

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA

FACULDADE DE LETRAS

PROGRAMA EM TEORIA DA LITERATURA



Mousetrapping

The Ordeals of Interpretation

Maria Sequeira Mendes

Doutoramento em Estudos Literários

Teoria da Literatura

2011

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Dissertação orientada por:

Professor António M. Feijó

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To my grandparents.

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Sometimes, the interpreter is the touchstone for the interpretation of others. His role will be portrayed, as well as the establishment of an asymmetry between those who are performing the test and those being tested, which seems to be a condition for procedures to work appropriately. Qualities for being a touchstone in interpretation, such as intuition, insight or conviction, education, and a certain knowledge of technique will be considered. Being a touchstone, however, may affect its agents, who have to deal with the physical and psychological consequences of the tasks they choose, or are being forced, to perform.

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Interpretation – Ordeal – Polygraph – Torture – Shakespeare

Abstract

The assumption that interpretation is widespread and must be tamed is illustrated in the ambition for a touchstone capable of showing the authenticity, or veracity, of certain entities. Such touchstone would have the capacity to help us distinguish friends from enemies, of identifying the quality of particular lines, and of bringing the truth to light. This touchstone, used for the comprehension of others, may be an object, a form of test, or a person. It will, however, be seen that accurate judgments do not derive from the use of the touchstone itself, but from a technical understanding of interpretation conducted by accomplished individuals. Precise forms of judgment are, thus, the result of a combination of factors that include good intuition, or conviction, the ability to learn a specific method or technique, to show something, detect errors and ask questions.

Resumo

Esta tese descreve a ambição por uma pedra de toque que demonstre a veracidade, ou autenticidade, de certas entidades. Esta pedra de toque, que pode ser um objecto, uma pessoa ou um teste, teria a capacidade de nos auxiliar a distinguir amigos de inimigos, de identificar a qualidade de alguns versos e de iluminar a verdade. Argumenta-se, todavia, que juízos precisos não derivam unicamente do uso da pedra de toque, mas de um entendimento técnico de interpretação conduzida por indivíduos hábeis. Bons juízos sobre terceiros são, assim, o resultado de uma combinação de factores que inclui boa intuição, ou convicção, a capacidade de se aprender um método ou uma técnica específica, de detectar erros e de fazer perguntas.

If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

(Hamlet, II, ii, 157-159)

Construct, then, a mousetrap that will catch a sublimer evidence.

Geoffrey Hartman, *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays*

Introduction

Picture a suspect of knowing a bomb's location; a foreigner blamed for robbery in medieval times, but claiming to be innocent; a woman wishing to apply for a supermarket position, but unwilling to confess she had robbed before. In these cases, liable to skeptical doubt, the affirmations of the accused may not be taken in consideration, since their word has no value. Someone wishing to place a bomb would not be eager to confess its location; a foreigner's word in medieval times had no judicial value; and no one applying for a job position would confess to previous robbery. There is no way of knowing if the suspect can be trusted, either since the accused is not considered honest or because there is no one able to testify as to whether he may indeed be relied upon. Thus, presumably and with good reason, one may assume the CIA, the medieval jury and the supermarket's owner would prefer a way of finding the truth which would not depend on the suspect's word. In many of the cases discussed, however, the only one capable of enlightening his interlocutors is the suspect.

The modes of proof here described – some forms of literary criticism, the medieval judicial ordeal, the polygraph and torture (in its various forms and historical periods¹) – presume that certain entities enclose the key to their comprehension, which may come to light if the appropriate method is employed. The presumption that the body is a vessel with hidden contents has implications when applied to ways of determining the truth. When there

¹ The use of torture and its techniques varies substantially according to the historical context, the country in question and whether it is, or not, a judicial practice. For this reason, I will discuss, throughout this dissertation, specific cases and underline particular aspects of torture. For a historical narrative see, for example: Henry C. Lea, *Superstition and Force: Torture, Ordeal and Trial by Combat in Medieval Law*, 1870. New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1996. Piero Fiorelli, *La Tortura Giudiziaria Nel Diritto Comune*, vol. Primo. Varese: Giuffrè, 1953. Allec Mellor, *La Torture – Son histoire, son abolition, sa réapparition au XX siècle*. Tours: Maison Mame, 1961. Malise Ruthven, *Torture – The Grand Conspiracy*. London: Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 1978. Edward Peters, *Torture*, 1995. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

is a problem requiring a preferably definite solution, and the key to the problem appears to be inside a certain person, it seems necessary to find a way to bring the answer forward. It is assumed that the individual's body, for one reason or another, holds the way out of the predicament, and it is therefore compulsory to extract it. However, in most of these cases, the suspects are unwilling to let their bodies be examined. They claim they are innocent or that they have been falsely accused and refuse to cooperate.

Curiously, literary works often cause us problems similar to those enunciated. Although a book may not be compared to the bomber, the medieval foreigner or the woman with a prior conviction, there is a complexity in many works that make us doubt if the words we read do mean what we firstly assume them to mean. In many situations, intricate passages seem to be doing to us the same as the person who placed the bomb and does not wish it to be found: withholding the actual meaning of their statements. In these cases, speaking with the author is not much of a help, which puts critics in a somewhat comparable position to that of the CIA: the person who could help them decipher a literary passage, or a state of affairs, cannot, or will not, do it. These are problems where, for any number of reasons, the objects in hand cannot be as cooperative as we would like them to be, which puts us in the position of having to be creative, or even violent, when dealing with them. In the case of books, as happens with unwilling subjects, it is necessary to discover if they are being purposefully deceitful or not, a determination that may settle the type of conclusions we draw. At the same time, it is difficult to know what exactly could be special signs needing analysis. Some authors point out the possibility of using certain passages and contrasting them with those requiring interpretation; for others, quoting from a text is a way of illuminating its meaning; while describing also appears to be a form of clarifying analysis.

The abovementioned examples have yet another feature in common. They portray guilty persons and their unwillingness to confess. Nevertheless, an innocent subject would also, in the same circumstances, deny having taken any part in the diverse affairs. From this viewpoint, to be innocent and to claim it is very similar to being guilty and claiming to be above suspicion. Both forms of verbal enunciation are identical. The main presumption of

modes of proof such as torture, the ordeal and the polygraph is that even if the suspect is unwilling to admit his knowledge or his guilt, there are signs of his culpability that may be evaluated. Thus, inquisitorial torture seemed to be able to make the suspect confess, while simultaneously providing valuable signs of guilt through the observation of his expressions. The medieval ordeal was considered a way of proving the truth in difficult cases, through the evaluation of bodily signs, whereas the polygraph is an instrument frequently used to uncover facts about a person that she does not wish others to know. It is presumed that the truth is discovered through the analysis of unintentional signs, the body's physiological response to the guilt of its owners. Although differences between modes of proof will be later surveyed, it is relevant to point out that, for these methods, signs such as perspiration or a burned arm are considered to be more truthful than verbal statements, due to the fact that they are unintentional and difficult to control. While many persons lie intentionally without being caught, only experts are considered capable of managing their physiological reactions when put to the test. These procedures share, therefore, the assumption that each entity's interior is veiled by its exterior, which is, paradoxically, also the place where the revelation will occur. It will be seen how this is a peculiar way to understand the relationship between the body's interior and its signs of exteriority, described as bodily proof.

These modes of test rely on the idea that if the appropriate method is employed and properly applied, there is the possibility that the correct answer to the problem at hand will appear. Although methods vary, these interpreters share the ambition for a touchstone that would allow us to distinguish these entities' authenticity. In certain cases, the touchstone is an object such as a stone or a painting, while in others it may be a Shakespearean line, some sort of test, or even a person. The ability to obtain results depends on the quality of the touchstone, the use given to the object, the ability to follow a procedure and to learn with experience. In some cases, the interpreter only needs to look at self-evident proof and to show it, something certain observers admire and others fear, whereas in other circumstances it is necessary to complement the results of the test with an adequate description. Those

evaluating these modes of proof must, therefore, possess a degree of expertise making them able to either discover or be the touchstone with which to judge others.

The outcome of the proof is deemed univocal. In fact, one way to characterize these modes of proof is to say they presume that if the correct protocol is followed, the desired outcome will surface. A point in Philip Roth's novel, *The Dying Animal*, illustrates this type of procedure. The narrator, a literature professor, explains his theory about relationships. According to him, persons mistakenly consider that conversation is required during the seduction process, assuming the woman is interested in who the man is and vice versa. However, attraction determines *a priori* the outcome of the process and, contrary to what happens when one goes to the doctor or the lawyer, the conversation during the seduction phase does not alter its ending. Both parties know they will end up having sex, and the discussion on Kafka and the interest in Velasquez are only detours with the purpose to justify the initial lust, a necessary means towards the intended ending. The unromantic perspective of Roth's character relates with this thesis' subject in more than one-way: it characterizes what is generally conceived as an interior process (the feelings of desire for another), and describes the public "symptoms" of that attraction. It also reveals a case where, although the outcome is deemed pre-determined, it seems necessary to follow the proper protocol. If Roth's literature professor is correct, there is a tacit acknowledgment between those involved, the protocol has a pre-established ending and it serves the purposes of both parties.

When the professor, a skilled interpreter, looks at his female students, he needs to find which of them attracts him. Quoting his words: "They come to my first class, and I know almost immediately which is the girl for me"². This type of knowledge is compared in the book with that of the bull in Mark Twain's story, who, when looking at the author thinks: "You are my meat, sir"³. The professor's predatory self-description presents some presuppositions worth mentioning, such as the fact that in a class full of students he is always interested in one of them. This is presented as a procedure that repeats itself through time,

² Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal*. London: Vintage Books: 2002, p. 2.

³ *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

and although the text is not clear in this particular point, one has good reasons to imagine that his abilities to discover the girl have improved. This type of intuitive knowledge enhanced by experience also characterizes examiners whose work, even if depending on a somewhat scientific analysis of charts, as happens in the polygraph test, is influenced by personal relationships and the individual ability to judge others. At the same time, what could be seen as the obligation to like one of the students finds its equivalent in the necessity to provide a verdict about someone or something in the aforementioned modes of proof.

The specificity in the professor's theory resides in the fact that he does seem to know, when he looks at the desired student, whether she will correspond to his feelings. This may be explained by the professor's experience in life, by the fact that his numerous adventures lead him to develop an intuition, making him more capable than most to assess his own intentions, as well as other persons', or at least his female apprentices. The professor's use of the word "almost" reinforces this idea, as his gaze stares at the universe of students, firstly eliminating the male elements of the class, and then progressively reducing the female pupils to the desired one, until he is able to see "right away that this was going to be my girl"⁴. It will be seen throughout the thesis how some persons seem to have this type of ability, how they are touchstones to the character of others, which may rely on their judgment. Being such an interpreter may not, though, be beneficial to one's health and it will be seen how some of these interpreters experience the secondary effects of the tasks they perform.

One way to characterize these procedures is to claim that they attempt to diminish the amount of talk in certain situations. After the classes end, so as to avoid sexual harassment claims, the Professor prepares things, such as arrange the adequate context, so that events can follow its normal course:

Talking this talk, you have a misguided sense, as does she, that you know what you're dealing with. But it's not as though you're interviewing a lawyer or hiring a doctor and that whatever's said along the way is going to change your course of action. You know you want it and you know you're going to do it and nothing is going to stop you. Nothing is going to be said here that's going to change anything⁵.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

What is interesting in this case is that, for the professor, the malfunctioning of the procedure is a surprise for the parties; the protocol is supposed to work and, if everyone behaves as anticipated, there does not seem to be a reason for it not to produce the expected results. Nevertheless, contrary to the professor's assumptions, the set of rules may not help to obtain the estimated results, for example, to follow the protocol one has to be acquainted with it. Moreover, one of the parties may discover that the other does not like Velasquez, thus deciding that lack of taste to be unappealing. The etiquette would be thus interrupted by the discovery of an unknown factor, which changes the expected outcome of the situation. For the professor, talking is only a protocol (this being the reason why he makes calculations in order to attempt to determine which is the required duration for the procedure), but the student assumes, as the professor notes, that she is letting him know who she really is. There is a disparity between interlocutors in this conversation, which, as will be seen, is a condition for the mentioned modes of proof to work. At the same time, if more of his putative interlocutors shared his seduction kit they would be able to save the Professor a lot of effort and go straight to the point. The thought that one may be more expedite, present in modes of proof such as the ordeal and torture, is contradicted in literary criticism, which seems to be characterized by being an activity that cannot be rushed. This means that the Professor is ignoring that his ability to discover students and to depend on a type of protocol is the result of experience, which is precisely what his students lack.

On closer inspection, another relevant feature in the Professor's theory comes into view. Namely, the fact that he does not consider that, in his predatory relationships, there is anything separating him from the desired subjects. Roth's professor assumes that when one is a lawyer there is something between the professional and the object he aims to study, and vice versa (as was seen before, what one hears the lawyer say might change one's will to employ him). On the contrary, there is nothing between the object, the Professor and his image of things, as the only information in need is the one he, as an interpreter, already possesses. As a consequence, the Professor portrays two types of persons, or professions, those that accede to universal desires, wishes or truths, and therefore are not in need of

anything exterior to help them analyze objects, and those in which interpreters need to be specially trained in order to understand the world around them. Contrary to what happens with the Professor, the modes of generating evidence that will be here described are said to require this effort to understand others. Objects and persons either are unwilling to be understood, or the regular methods for their comprehension are not producing the desired outcome. Therefore, as will be seen, the literary critic, the polygraph examiner and the medieval judge, unlike Roth's Professor, see themselves often in the position of having to understand an object with the use of a technique.

While the professor sees the procedure as a set of rules for something that had been previously established to appear, these modes of proof consider that the *modus operandi* helps to determine the correct outcome of the test, this being the reason why the procedure has to be thoroughly followed. However, these ways of testing entities also attempt to predict what will happen if the method fails to produce accurate results, and provide solutions for the problem (results from these tests may appear in the form of a conclusion, a verdict or an essay about a poem).

There is little certainty to whether these modes of proof are, in fact, able to lead us to the truth. Critics often deride these procedures, portraying them as offering little of the truthfulness they wish to highlight. Some of these methods are difficult to defend from an ethical point of view, as it is not easy to argue in favor of burning other persons' arms or submitting them to water torture. Although I tend to agree with those who are critical of such procedures, these methods, whose use would not be deemed appropriate, do allow us to obtain verdicts (even if not truthful ones) and do seem to have the advantage of being able to give us what may be considered definite replies to some questions. These modes of proof entitle us to put a stop to interpretation and to obtain a final verdict. In the case of critics, the use of these methods is unable to provide us with what they consider truthful or authentic solutions to certain literary problems. Still, they allow for the writing of insightful essays (in the case of criticism the value of the procedure seems to lie in its ability to sanction the discussion).

It should be mentioned that these forms of test have been used in diverse societies, contexts and systems of belief. The medieval society in which the ordeal worked as a judicial way of solving conflicts has little to do with the way contemporary methods of truth inquiry deal with the polygraph, or even with torture. This thesis' aim is not to historicize such practices but to expose their similarities and differences within this problem's context. Therefore, I will invoke specific ways of producing evidence when particular interpretative problems are brought to light.

When one speaks of torture, medieval ordeals and polygraph tests, two possibilities emerge. Those who argue against these modes of proof seem to share the professor's theory, which means that they consider the result is previously determined and the purpose of the mode of proof is but to confirm it. On the other hand, those in favor of the truth tests assume the result depends entirely on the ability of those involved in the process to follow the proper procedures. To ascertain which of them is correct is cause for wonder, but it is not the aim of this thesis. Its purpose is to attempt to reflect on their particularities, ways of functioning, common presuppositions and dissimilarities, as well as to include them in a group of other methods sharing, in Dewey's terms, the quest for certainty.

Chapter I

A Tribunal of Interpretation

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust
(*Macbeth*, I, iv, 11-14)

This chapter discusses three plays, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello*, which describe a tribunal of interpretation where emotions perform the central role, either because they are being tested, or concealed. According to the perspective presented in these plays, as well as in the modes of proof which will be described, human beings possess an inner truth that may be clarified under proper observation, or if a physical test is applied to the body. Concomitantly, persons seem to be compared and included in a larger group of entities where we may find objects, situations or texts having in common the fact that they are considered to be particularly introverted, or impervious to analysis.

Knowing how to identify someone's murderer, whether one is being betrayed, how to distinguish a friend from an enemy, or try to avoid being exposed, are questions that compel the main characters in the plays discussed. The credibility of a trial, one in which the sentence does not precede the verdict, is contingent to a set of procedures: an investigation, in which valuable proof is gathered, must take place, a suspect is found, witnesses are called upon, accusation and defense present their case and a reliable jury evaluates the results.

Although these characters pursue the truth, and sometimes find effective forms of testing it, the examination is seldom distinguished from the tribunal itself, as if the inquiry and its assessment were one and the same. In fact, the formulation of the mode of proof and the discovery of evidence absorb these interpreters. These evaluations are a way of justifying beliefs, obtaining certainty about supposedly reluctant objects, and being able to say that some entities are untrue, or inauthentic. Although to clarify a meaning is an interpretative act, it will be seen that the modes of proof discussed here identify the interpreters' conclusions as a way to discover the truth. However, as will be seen, interpretation is always at the root of both processes, even if the latter like to present themselves as objective procedures for uncovering falseness.

1. Devising a Truth Test

Hamlet illustrates the conviction that there is a truth to be tested inside the human body. In the third act, the Prince of Denmark seeks for a solution to end suspicions about the presumed murder of his father. He thus stages a play in which the crime supposedly committed by his stepfather, Claudius, is represented. *The Murder of Gonzago* has the purpose of catching the conscience of the King through the observation of Claudius's reactions to the performance. Hamlet's test is based on the assumption that a criminal, when confronted with his deeds, confesses his guilt through visible physical responses. Consequently, the way Claudius behaves, rising in the middle of the play and calling for the lights to be lit, seems to be the proof Hamlet needs to be sure the Ghost's accusations were true. When the play is interrupted, the dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio, to whom the Prince had told his plan and asked to closely survey his uncle, seems to prove that both witnessed a transformation in the King's physiognomy. However, before the play began, a dumb show had been performed, in which the story was presented for the first time, and towards which Claudius did not react.

The explanation of what constitutes proof has its classical places in the critical literature on *Hamlet*. It was W.W. Greg who, in “Hamlet’s Hallucination,” began the debate about the dumb show’s relevance, when he considered it was unlikely for the King not to respond the first time the action was presented:

If the King could seat unmoved through the representation in pantomime of these events there is no imaginable reason why they should move him when acted with words. For the language of the play adds nothing to the pointedness of the allusion: the sideglances at the Danish court are all aimed at the marriage of the Queen, not at the crime of the usurper. The actual speech of the murderer, which is interrupted by the King’s rising, is mere bombast that could not possibly discompose the tenderest criminal⁶.

Three theories, in the discussion of the play-within-the-play, are sustained: firstly, if the King did not move during the dumb show he would not also have reacted during the Player-speech; secondly, the supposition that the court is looking at the Queen and not the King; and thirdly, that the Player’s speech would not have any effect on a minimally hardened criminal. The fact that Claudius was unperturbed during the dumb show indicates, according to Greg, that, contrary to Hamlet’s presupposition, although the King is indeed guilty of murder, he did not *poison* his brother and, therefore, could not recognize himself in the particular action being mimed. The Ghost’s narrative of how he had been poisoned could not, therefore, be true, we now realize, but is rather the product of a hallucination in Hamlet’s mind. Claudius’s abrupt interruption would, then, be due to the fact that the play itself, as well as Hamlet’s improper behavior during the performance, was a direct challenge to the Queen and, consequently, to the King and its court.

Greg surmises that the actors probably improvised the dumb show, which explains Hamlet’s surprise and justifies his affirmation “Marry, this is miching malicho. It means mischief” (III, ii, 135). The unexpected performance has a profound effect on Hamlet, who knows Claudius has been warned, and is therefore determined to make him give himself away. This gradual “change in intention” justifies Hamlet’s offensive behavior towards Ophelia, the Queen and King during the dumb show, which would be why Claudius does not

⁶ W. W. Greg, “Hamlet’s Hallucination,” *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 12, n.º 4, Oct. 1917, p. 398.

leave when the Player poisons the King, but during Hamlet's remarks. The thought that Claudius did not murder his brother using poison would also help to explain the unlikely similarity between plots (Hamlet had heard the play before and his perturbed mind could later appeal to it, associating it with his suspicions towards Claudius and providing the justification he was looking for).

John Dover Wilson, in *What Happens in Hamlet*, concurs with W. W. Greg's case, equally rejecting "the second tooth theory" sustained by authors such as Alfred Pollard and W. W. Lawrence, according to which Claudius would have been able to resist emotionally to the first enactment of the crime in the dumb show, but not to the onslaught of the second enactment in the play that follows. Wilson observes that there are no indications in the text to prove this theory, considering that the play's repetition on stage would be less efficient dramatically. But, unlike Greg, for Dover Wilson the Ghost is not a figment of Hamlet's imagination and the King did murder his brother, as the play suggests. To Wilson, the scene discloses the facts to the audience, given that the dumb show contains the argument of the play, but not to the King, said to be otherwise engaged. According to Dover Wilson, it only works if "He [the King] must not know nothing, but they [the audience] must know everything"⁷. The explanation for what Dover Wilson supposes to be the King's lack of reaction during the dumb show follows Halliwell-Philips, for whom the King was busy exchanging views with the Queen and remained unaware of the dumb show. The author considers that the King's conversation begins with Polonius, and that they are both speaking about Hamlet's improper behavior when he throws himself at Ophelia's feet with his lewd badinage (only afterward does the King turn his attention to the Queen). Wilson maintains Greg's point on how the dumb show was unexpected to Hamlet and argues that this perspective is emphasized when one reads Hamlet's declaration to Ophelia, according to which "The players cannot \ keep counsel: they'll tell all" (III, ii, 137-138).

Both W. W. Greg and Dover Wilson's views are criticized by W. W. Lawrence who, in "Hamlet and the Mouse-Trap," argues that the problems pointed out by these critical

⁷ John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 1935. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 146.

readings of the play are, in fact, inexistent both to those who stage it and to the spectators in the theatre. To Lawrence, both authors erroneously consider that Claudius would not have been touched by the dumb show, since there is no evidence in the text to prove this. Only those who were looking for Claudius's emotions, such as Hamlet and Horatio, would have been able to find them, since all the others were watching the play. When the King realizes his secret was found, he is careful not to respond, waiting for an adequate time to do it. Therefore, he leaves the play abruptly, but without losing his dignity. According to Lawrence, both the dumb show and the prologue have the function of giving the public the idea that a real play is starting and explaining what the plot is, which avoids the whole representation of the action. For Lawrence, the three functions of the dumb show are: to increase the illusion that the play is real, to reveal to Claudius that Hamlet knows the motives of the crime, and to pose the question, can the King endure it?⁸

The aforementioned authors provide the framework for the discussion that follows, which will focus on the question of the double test (as well the interrogation about Hamlet's prior knowledge of the dumb show) and on Claudius's reaction to the play-within-the-play⁹. Hamlet needs to attempt to “catch the conscience of the King” and assumes Claudius will not be able to hide the truth before the theatrical representation of his dire deed:

Hum – I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions.

⁸ W. W. Lawrence, “Hamlet and the Mouse-Trap,” *PMLA*, vol. 54, n.º 3, Sep. 1939, p. 709-735.

⁹ It should be mentioned that Hamlet's performance does not appear in the main sources for the play, Saxo Grammaticus's book, *Historiae Danicae*, which probably Shakespeare did not read, but which influenced his mainsource, Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. There are several mentions to a play which would be the origin of *Hamlet*, a so-called *Ur-Hamlet*, whose text was never found, and there is, of course, much debate about the relation between Shakespeare's play and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. *The Murder of Gonzago* appears both in folios Q1 and Q2, and Geoffrey Bullough, in his study of the play's narrative sources, argues that it contains elements of a description of the murder of Francesco Maria I, Duke of Urbino, as well as allusions to the War of the Theatres. The player's speech would be influenced by Seneca's *Troades* and *Agamemnon*, while the idea of a murderer who betrays himself during the performance of a play could be inspired in *Warning for the Faire Women* (1599), which Shakespeare's company had recently performed. Cf. Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 1973. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;
 I'll tent him to the quick. If a do blench,
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
 May be a devil, and the devil hath power
 T' assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,
 out of mine weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 More relative than this. The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King¹⁰.
 (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 584-601)

An analysis of Claudius's features would allow access to the hidden contents of his mind, the face being the place where private emotions are made public. If the King reacts to the reenactment of the crime, Hamlet's doubts as to the authenticity of the Ghost will vanish and he will be certain Claudius is guilty. The test is twofold, as it aims to verify the Ghost's words, confirming that they are not the action of the Devil, and to test Claudius's actions¹¹. In Hamlet's pragmatic resolution of the problem of other minds, the expression "If a do blench \ I know my course" has a double meaning, as it refers to the sign of Claudius's guilt and the course of action Hamlet will have to pursue once he discovers the perpetrator of the assassination. However, "course" could also stand for corpse, which means that Hamlet would finally be able to understand what happened with his father's body (the expression relates to "murder will speak with most miraculous organ," and it shall be described later on in the chapter).

For Hamlet to unveil Claudius's guilt, it was necessary to be particularly careful with what would be played. This explains his advice to actors about the best way to enunciate each word, as well as his description about the dangers of overacting. Hamlet's zeal is similar to

¹⁰ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990. Quotations follow this edition.

¹¹ Regarding Hamlet's test to the Ghost see: Miriam Joseph, "Discerning the Ghost in Hamlet," *PMLA*, vol. 76, n.º 5, Dec. 1961, pp. 493-502. Joseph holds the view that several witnesses test the Ghost according to the theory of the discernment of spirits. Hamlet believes in the Ghost the first time he sees him, but he naturally doubts his conviction after he has time to think. Therefore, he seeks "evidence more reliable than his initial spontaneous conviction" (p. 497). Hamlet's doubts are reasonable and his test, as well as the way he asks for Horatio's help, serves the necessity to double-check the Ghost.

that of a theatre play director who desires to thrill the audience, but it also reminds us of formal judicial procedures through which a criminal's guilt is uncovered. In this sense, Hamlet's mode of proof may be compared to a technical truth test such as that effected by the polygraph.

The polygraph is a version of a series of instruments developed over time with the purpose of identifying a liar. However, both those who argue for and against the polygraph maintain that it is not a lie detector. In reality, it measures physiological transformations in the nervous system that appear when someone is emotionally upset, and which require interpretation. Instruments such as the polygraph have the function of recording involuntary bodily reflexes through the evaluation and analysis of physiological patterns, recording transformations in breathing patterns, heart rate and pulse rate, blood pressure and galvanic reflexes, while pre-established questions are being asked. In order to record this physiological activity, sensors are placed to measure breathing patterns, while a galvanometer measures the electrodermal system, and a blood pressure cuff records blood pressure and cardiac activity. The polygraph examiner analyzes the ensuing charts. There are different ways to administer the polygraph test, which depend on the model of questions used. The exam is generally preceded by an interview with the purpose of obtaining the subject's verbal and written consent to the test, as well as a summary of his biographical information and a brief health history. This initial interaction is completed with the description of the polygraph, made by the examiner. According to Dennis C. Mitchell, the pre-test interview has three objectives: to persuade the suspect that the test's results are always true; to select the questions which will serve as comparison during the interrogation; and to evaluate the suspect's behavior, analyzing his emotional state before the test¹². After this, a simulation test is applied to persuade the suspect of the reliability of the instrument.

The practice of introducing a certain mode of proof before its execution is not recent, and it is one of the aspects relating the polygraph with other methods used to ascertain the

¹² Dennis C. Mitchell, "The Pre-test Interview, a Preliminary Framework," in *Handbook of Polygraph Testing*, Murray Kleiner, ed.. London: Academic Press, 2002, p. 183-209.

truth. In *Traité de la justice criminelle* (1771), a relevant judicial French manual, Daniel Jousse advises interrogators to precede the question, or torture, with an exhortation made to the suspects about the importance of telling the truth¹³. The same author refers to how sometimes the Parlement controlled the use of torture with the *retentum*, an instruction demanding the description of the torture's procedures to the accused, with the instruments in view to obtain a confession. As Lisa Silverman argues, in these cases it was required "that the question be 'presented' rather than performed, so that the accused be prepared in every way for torture but that the torture not be physically performed"¹⁴. Torture would follow if the suspect were not persuaded by this anticipation of pain.

There are similarities between the medieval ordeal ritual and inquisitorial torture procedures, since the legislation of torture follows the medieval ordeal conventional tradition¹⁵. In an ordeal, it was assumed that God, who had witnessed it all, would give his testimony on the trial, making Himself present by altering the natural elements. This was why, for example, someone could walk a certain distance with a hot iron in his hands and not get burned, or have only minor injuries¹⁶. According to Theodore Plucknett, the incorporation of the medieval ordeal in a set of Christian ceremonies heightened the moral efficacy of the

¹³ Daniel Jousse, *Traité de la justice criminelle de France*, 1771, 2 vol., Paris, accessed Feb. 2009, <http://books.google.com/books?id=G7QWAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=daniel+jousse+traité+de+la+justice&ei=vf9dS8L6I4LmzATT5YDBBQ&cd=1#v=onepage&q=&f=false>.

¹⁴ Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects – Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 75.

¹⁵ Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*, 1975, trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

¹⁶ The word "ordeal" derives from the Latin term *ordalium*, or "judgment". The concept was later used in the sense of "divine judgment" and, as Federico Patetta, in *Le Ordalie: studio di storia del diritto e scienza del diritto comparato* (1890), sustains, ordeal corresponds in medieval Latin to the following expressions: *iudicium*, *Dei iudicium*, *paribile iudicium*, *probabile iudicium*, *purgatio*, *probatio*, *examen* and *examinatio*. The ordeal existed in different cultures and civilizations, in different moments of History, and the diversity of practices is extraordinary. One may find descriptions of ordeals from Ancient India to Egypt, from Africa to Japan, from Tibet to Polynesia. In the Hammurabi code, the use of the ordeal is mentioned twice (2 and 132), and one may equally find examples of ordeals in the Laws of Manu and the Old Testament (Num. 5: 11-31). In Europe, Robert Bartlett, in *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (1986), divides the history of the ordeal in two periods: the first takes place before 800 a. C. and is characterized by the almost inexistence of documents, and the second one, which the author names "proto-history of the ordeal," may be placed from 800 a. C. onward, since from that date on there is a profusion of judicial descriptions on the theme. Cf. Federico Patetta, *Le Ordalie: studio di storia del diritto e scienza del diritto comparato*, Fratelli Bocca, 1890, accessed Feb. 2009, <http://www.archive.org/details/leordaliestudiooopategoog>. Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

test and, eventually, its practical value as a psychological truth test¹⁷. One of the purposes of the ordeal ritual was, similarly, to appeal to the conscience of the guilty person, making him confess before the proof took place.

Thus, both the pre-test interview, the simulation test in the polygraph, the presentation of torture objects before the procedures begin, and the ritual which takes place before the ordeal, are relevant modes of contextualization of the proof, as well as an attempt to liminally coerce the accused. If Hamlet's play can be compared to a physiological exam with the purpose of inducing a nervous reaction in the suspect, the dumb show would equal the pre-test interview, in that its purpose was to prepare Claudius for what would follow, as well as to exacerbate his emotional response. It makes sense to think that Hamlet would want to evaluate Claudius's behavior before and after the test takes place, to persuade him that he would find the truth, and to appeal to his conscience (which, as Claudius's confession proves to the audience, Hamlet was able to do).

Putting someone to the test seems to be an exercise requiring a rigorous set of procedures, as the accused must feel enormous pressure in order to confess. The threat of being discovered, as well as the menace of further punishment, are powerful mechanisms of persuasion. Such persuasive constraint must, however, be gradual, so as to give the guilty conscience time to feel remorse. Take, for example, Hamlet's "I'll tent him to the quick," which may refer to an impatient or hot-tempered personality, that, if shown during the experiment, would thus reveal itself. Claudius's reaction, leaving the room, seems to point to that conclusion. However, the King is not an irascible man and he never reacts when he is first provoked, as previous conversation with Hamlet showed. The adequate meaning of "quick" would be "fig. with ref. to persons, chiefly in phrases denoting acute mental pain or irritation, as touched, galled, stunt, etc. to the quick"¹⁸, as it does not refer to Claudius's personality, but to Hamlet's capacity to taunt him. It should be noted, as the Arden edition

¹⁷ Cf. Theodore Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law*, 1929. London: Butterworth & Co., 1948.

¹⁸ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VIII, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961, p. 51-54.

explains, how tent "was an instrument for examining or cleansing a wound"¹⁹. Incidentally, the expression "to the quick" also names, as described by the OED: "The tender or sensitive flesh in any part of the body, as that under the nails or beneath callous parts, also, the tender part of a sore or wound"²⁰. Today, the examination of the flesh under the nails could be read as an allusion to the torture of unwilling suspects, as in the nail torture method pointed objects are inserted under the finger, and toenails or nails may be torn off. Practices include placing needles under fingernails or removing nails with pincers, and these are very effective ways of "invisible" torture, since the nails grow again, which makes the procedure hard to detect (I will make an argument about "clear" torture later in the chapter). Even if this is not the primary meaning of the expression in Shakespeare, the careful examination of a wound is usually a painful activity, which is why persons respond to it. Hamlet knows, and the King's confession will prove that he was correct, that the assassination left its marks on Claudius's conscience and this is the wound that Hamlet hopes to look at, "to tent."

While the double test has the purpose of extinguishing the guilty one's hopes of remaining undiscovered, it also gives him the possibility of telling the truth without undergoing the ordeal or torture, saving him from what could be considered unnecessary pain. From this perspective, the duplication of the test in *Hamlet* could have the function of helping to show Claudius's guilt without inflicting further agony. This is not, as will be seen, the Prince's purpose. The procedure has, rather, the objective of reinforcing the conviction of all those involved in the mode of proof in the certain outcome of the test (a particularity especially relevant in Hamlet's case, as he needed to be sure that this was the correct way to test the Ghost's words, as well as his stepfather's guilt). I am not claiming that Hamlet was aware of the existing complexities in the modes of proof and it is very unlikely that he (or Shakespeare, for that matter) pondered the subtleties of judicial procedure. The examples given show situations ranging from the medieval ordeal (and later it will be seen how Shakespeare knew at least one type of ordeal), to the usual methods of torture and

¹⁹ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990, p. 273.

²⁰ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XI, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

interrogation (in different historical periods and contexts), which has merely the purpose of showing how such different methods may share assumptions which are unknown to, say, literary critics and the like, but common to those who find themselves in the position of having to put suspects to the test.

Words, in these modes of proof, possess a limited value, as they are considered virtual instruments of deceit, which the suspect can control. Claudius, a diplomat, would be particularly virtuous in their use, which is the reason why Hamlet seeks for an alternative way to discover the truth. If the suspect's words may not be considered veracious, the analysis must lie in unintentional bodily reactions, seen as the body's response to guilt. Another relevant particularity of these modes of proof is the idea that the person must know he is a suspect, so as to increase the anxiety about the test. From this perspective, when critics underline the importance of Hamlet's play-within-the-play as a surprise element, they are erroneously considering that it would be better if the subject did not know he was being suspected beforehand. Even in cases such as inquisitorial torture, where the precise nature of the charges was obscure, a significant part of the examination relied on the fact that the suspect knew he was being put to the test. Such was Hamlet's purpose, which is why W. W. Greg's point of view does not seem sensible:

The point of the Mouse-Trap is that the sudden and unexpected shock of the disclosure shall cause the King to betray his guilt: if he withstands one shock he will be less, not more, likely to give himself away on a repetition²¹.

Or Dover Wilson's:

Had there been too much parallelism in the spoken play, or indeed any clear hint of the coming murder, the King would have seen the trap, and would either have prematurely taken fright or have had an opportunity of screwing himself up to endure the spectacle of his crime and so perhaps have avoided giving himself away in Hamlet's eyes. He must be lured gradually and unconsciously into the trap, and then caught – squealing²².

The sentences above ignore tried procedures for finding the truth, as the idea that a

²¹ W.W. Greg, "The Mouse-Trap: A Postscript," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 35, n.º 1, Jan. 1940, p. 8.

²² Dover Wilson, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

sudden shock (as opposed to the increase of pain, or intensity during the questioning of the suspect) will make someone confess is counter-intuitive. On the contrary, to those testing the truth the repetition of the procedure is indispensable to obtain a confession (which generally no single shock can bring about). Dover Wilson's idea that the King would be caught squealing is not sensible. As many critics argue (W. W. Lawrence among them), Claudius was an intelligent man, capable of deceiving an entire court, and not prone to sudden rash emotional reactions. A. Hart, for example, insists that Claudius did not "blench" during the dumb show. In his account of Claudius's behavior during the play, the author describes the King as "an energetic and efficient monarch, [who] thinks quickly, acts promptly," but also a "smiling villain, a seducer, poisoner, and usurper"²³, a "tough guy, and nothing but continuous 'third degree' methods will break him"²⁴. That Claudius would not easily confess is a very reasonable notion (this is something known to Hamlet and which could explain the delay of his actions, as he knows he needs to devise the perfect plan). Nevertheless, Hart fails to see that he is in the presence of a "third degree method" which does not involve the beating of the suspect, but does inflict such psychological pain that he will not be able to resist it (I will later claim that the pressure applied on Claudius's mind was continuous). This signals indeed Shakespeare's (call it Freudian) knowledge of the human mind. If we accept the theory that the dumb show follows judicial procedures where the presentation of the proof is fundamental, then there would be a considerable difference between the demonstration of the test and the test itself, as the King would know, from the beginning of the dumb show, that what he feared the most, i.e. public exposure and the pain of seeing the reenactment of the crime, would soon follow.

One should now return to the process in which interrogators show their suspects details of the crime before a real accusation. This practice has the double purpose of evaluating the suspects' reactions to the idea that the precise nature of the crime was discovered and of building up psychological tension. Hamlet did not wish to cause a sudden shock but, as the

²³ A. Hart, "Once More the Mouse-Trap," *The Review of English Studies*, vol. 17, n.º 65, Jan. 1941, p. 16.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

title he gives his play suggests, *The Mouse Trap*, to lure and ensnare the King, to let him know that there was someone who knew what had happened and that revenge would follow. Accordingly, Hamlet had the intention of gradually exercising psychological pressure upon Claudius until the climax, in the King-player speech. As in the judicial tests described earlier, repetition is of the essence here. The King is an intelligent man, used to the machinations of the court, and it becomes clear, from the beginning of the play, that he is paying close attention to Hamlet. The King's conversation with Polonius before *The Murder of Gonzago* begins reveals how he was already determined to send Hamlet away to England. That Claudius was observing Hamlet's doings, and that he would be very much alert during the performance of the play, may be perceived when the King tells Polonius: "Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go" (III, i, 190). Not only is Claudius recognizing Hamlet's astuteness, but he is also explicitly saying that he will continue to closely survey him. W. W. Lawrence argues that Rosencrantz and Polonius have mentioned to the King and Queen that it is Hamlet's desire that they should watch a play and quotes the following verse: "And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties \ To hear and see the matter." (III, i, 22-23). Lawrence is right to sustain: "Claudius would be a dreamy simpleton indeed if he did not realize that the facts of the murder have been discovered"²⁵. Everything points to the fact that the King will be in suspense about what will be played.

If the double test is taken to be Hamlet's original intention, then both W. W. Greg and Dover Wilson's analyses of the passage "Marry, this is miching malicho. It means mischief." (III, ii, 135) have to be reinterpreted. According to both authors, this passage is proof that the dumb show was an unwelcome invention by the players and it represents not Claudius's crime, but "the *skulking iniquity* of the players, who have introduced this unauthorized and ridiculous dumb show, and so have almost ruined the whole plot"²⁶. When echoing W. W. Greg's words about the dumb show, Dover Wilson repeats the mistake of considering that the plot would be ruined by what (should) be considered the technical presentation of the proof.

²⁵ W. W. Lawrence, "The Play Scene in Hamlet," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 18, n.º 1, Jan. 1919, p. 10.

²⁶ Dover Wilson, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

One only has to substitute dumb show for the introduction of the torture instruments before the proof takes place to understand that there is nothing ludicrous in these very effective psychological forms of pressure. Despite the OED, which considers that there is no other occurrence for the expression "miching malicho," in Shakespeare or anywhere else, and assumes it to be "of uncertain form, origin and meaning"²⁷, the Arden edition's much fuller notes provide an apt justification for the use of the phrase. "Miche" is interpreted as "to shrink or retire from view, to lurk out of sight"²⁸ and "malicho" probably comes from the Spanish "mallecho," wrong doing. Hence, Hamlet was referring to the actions played by the actors (the plot itself was mischievous). Moreover, "with a play on the word means, the dumb show, by revealing what is to come, also 'means mischief' for the King"²⁹. Let me suggest how such a view is congruent with the theory of the double test.

One other aspect is still left to be explained: the reason why Hamlet, while devising the plan to catch the King, asks the players, in front of Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Polonius, if the player can "study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which \ I would set down and insert in't...?" (II, ii, 534-536). If the roles were reversed, Hamlet would surely suspect that the affair was dubious, consequently making the King, at the very least, as suspicious as he was. Has Hamlet so little consideration for his friends' and Polonius' intelligence that he assumes they will not understand the framing of a cunning plan? It is clear that Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's are not the sharpest wits in Denmark, but could the same be said of Polonius? Even if it were so, would none of the three find the episode noteworthy? There is no evidence in the text pointing to the idea that any of them told Claudius of Hamlet's endeavors. Yet, previous episodes showed us how Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Polonius sent word to the King even at moments when they hadn't fully understood the intentions behind Hamlet's actions.

If they had told Claudius about the speech, if Claudius had known not only that

²⁷ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VI, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

²⁸ Harold Jenkins in *Shakespeare, Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990, p. 506.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 506.

Hamlet had staged a play, but that he had also added a few lines to it, this would mean that 1) there was more than a double test being framed, as Hamlet was pressuring the King before the play had begun, 2) that his advice to the actors, generally portrayed as a meta-reflection about theatre, is a warning to the King and the first move in Hamlet's strategy and 3) that the King would understand that the dumb show was a further warning for the speech to come.

It is helpful to seriously consider the first possibility, given that, if Hamlet really wanted the King to know about the play before it had even begun, then the question of the double test loses its relevance, as Hamlet was not aiming to surprise the King, but to pressure him unremittingly (and, contrarily to what Hart claims, the idea of a "continuous third degree" finally makes sense).

Regarding the second hypothesis, one could, obviously, wonder why the King didn't end the play before it even began, if he was aware of Hamlet's intentions. But isn't it true that diplomatic cunning knows that it is better to understand what the enemy is thinking than to take sudden action? If Hamlet hopes to irrevocably comprehend, by means of the performance of *The Mouse Trap*, whether Claudius is guilty of murdering his father or not, the same may be said about the King (he had already decided to send Hamlet to England, so there would be no harm in waiting a little bit longer). A chess game indeed: both Claudius and Hamlet in a gambit for each other's intentions, in order to be able to respond to the attack that they knew would soon arrive.

W. W. Greg questions the literary quality of the speech, maintaining, as previously quoted, "it is mere bombast that could not possibly discompose the tenderest criminal"³⁰. In fact, the King-player speech should not be compared to the literary virtuosity of the rest of the play. But Greg does not seem to bear in mind that literary quality is not, unlike what is expressed in the source of the play, Hamlet's main concern. Notice the differences between what has been taken as the origin of the passage and Hamlet's remarks.

A woman that had made away her husband,

³⁰ W. W. Greg, "Hamlet's Hallucination," p. 398.

And sitting to behold a tragedy
 At Linne a towne in Norffolke,
 Acted by Players travelling that way,
 Wherein a woman that had murderd hers
 Was ever haunted with her husbands ghost:
 The passion written by a feeling pen,
 And acted by a good Tragedian,
 She was so mooved with the sight thereof,
 As she cryed out, the Play was made by her,
 And openly confesst her husbands murder³¹.

Hum – I have heard
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play
 Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
 Been struck so to the soul that presently
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions. (...)
 I'll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 584-591)

The first quotation belongs to the source, a play called *A Warning for Faire Woman*, which, as Bullough states, had been represented by Shakespeare's company and published in 1599, where examples of "murders strangely revealed"³² are discussed. In this case, as in Claudius's, both the guilty woman and the woman in the play have murdered their husbands (even if the eventual similarities between their crimes are not described). The woman's confession is a result of the value of the play being represented, the feeling with which it had been written and the excellence of the performer. Therefore, the source passage underlines in more than one way the quality of the representation.

This does not happen in Hamlet's lines. In the soliloquy (second quotation) there is no reference to the merit of the players (Hamlet's advice to the actors is, as seen, a warning to Claudius and not a show of lack of faith in the first player), to the quality of the text or to the overall performance. In fact, Hamlet only mentions "the cunning of the scene". The Arden edition asserts that "cunning" is here being used in the sense of "art," which would be consistent with the meaning of the source of the passage³³. However, neither Hamlet's soliloquy nor his remarks to Horatio seem to warrant this. Much on the contrary, it seems

³¹ Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. VII, 1973. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 181.

³² *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

³³ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990, p. 272.

that its sole “artistic” advantage is its similarity with his father’s murder. Here’s Hamlet to Horatio, and Hamlet’s own, further elaboration thereof:

There is a play tonight before the King:
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death.
(*Hamlet*, III, ii, 75-77)

What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 554-560)

The first quotation is also characterized by the absence of references to the quality of the play, as Hamlet’s advice to Horatio underlines his main concern: the similarity with the plot. In the second quotation, “cue,” “the concluding word or words of a speech in a play, serving as a signal or direction to another actor to enter or begin his speech”³⁴, leads to the reaction of the other player as Hamlet ponders what would the first player do if he had Hamlet’s motive, if he were Hamlet. The player’s skill, his horrid speech, would allow him to “make mad the guilty” and “confound the ignorant” (II, ii, 558), meaning that those who know nothing about the crime are not able to make sense from the action on stage. The “horrid speech” would, certainly, be an artful one, but the difference between the subtlety of this reference and the way the source so often underlines the excellence of the performance should be noticed. Notwithstanding, this notion may not be solved without considering Dover Wilson’s keen analysis of Hamlet’s piece of advice to the main actor.

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to
you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it as
many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier
spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with
your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very
torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of

³⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VI, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance
 that may give it smoothness, O, it offends me
 to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow
 tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears
 of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable
 of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise.
 (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 1-12)

According to Dover Wilson, the first passage shows the actors that Hamlet was not thinking about Claudius, he was concerned with the lines he had given to the player and with the actor's ability to perform them adequately³⁵. The lines deal mainly, as Wilson contends, with the speech Hamlet directed to the players. But is Hamlet underlining the need for “a passion”? Or are Hamlet’s teachings on how to act properly mainly about the concern for restraint? “Passion” is mentioned as a characteristic in the art of representation (one which the actors cannot do without), and it is related with the already quoted “the cue for passion,” i.e., with the reasons that lead us to action. Nonetheless, what is being highlighted here is the necessity to suppress excessive emotional gestures (which ought to be countered, using the hand gently, for instance), affected modes of speech, and, most of all, endow every speech instead with “a temperance that may give it smoothness”. More importantly, what Dover Wilson considers to be Hamlet’s contempt for dumb shows is only disdain for those deemed “inexplicable”. And, if anything, there could be no doubt that this dumb show is far from leaving anything untold. That Hamlet even mentions dumb-shows should be proof both of his knowledge of their existence in general and of his use of the pantomime in this play in particular, as well as representative of his warning to Claudius.

Hamlet would, then, be using “cunning” in the sense of skill or, as the Oxford Shakespeare edition sustains, to the “skillful realism of the performance”³⁶. Additionally, it would equally make sense for Hamlet to use “cunning” in its earlier sense of “knowing”³⁷.

³⁵ Hamlet's words show that his inserted speech, which is of course now written, is to be one of “passion”, and “that the passion referred to is not love but anger or crime – the passion of the torrential, tempestuous, whirlwind species, which the Herods and the Termagants of the old plays had so grossly exaggerated”. Cf. Dover Wilson, *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

³⁶ Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. G. R. Hibbard, Oxford Shakespeare Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 235.

³⁷ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

This would mean “That guilty creatures sitting at a play \ Have, by the very” knowledge “of the scene, \ Been struck so to the soul that presently \ They have proclaim’d their malefactions.” (II, ii, 585-588). The comprehension of the performance could then be both applied to the act of watching the episode and learning its content, but also to the understanding that it duplicates the action of the murder. The “knowledge of the scene” could then indicate not only the player-speech, but also the dumb show. The main purpose of the play-within-the-play is to build a mousetrap, not to create a work of art.

Previous pages described procedures for discovering proof about a suspect’s culpability. It was seen how, in order to produce evidence, a group of thorough techniques with the purpose of pressuring the subject must be performed. Although the precise nature of the accusation may take time to be revealed, it was seen how it is required for the suspect to know he is being accused. It was equally exposed how to prepare the suspect for the evaluation which follows is more effective than conducting a double test, and contended that Hamlet’s main purpose was not to surprise Claudius, but to make the King realize he knew the truth about the assassination. It should not be forgotten that the test has also the purpose of trying the Ghost’s words and that, although Hamlet has great expectations regarding the outcome of the examination, he also needs to discover the truth. It is now necessary to understand the nature of the proof originated by the test, as well as to comprehend its mode of assessment.

2. Evaluating the results

The inquiry about the supposedly public or private nature of the test must be described. In the modes of proof I have surveyed, experts analyze the test’s results, so it is necessary to inquire whether Hamlet wished to expose publicly the outcome of the test or, on the contrary, if he only wanted to evaluate the King’s guilt for himself. It should be considered that the results from this type of procedure are deemed to be clear and

unequivocal to the experts judging it (even if those observing the procedure, but without the necessary talent, are unable to comprehend what they are seeing). Horatio and Hamlet would, then, be skilled judges, whose virtues of character complement each other so as to produce a balanced and truthful verdict. In the already quoted source passage from Bullough, not only there was no one looking for the woman's reactions, but she also plainly confesses her crime (one may only guess that she does it during the climax of the play). The use of "presently" could indicate that Hamlet was equally intending for Claudius to publicly confess. Nevertheless, Hamlet does not seem to contemplate the possibility that that would happen to Claudius, and he prepares everything so that if a confession is visible in the King's facial expressions, he may be able to see it. Contrary to what has been argued, Hamlet does not seem to anticipate, or want, an outcome for all to see. His is not a public denunciation, but a private one, only to be detected by those closely observing Claudius (the skills of talented interpreters will be later discussed). Once more, Hamlet's conversation with Horatio gives us an explanation about his intentions:

I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
 Even with the very comment of thy soul
 Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt
 Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
 It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
 And my imaginations are as foul
 As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
 For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
 And after we will both our judgments join
 In censure of his seeming.
 (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 78-84)

Hamlet is here asking Horatio to let his soul (where passions and reasoning work in unison) observe his uncle. In this passage, he makes clear that he is not expecting everyone will see the reaction. On the contrary, knowing how careful Claudius is, Hamlet is rather looking for an almost unnoticeable small expression in the King's face. At the same time, conclusions to be taken from the experience will be the product of a comparison of judgments, and not the interpretation of a single observer.

As was seen, Hamlet and Horatio presume that a transformation took place in the

King's face, and it is now necessary to describe the nature of the emotions revealed. W. W. Lawrence criticizes the idea that the King endures the play without flinching and argues that Hamlet's remarks to Horatio, and the latter's replies, show that they observed something in the King's features: "I maintain that there is no valid evidence that Claudius is not affected, and deeply so. His motion, if he reveals it, is perceived only by Hamlet and Horatio, who are watching him, and not by the courtiers, who are intent on the stage"³⁸. Hamlet and Horatio do seem to compare judgments at the end of the play, both concluding that there was a transformation in the King's facial features. Although Lawrence's viewpoint is accurate, he fails to account for the nature of Claudius's emotion. Hamlet is determined to catch a subtle physiological reaction. In fact, the observation of the face requires experience and concentration and although Hamlet is well trained in the evaluation of others, not all are, however, equally skilled at discovering and concealing their natures.

The description of Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's inadequate attempts to discover Hamlet's intentions illustrates this point, as his conversation with his friends, in the third act of the play, shows his dislike of those attempting to sound him.

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you
make of me. You would play upon me, you would
seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the
heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my
lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is
much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet
cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I
am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what
instrument you will, though you fret me, you cannot
play upon me.

(*Hamlet*, III, ii, 354-363)

Hamlet sees his friends were brought by the King and Queen to find out what is the matter with him and resents the idea that they are putting their friendship to the King's disposition in order to determine the causes of his instability. To use Hamlet makes him "unworthy," not only because it means he is allowing others to take advantage of him, but also because Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are doing it with lack of skill. They are assuming

³⁸ W. W. Lawrence, "Hamlet and the Mouse-Trap," p. 720.

their friendship will naturally make him speak, which, as Hamlet points out, is an inefficient way of manipulating him. In fact, Hamlet is teaching a lesson to his friends (one they will unfortunately be unable to understand). When he asks Guildenstern to play the pipe, his friend replies: “But these cannot I command to any utterance of \ harmony. I have not the skill.” (III, ii, 352-353). Guildenstern comprehends that talent is necessary for an instrument to be played, but fails to see that a similar degree of expertise is required when we try to understand other persons’ thoughts or intentions. Hamlet’s lesson should have been clearer, stating not only the need for a specific skill, but describing the particular talents such technique would require. Thus, although both friends are able to make Hamlet speak, they cannot entirely comprehend him, as his words deliberately evade interpretation. Although they understand the type of skill required for one to play the pipe, they are unable to perceive the type of qualities which would make a good interpreter.

This discussion echoes Hamlet’s first encounter with his friends in the second act of Shakespeare’s play. However, earlier on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had found a polite Hamlet, both willing to exchange amiable words with them and to ask them frankly what their reason was for coming to Denmark. To this, after some pressure from Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern reply honestly, confirming the King had sent them. Hamlet acknowledges their sincerity and in the end of the conversation gives them a hint about what is happening with him:

You are welcome.
But my uncle-father and my aunt-mother are deceived. (...)
I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is
southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 371-375)

Thus, he tells them his was a conscious lunacy. Hamlet is only mad when the wind is not favorable to his predisposition (and one may assume this north-north-west wind is the one blowing in Claudius’s presence³⁹). On the contrary, when the wind is southerly, Hamlet

³⁹ In *Bleak House*, Dickens echoes this passage in his description of one of the novel’s main characters, John Jarndyce, an amiable man, prone to melancholia when the wind does not appear favorable, i.e. when people do

knows how to distinguish different entities, such as the hawk from the handsaw. At the same time, both the hawk and the handsaw have violent connotations, the hawk being a predatory bird and the handsaw a cutting tool. The Arden editors pointed out that handsaw could be a misprint or even a corruption of a traditional proverb, the original word being *hernshew*, a young heron, which would mean that although Hamlet seemed lunatic, he was still able to distinguish both birds. Yet, the sentence's meaning does not depend on the characteristics of the chosen kinds. At this point, Hamlet seemed willing to confide, even if ambiguously, that he is not crazy, but none of his friends understood him.

As a consequence, when the King and Queen ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern what is the reason for Hamlet's doings, they confess they do not know the causes of his distraction. More importantly, Guildenstern explains: "Nor do we find him forward to be sounded, \ But with a crafty madness keeps aloof \ When we would bring him on to some confession \ Of his true state." (III, I, 7-10). He understands Hamlet's madness is crafty and useful to keep them away, but he does not describe its craftiness as being intentional, nor fathoms its causes. Guildenstern only acknowledges Hamlet's lack of interest in confessing himself to them. It is meaningful that Guildenstern uses the word "sounded," which will be later employed by Hamlet to accuse them of trying to play him. Hamlet's later resentment towards his friends might be better understood if we consider how, upon their arrival, he had asked them to be plain with him, without deceiving the King. Hamlet's request underlined the importance of friendship:

But let me conjure you,
by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of
our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved
love, and by what more dear a better proposer
can charge you withal, be even and direct with me
whether you were sent for or no.
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 283-288)

Hamlet is depicting what they have in common, such as youth and a past, but he is

not react decently. In Jarndyce's case, other persons' follies make his mood swing, but as he does not like to acknowledge others' misdeeds, he just describes a change in the wind. Cf. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, 1853, introd. Doreen Roberts. London: Wordsworth Classics, 2001, p. 655.

also describing their rights and obligations, as if, at this point, he still hopes they will rise to the occasion. Even if Rosencrantz and Guildenstern comply this time, they fail to do so afterwards, and, in the fourth act, Hamlet's animosity towards both his friends has grown. He now accuses them plainly of not keeping others' secrets, as well as of being only officers (i.e., pawns) at the King's command. As Hamlet contends: "Do not believe it. \ (...) That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. \ Besides, to be demanded of a sponge – \ what replication should be made by the son of a king?" (IV, ii, 8-12). Those who can keep secrets are distinguished from those who are nothing but a sponge "that soaks up the King's countenance" (IV, ii, 14). It should be noted that the main function of a sponge is to rub dirty surfaces, or remove marks, which would here imply that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are taking off a stain, i.e. Hamlet, who is bothering the King. However, to be a sponge could also mean that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern absorb other persons' points of view, lacking ideas of their own. In reality, when someone holds and squeezes the sponge all that it had absorbed vanishes, leaving only a void structure. The best characterization of both friends appears during Hamlet's play, in the Player-King's lines:

*And hitherto doth love on fortune tend:
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try
Directly seasons him his enemy.*
(Hamlet, III, ii, 201-204)

Those who are not in need have plenty of friends, unlike those whose fortune failed and are only left with enemies (such as Hamlet). If those in distress call for the help of a hollow friend an enemy will stand before them, thus failing the test of friendship. The hollow friend, the sponge, would then be, unlike Horatio, the one oozing others' intentions, the one without a mind of his own.

This topic, as well as both friends' void personality, was delineated when they met Hamlet for the first time in the play. After being asked how they were, Rosencrantz replied "As the indifferent children of the earth" (II, ii, 227), while Guildenstern observed "Happy in

that we are not over-happy: on \ Fortune's cap we are not the very button" (II, ii, 228-229). In the first remark the adjective "indifferent" points to a regular life without too many aspirations, wishes or desires, whereas Guildenstern's comment describes Fortune's button, which, as the Arden edition contends, is at the top of the cap, its highest point. Yet, button may sound like bottom, which would underline the idea that they are neither on the top, nor at the bottom (they are common men). This double meaning of button would be supported by Hamlet's reply, "Nor the soles of her shoe" (II, ii, 230) which would mean, as was said, that they were not also at Fortune's feet. Moreover, Hamlet, well acquainted with them, asks: "Let me question more in particular. What have you, \ my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune \ that she sends you to prison hither?" (II, ii, 239-241). "Fortune" stands for Claudius, as he is the one who asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to inquire about Hamlet and is ultimately responsible for their change of behavior towards him. It should be noted, however, that Hamlet knows them well, which means that his anger both acknowledges and ignores the fact that if they are both hollow their character will reverberate eventually, even without the King's demands.

In fact, Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's friendship finds its opposite in the feeling that unites Hamlet to Horatio, as the metaphor of the pipe is equally applied to Horatio, but to prove how worthy he is of Hamlet, in a disavowal of the metaphor's tenor:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
 And could of men distinguish her election,
 Sh'ath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
 As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
 Whose blood and judgment so well commedded
 That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
 To sound what stop she please.
 (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 63-71)

In Dover Wilson's *What Happens in Hamlet*, this passage is analyzed. The author supposes that Hamlet is here admitting (pathetically, is the adjective used) "that he is himself

‘passion’s slave’, and ‘a pipe for Fortune’s finger’⁴⁰. Yet, this view ignores the fact that Hamlet is establishing a comparison between Horatio and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, a perspective underlined by the fact that he applies the same metaphor to both types of friends. The passage aims at portraying Horatio and the way his blood and judgment (his passions and his reasoning) are so well balanced that he is not subdued by Fortune’s wishes, which indicates Horatio is not an instrument to be played by others. Hamlet’s words hold two important perspectives: firstly, that he is a good evaluator of character and therefore knows how to distinguish those permeable to let themselves be transformed by worldly events (this is the faculty that leads Hamlet to identify Rosencrantz’s and Guildenstern’s motives) and secondly that a harmonious character will not be played by Fortune’s demands (Horatio being even steadier than Hamlet, who is, as himself claims and Dover Wilson notices, prone to melancholy).

It could be argued that Horatio, who is here being described as a virtuous character, also has something to conceal. Although he knows that the Ghost appeared, he did not say anything about it to the King, to whom he should now own his loyalty. He is also acquainted with Hamlet’s plan and, again, fails to report it to the King or to the Queen. This could point to an ambiguity in Horatio’s character or, at least, to the fact that, just like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he, too, is disguising something. Yet, the play distinguishes Horatio and the other characters, as his dedication is unequivocally to Hamlet. For instance, when Hamlet tells Horatio about his plan, he replies: “If a steal aught the whilst this play is playing \ And scape detecting, I will pay the theft” (III, ii, 88-89). Even if Horatio is committing treason to the King while helping Hamlet, he describes his allegiance as belonging to Hamlet: if anything escapes recognition he will pay treason to Hamlet and not the other way round. Moreover, Horatio’s deception is found to be just and virtuous once the authenticity of the Ghost is proved and his words reveal the truth. Finally, no one ever questions Horatio about such matters, which suggests that he is never duplicitous, unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

⁴⁰ Dover Wilson, *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

The comparison between the body and a flute, or a pipe, is important: the body is described as a hollow instrument with an exterior which, in Hamlet's case, protects his secrets from being revealed, as Hamlet is too wise to let others understand the complexities of his character. Each body contains a soul (responsible for Hamlet's feelings, his intelligence and for his unwillingness to be played by others). But when the body\instrument is described as shallow, there is the danger that it may be filled with someone else's intentions (this is what happens with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern). But even though Hamlet's friends are trying to discover his plan, roles will be reversed and it is Hamlet who will probe them. Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's purposes are easily revealed, and one could perhaps argue that shallow instruments, permeable to others' ideas and suggestions, lack the strong exterior which would protect them from untimely disclosure. The play seems to establish a difference between difficult subjects to sound (such as Claudius and Hamlet, who have to conceal things and try harder to veil their interior); those who have nothing to hide, such as Horatio; and sponges, which absorb everything and cannot help spilling their true nature.

Hamlet is, therefore, a good observer of physical features, and his evaluation of character through his expressions is not limited to Claudius. This is made clear when he discovers Guildenstern's and Rosencrantz's motives for coming to Denmark through an analysis of their looks: "You were sent for, and \ there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your \ modesties have not craft enough to colour." (II, ii, 278-280). Hamlet knows how intentions may be made public in the face, and the difference between his friends and Claudius is that they are not good at hiding them. Claudius is, however, a different matter, as the King is used to exercise concealment, as to the manner born.

An important requisite for a truth test to be performed is the existence of those able to assess the procedures. It was seen how Hamlet considered Horatio a good judge, due to the fact that he proved to be reliable and constant. It may now be understood how Hamlet, even if lacking Horatio's equanimity, may be deemed an adequate judge. Not only has he privileged access to information (he heard the testimony of a valuable witness), he is also a good observer of other's features, which makes him a good interpreter.

Recent analyses, such as Paul Ekman's, seek to develop the study, initiated, among others, by the criminologist Cesare Lombroso, in *L'Uomo Delinquente* (1876), about how the suspect's features provide evidence about his culpability. In books such as *Telling Lies*⁴¹ and *Unmasking the Face* Ekman upholds the idea that one may be able to learn to detect the truth in the face and distinguish seven types of emotions with proper training (according to his website, the basics may be learned in an hour by a keen observer⁴²). According to the author, emotions are universal and when someone is trying to conceal or to repress them, a micro facial expression unconsciously appears. The transformation in the face is temporary and the observer has to rely in "rapid facial signals". Although it lasts only for 1/15 to 1/25 of a second, it may nevertheless be perceived. Ekman claims that:

Even the more usual macro-expressions frequently last only a few seconds. It is rare for a facial expression of emotion to last as long as ten or five seconds. If it does the feeling must be intense, so intense that the feeling is likely to be simultaneously shown in the voice through a cry, laugh, roar, or in words. Even if you are not looking at a person's face, you would be likely not to miss these intense emotions, because you would hear them⁴³.

Wouldn't Hamlet prefer to trigger an intense feeling as opposed to a macro expression that would only last for some seconds? To induce a strong emotion, one the King would be unable to restrain, it was necessary for Hamlet to generate a feeling visible both to him and to Horatio (there is, as told, no indication in the play suggesting that Horatio was as good an observer as Hamlet). The fact that a strong emotion seemed to emerge, and that the King was unable to suppress it, is clear not only by the fact that he gets up from his seat, but also from his confession afterwards.

I would argue, in favor of the second tooth theory, that Claudius could not have been

⁴¹ Paul Ekman, *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics and Marriage*, 1985. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. Paul Ekman avowedly draws on Darwin's idea that facial expressions are universal, but attempts to understand better the nature of deception in emotional expressions (a subject Darwin did not discussed at length in his classical book on the subject). See: Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1890, ed. Francis Darwin. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

⁴² Paul Ekman, "Interactive Training by Dr. Paul Ekman", F.A.C.E. training, accessed 11 September 2010, <http://face.paulekman.com/default.aspx>.

⁴³ Paul Ekman, Wallace V. Friesen, *Unmasking the Face – A Guide to Recognizing Emotions from Facial Expressions*. Malor Books, 2003, [kindle edition], loc. 291.

surprised at *The Mouse Trap*. Before I proceed, let me delineate what Claudius's face would look like if he were surprised. According to Ekman, when surprised, especially if the person startles, one's eyebrows are lifted (they appear curved and high), the eyes are opened wide and the jaw drops. The (other) problem with those who reject the second tooth theory is the fact that they ignore that surprise is "the briefest emotion" and that it never remains in the face for long. Dover Wilson (after reading Ekman) might well argue that the emotion would be brief, but that it could be perceived by someone intently observing Claudius's face, or even that, although surprise shows but for a brief moment, it is often followed by another emotion, which stays in the face for a longer period of time (in which case the face would show a fading of surprise into the subsequent emotion). But would someone, like Horatio, who does not make a living out of facial analyses, or who is not intuitive like Hamlet, be able to see such a quick transformation (an expression which would last, as was mentioned, for 1/15 to 1/25 of a second)? Probably not. More importantly, is there any indication in the text about what Claudius was feeling? Guildenstern's comments after the play point us the right direction:

Guildenstern: The King, sir (...) \ Is in his retirement marvelous distempered.

Hamlet: With drink sir?

Guildenstern: No, my lord, with choler.

(*Hamlet*, III, ii, 291-295)

So, Claudius was choleric and both Hamlet and Horatio's comments after the play and Guildenstern's declarations seem to prove that he was not disguising it. What does this mean in terms of physiological expressions? According to Ekman: "Blood pressure increases, the face may redden, the veins on the forehead and neck may become more apparent. Breathing changes, the body may become more erect, the muscles tense, and there might be a movement forward toward the offender"⁴⁴. These reactions would be unintentional and they would probably not be perceived even by Claudius himself, whose main concern would be the play's untimely disclosure. Apart from changes in bodily behavior, transformations must occur in three distinct facial areas during anger. If not, the feeling becomes unclear and open

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, loc. 1060.

to interpretation (this is not the case with Claudius, as Guildenstern remarks make clear).

Anger is unambiguous when one displays the following signs:

The brows are lowered and drawn together: vertical lines appear between the brows: the lower lid is tense and may or may not be raised; the upper lid is tensed and may or may not be lowered by the action of the brow; the eyes have a hard stare and may have a bulging appearance; the lips are in either of two basic positions: pressed firmly together, with the corners straight or down, or open, tensed in a squarish shape as if shouting; the nostrils may be dilated⁴⁵.

Hamlet and Horatio could easily perceive all of these expressions. It is also known that extreme anger (choler) intensifies these facial expressions. Furthermore: “in intense anger or rage, it may be impossible to stand still, the impulse to strike may be so very great”⁴⁶. This is the keystone for the interpretation of the episode. The King was not, as Greg and Wilson sustain, waiting for the adequate moment to rise, and he did not, as Greg claims, endure the poisoner’s scene.

Let me sum up the episode: Lucianus enters, Hamlet explains he is the King’s nephew and Ophelia notices that Hamlet knows the play so well he is “as good as chorus” (III, ii, 240). Hamlet’s remarks during the play have the practical theatrical purposes of intensifying the dramatic action and of building suspense. It is not only important for the King to understand what is taking place, but also to fear he will be discovered before everyone. This is the fear that will make him act. The King, of course, who at this point already suspects of what is to come, understands the comments as menaces, designed to make him lose his temper. In fact, a little bit earlier, the King asked “Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence \ in’t?” (III, ii, 227-228), which could have two interpretations. Either it shows concern on the part of the King, as he was already affected by Hamlet’s test, or it would represent an attempt made by the King to maintain his poker face, to disguise his emotions and to show Hamlet that he was unshaken by the play. From this perspective, even if Hamlet was not defrauded, Claudius was able to mislead later critics.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, loc. 1189.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, loc. 1062.

Continuing with the episode's description, before Lucianus gives his lines, Hamlet's main, if oblique, menace to the King is proclaimed: "Begin, murderer. \ Leave thy damnable faces and begin" (III, ii, 246-247). An assassin possesses several faces (the line is a prelude to the analysis, which will follow, of *Macbeth*), but while murder is committed the masks fall and his true self is revealed. Lucianus finally says the first lines, "*Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing*" (...) "*Pours the poison in the sleeper's ears*" (III, ii, 249-254). Hamlet acts as chorus to the action, explaining how the King was poisoned in the "garden for his estate," naming Gonzago (which confirms the theory that only the King was supposed to understand that the plot was for him to hear), and claiming that the murderer will now get the love of Gonzago's wife. At this point, Ophelia notices the King rising. Observe how, if Hamlet's intention is that of frightening the King, and if the play is to be heard, i.e. understood, by Claudius alone, it then seems that Hamlet is attacking his uncle in a similar, if figural, manner to that of his father's murder: poisoning Claudius's ears with the fear of what is to come.

What could be more contrary to the theory that Claudius is unaffected by the scene of the poisoner, if the King rises immediately after it takes place, unable to control himself, in intense rage? This is in complete agreement with the notion that, unlike what so many wish us to believe, Hamlet did not intend to surprise Claudius. On the contrary, Hamlet aimed to provoke a lasting emotion, ending with an explosion that would not briefly fade, as surprise would. The double test is used as a warning, as a way to build tension so that, when the King is unmasked, the transformation in his features is flagrant and impossible to control. His guilty conscience, as the confession proves, is unable to withstand the onslaught. Hamlet's test succeeds in producing a reaction in the King and for Hamlet and Horatio the meaning of the alteration is unequivocal. The reason why others are unable to make sense of Claudius's transformation and consider that he was offended by Hamlet's behavior is due to two factors: they don't know that King Hamlet was murdered; and the Prince did not want the result of his test to be public.

Ekman's perspective is helpful when one wants to accurately read the play, but it

should be mentioned that the play's criticism also helps to discuss this author's viewpoint. There is no doubt in *Hamlet* concerning Claudius's anger, given that the nature of his emotion was properly identified by more than one character in the play. Generations of critics have, however, disagreed about the motives for the King's wrath. In fact, dissent on the reasons for a certain emotion is common and represents a concern for the lie catcher, as portrayed in Ekman's chapter on dangers and precautions. In *Telling Lies*, the author portrays two types of common mistakes when one is attempting to catch a liar. The first is "disbelieving-the-truth," as Ekman calls it, which consists in interpreting the bodily and facial reactions of an innocent person and assuming they are signs of deceit instead of, for instance, indications of fear of wrongful punishment. The second is "believing-a-lie," which may happen with natural liars, psychopaths, or with those who believe their own lies, as in these cases modifications in bodily behavior may not appear. Ekman's research allows us to comprehend and to systematize types of emotions, to distinguish visible sentiments from those someone is trying to conceal, but the reasons for veiling the face are harder to explain. At the same time, preconceptions about someone, a certain context, absence of signs of deceit in persons who do not leak, or signs of emotion in anxious, but innocent, individuals are just some of the problems which may appear in this type of analysis.

How, then, may we be sure that Hamlet's test really did work and that its outcome was unequivocal? Unlike Hamlet's assumption, his mode of proof is subject to interpretation. He knew Claudius well, so he was able to observe transformations in his pitch of the voice, bodily behavior, "manipulators" (the way someone unconsciously twists the ring on his or her hand, or plays with the hair), or "illustrators" (such as gestures used during speech). These are characteristics that may only be accurately explained when one knows the person and is acquainted with their usual public behavior. At the same time, the information the Ghost had given was correct (it will later be seen that this is not always the case), which means that Hamlet had a valuable witness. Also, Claudius's confession paraded his guilt. This means that Hamlet conducted more than one test and that he had at his disposal more than a single clue, as well as Horatio as co-juror.

It is now possible to consider that the test has given Hamlet, as well as readers of the play, the possibility to know Claudius. Could we say the same about Hamlet? When the Prince gives the King the title of the play-within the play, he says the following: “’Tis a knavish piece of work, but what o’ that? \ Your Majesty and we that have free souls, it touches \ us not.” (III, ii, 235-237). The ironic remark, another gambit in this game of chess, implies that the play only touches those with a sinful soul, and that Hamlet considers Claudius sufficiently honest not to be troubled by it. In this unusual praise, his stepfather would find more reasons to be suspicious. Still, the observation points to a similarity between Hamlet and Claudius that was mentioned before: their souls are equal, not because they are free, but for the opposite reason. Both of them have souls possessing ulterior motives, and both are moved by the play, even if for different reasons. Hamlet, because he was finally able to prove to himself the Ghost’s words are true, and Claudius because he now knows he was discovered.

3. Difficult subjects to sound

Claudius has been portrayed as a secretive character, but what to say of Hamlet? In his case, such claim might seem counter-intuitive, as the Prince speaks incessantly during the play. Yet, language is for Hamlet a way to conceal intentions. His puns and riddles, his constant mocking, are a way to provoke others, to make them think about his hidden agenda, to make them doubt his sanity. Hamlet never stops talking and yet is a taciturn, secretive creature, whose true state of mind is not even known through his soliloquies, as so many contradictory critical perspectives have shown.

Hamlet’s inaccessibility to all, be they characters in the play, the audience in the theatre or literary critics, has to do with this queer impossibility of getting to know him. Even if the excess of language could sometimes make us think otherwise. I will describe the way other characters try to comprehend Hamlet, which is why an analysis of the soliloquies will not

take place, but Harold Bloom's perspective on the subject will be briefly portrayed, as it helps to establish a difference between what was considered to be Rosencrantz's and Guildenstern's lack of mind, and what Bloom describes as Hamlet's excess of consciousness.

It seems that, without portraying Hamlet's play-within-the-play in detail, Bloom reproduces both Claudius's and Hamlet's experiments to enter each other's minds through the attempt to externalize what is supposedly hidden in the recesses of the brain. For Bloom, "the play is Shakespeare's longest because Hamlet speaks so much of it"⁴⁷, which is accurate. Bloom advocates that the monologues are a window into Hamlet's mind, contending that, in them, Shakespeare invented the human through the description of the internalization of the self (the monologues exteriorize what was previously hidden, unsaid, uncharacterized). In his essay, Bloom is depicting Hamlet's inner conscience, relating it to the growth of a (now) global self-awareness and claiming "that Hamlet is Shakespeare's own consciousness"⁴⁸. Bloom seems to be replicating Hamlet's test to Claudius, with the difference that instead of describing physical expressions, he is portraying the monologues as an expression of the mind. Hamlet's analysis of facial expressions finds, therefore, its correlative in Bloom's thesis about inferential reasoning. Consider the following quotation:

Hamlet's freedom can be defined as *the freedom to infer*, and we learn this intellectual liberty by attending to Hamlet. Inference in Hamlet's praxis is a sublime mode of surmise, metaphoric because it leaps ahead with every change and circumstance, and inference becomes the audience's way into Hamlet's consciousness⁴⁹.

Hamlet's capacity to reason, to ponder contradictory arguments and discuss them with other characters and with himself, to continually change perspective, to resume a previous conjecture, is, as Bloom makes clear, probably his most relevant characteristic. But does it lead to knowledge? Does it allow us access into Hamlet's mind? It probably does, but in the same way that Hamlet is able to describe Claudius's mental space: through the observation of his features. In Hamlet, a keen interpreter may always externalize hidden thoughts and,

⁴⁷ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare – The Invention of the Human*. London: Fourth Estate, 1999, p. 423.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 407.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 419.

ultimately, interpretation derives from the analysis of public contents, whether they are facial expressions or modes of thought. However, Bloom's complex theory is only a justification for the continuous misapprehension of the play. He is here describing his own (and our) inefficacy to read Hamlet and legitimizing that impossibility with the idea that the play is metaphoric, a metamorphic mode of surmise leaping with every change and circumstance. Thus, although we understand with Hamlet how to reflect and access his conscience when we learn to infer, inference leaps ahead, leaving us with a play of contraries:

But that is typical of Hamlet's consciousness, for the prince has a mind so powerful that the most contrary attitudes, values, and judgments can coexist within it coherently, so coherently indeed that Hamlet nearly has become all things to all men, and to some women⁵⁰.

Hamlet's antithetical positions are thought-provoking, they contemplate everything, divergent points of view, which is why they speak to everyone. While Claudius's guilt makes him an unambiguous character (and easily interpreted, too, after the test takes place, Kittredge's flattering view of the character notwithstanding), Hamlet's monologues add enigma to the character. From this perspective, there is no test to Hamlet's mind.

This proof that there is no proof, the idea that "Shakespeare created him to be as ambivalent and divided a consciousness as a coherent drama could sustain"⁵¹ becomes the motto for Bloom's acceptance of Peter Alexander's idea that Shakespeare himself wrote the *Ur-Hamlet*, when his work as a dramatist was starting, and never stopped rewriting it. This would mean that a first version of the play would be very close to Belleforest's *Amleth*, but that it was later revised, as "Inwardness in Shakespeare's plays does not assume its characteristic strength before the comic triumph of Falstaff"⁵². The play would, then, be the description, developed over time, of a "growing inner self," which admits no ultimate explanations. As Bloom contends, "It is very difficult to generalize about Hamlet, because

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 402.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 387.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, p. 400.

every observation will have to admit its opposite”⁵³, or:

There is no ‘real’ Hamlet as there is no ‘real’ Shakespeare: the character, like the writer, is a reflecting pool, a spacious mirror in which we needs must see ourselves. Permit this dramatist a concourse of contraries, and he will show us everybody and nobody, all at once⁵⁴.

Hamlet’s and Shakespeare’s inaccessibility is the reason why we fail to describe them, as a mind made of contradictions allows more than one interpretation. Unlike Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whose mind is transparently filled with other person’s intentions, which makes them easily explainable, Hamlet’s reasoning is a “dance of contraries” (“everything and nothing” in Keats’ description, which Bloom distortingly echoes in the quoted excerpt). In a certain sense, Bloom is writing an essay about the impossibility of explaining the play (even if he is able to learn with Hamlet and conjecture about what could be its true sources). Few passages are quoted (only two monologues and some lines), and instead of being analyzed they are used to exemplify Hamlet’s personality and his singular use of language, that mode of freedom to infer. This lack of a detailed examination could be sustained by the argument of the essay; such analysis only shows a spacious mirror.

But Bloom does say that in a mirror (whether spacious or not) we see ourselves. And ultimately this is why Hamlet is a taciturn character. An analysis, which Bloom fails to do, of how the diverse characters in the play understand the Prince helps to prove the idea that Hamlet is a spacious mirror, since while seeking an explanation, they somehow project themselves into what they fear or wish is happening to Hamlet. Dover Wilson accurately sustained three explanations for Hamlet’s madness⁵⁵. The author describes Polonius’s theory about how Ophelia rejected Hamlet, which led to his madness. He notices how Hamlet may have heard the King and Polonius demonstrate their plan to Ophelia, which would clarify Hamlet’s animosity towards her during the rest of the play. Secondly, Dover Wilson

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 409.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 401.

⁵⁵ Cf. Chapter IV, “Antic Disposition”, in Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 1935. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

characterizes the industrious King's "thwarted ambition," sustaining that Claudius, being a usurper, would naturally be attentive to the crown's rightful successor. Lastly, the Queen's account is depicted, and it is explained that she considers that Hamlet's melancholy is due to "His father's death and our o'er-hasty marriage" (II, ii, 57). Notice how both the King's and the Queen's ideas about what is happening to Hamlet are intimately related with their own actions and personalities. But Dover Wilson's point of view fails to mention how Ophelia's and Polonius's theories about Hamlet's behavior are so intimately connected with their own desires and fears.

For instance, Ophelia ponders her own love, she is afraid of the effects her refusals may have had on Hamlet's temperament. So, when Polonius asks her if Hamlet is "mad of love," she replies: "My lord, I do not know, \ But truly I do fear it." (II, I, 85-86). That Ophelia is here projecting her worst fears about what would happen to a spurned lover will be made clear when madness takes over her even if, as will be later seen, she had been the only one to accurately portray Hamlet's concerns.

Polonius, like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, proves to be a bad interpreter of Hamlet's words, analyzing all his remarks as if they proved his previously formed theory. For example, when he is speaking with Hamlet, who is clearly insulting him when calling him a fishmonger, Polonius remarks, "How say you by that? Still harping on my \ daughter" (II, ii, 187-188). And he continues to project his own experience into the affair when he comments: "A is far gone. And truly in my youth I \ suffered much extremity for love, very near this." (II, ii, 189-190). The recognition of young Polonius' love affairs in Hamlet's figure is stronger than any attempt at accuracy.

And yet, it should be remembered how, at this time, the use of Hamlet as a mirror shows an untidy reflection, as his physical appearance alters substantially through the play. Do Hamlet's looks add to the interpretative confusion of the other characters or, as in the theater play, they aid in the grasping of his motives despite his will? In other words, does, in this case, the exterior translate someone's inner self? If, in the beginning of the play, before Hamlet sees the Ghost, the only alteration in him is the fact that he insists on using mourning

clothes (as the Queen's remark makes clear: "cast thy nighted colour off," [I, ii, 68]), soon other modifications appear. As the King declares to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

Something have you heard
of Hamlet's transformation – so I call it,
Sith nor th'exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was.
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 4-7)

The exterior is taken to be a prolongation of Hamlet's interior and both point to an unexplainable transfiguration. The exterior is related with his appearance, with his looks. The "inward man" suggests an alteration in Hamlet's temperament, but one that is very likely related with the alternation between a melancholic character and his histrionic behavior. But if this is so, what difference is there between the exterior and the interior? Aren't these all marks of external behavior? In the following lines, Dover Wilson considers that Polonius is diagnosing Hamlet's medical history:

Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves
And we all mourn for.
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 147-151)

For the author, Polonius is describing different phases of a disorder known by all who observe Hamlet. Quoting Dover Wilson's words: "dejection, distaste for food, insomnia, crazy behaviour, fits of delirium, and finally raving madness"⁵⁶. Wilson claims: "the symptoms that Polonius records are all mental"⁵⁷. Interestingly, he seems to be following closely the King's (and Bloom's) remarks and accepting the difference he postulates between interior and exterior. However, aren't a fast, insomnia, or even manifestations of madness, public actions? What is there in Hamlet's "antic disposition" that may not be observed by all? It seems that both the King and Dover Wilson are saying that a public, but unexplainable, behavior should

⁵⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p. 211.

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

be considered interior. The interiority derives from the fact that others may not describe it, given its secretive nature. But even if Polonius cannot explain the transformation, he is able to describe Hamlet's melancholy in detail.

Ophelia, as stated before, misunderstands Hamlet's words, despite the fact that her description of his looks is the most accurate in the play:

Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell.
To speak of horrors,
(*Hamlet*, II, I, 81-84)

Here is the theory we were looking for and failed to acknowledge, for Ophelia's remarks describe not only Hamlet's looks, but also the reflection of his own father in his figure. In Hamlet's features, Ophelia describes King Hamlet, temporarily freed from Hell to speak about his own murder. That Polonius ignored her intuition and that she was unaware of the context that would allow her to interpret it correctly, could reside part of the tragedy. Only Horatio and Hamlet could understand Ophelia's remarks, as they mime the conversation between both friends, at the time Horatio depicted his encounter with the Ghost:

Hamlet: Then saw you not his face?
Horatio: O yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up.
Hamlet: What look'd he, frowningly?
Horatio: A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Hamlet: Pale, or red?
Horatio: Nay, very pale.
Hamlet: And fix'd his eyes upon you?
Horatio: Most constantly.
(*Hamlet*, I, ii, 228-235)

This would be the interpretative key for Ophelia's observation. The Ghost's face was, like Hamlet's, "very pale" and he had his eyes fixed upon Horatio, just like Hamlet, miming his father's behavior, laid his eyes upon Ophelia. Hamlet's "piteous looks" exposed a sore mind in his distorted figure, but also his sadness, just like the Ghost's, with a face showing more sorrow than anger. If Hamlet's behavior is reproducing his father's, then he too wished

to speak about the horrors that had taken place. However, the Ghost could not say anything to Horatio as Hamlet was also unable to speak with Ophelia.

Hamlet's paleness also replicates Horatio's, when he saw the Ghost for the first time: "How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale" (I, I, 56). And Ophelia's reaction to Hamlet's piteous looks seems to equal Barnardo's and Marcellus's response after seeing the Ghost. They had "Almost to jelly with the act of fear, \ Stand dumb and speak not to him." (I, ii, 205-206)," and Ophelia seems to quietly let Hamlet survey her looks ("As a would draw it," II, I, 91), not speaking with him and doing nothing else. Hamlet's exterior seems to give the reader an explanation about what is happening with him: his looks help to reinforce the vision of the Ghost, when they underline the paleness that derives from it and show that what could have been considered sadness after the death of his father may not now be explained.

It was an impossibility for Ophelia to know that Hamlet's paleness was due to his own encounter with the Ghost and although her intuition was accurate and led her in the right direction, she could not guess King Hamlet had returned, nor understand the horrors in need of being spoken (this is a case, which will be taken up later, of how being able to describe a situation is not necessarily understanding it). So, when her father asks if Hamlet's madness could be a result of unrequited love, Ophelia acquiesces, giving the only explanation that makes sense to her. As happened with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the impossibility of describing Hamlet's actions is a result of Hamlet's puzzling remarks, a difficult context to be explained, but also of some incapacity on the interpreters' part to realize that they are unable to distinguish their own lives from Hamlet's intentions.

These characters' inability to understand Hamlet, and the way they project their own sentiments onto him, seems to follow Bloom's idea that Hamlet is a mirror where everything may be reflected. However, readers of the play will, in the end, understand how each of these characters' interpretations is wrong. From this perspective, the monologues are indeed a doorway to Hamlet's mind, as they will presumably allow us to understand him. There is, as seen, a difference between Hamlet's test to Claudius and what happens to the rest of us, the readers of the play. Hamlet's skillful test leads him to an unequivocal explanation of

Claudius's guilt, as the observation of his face provides him with clear signs, corroborated by Horatio, of Claudius's guilt, even though, as said, his monologues do not yield a (clear) incontestable explanation for Hamlet's character. If each character's projection of Hamlet tells us something about him or herself, it would be interesting to ask whether the same happens in the literary criticism of the play. If it were so, Bloom's essay would be the mirror of his own soul, aiming to understand not only Hamlet, but Shakespeare himself, an illusion of knowledge, even if it is a knowledge made of contradictions.

4. Avoiding a tribunal

As Hamlet's test seems to have proved, it is possible to gain access to the secrets of other persons against their will. Hence, *The Murder of Gonzago* seems to be the interpretative key allowing Hamlet a right of entry into the King's guilt. If Hamlet's exercise epitomizes an attempt to determine what someone is trying to conceal through the observation of his external behavior, in *Macbeth* the opposite is being represented, as we have the possibility of knowing what "criminals" experience, as well as the labors they go through in order to hide the symptoms of their deceit.

The tragedy is prompted by the witches' encounter with Macbeth, and their enunciation of the prophecy that will trigger his actions. The witches hail Macbeth as "Thane of Glamis," which he is, "Thane of Cawdor," which he will become, and finally, "King hereafter". When the King promotes him to Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth assumes the prophecy may be relied upon, thus deciding that instead of waiting for the third prophecy to be fulfilled, he may act upon it, murder the King, and remain in power. The play portrays the

tacit agreement of a married couple towards the decision to commit murder, and their attempt to survive through what becomes a complex crisis. The motto for *Macbeth* becomes known in *Hamlet*, during the play-within-the-play, before the King is poisoned:

*Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
 Confederate season, else no creature seeing,
 Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
 With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
 Thy natural magic and dire property
 On wholesome life usurps immediately.*
 (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 249-254)

The main themes of the play are represented in these lines. Black thoughts that lead to murder, hands that must do the deed which the eye does not wish to see, time agreeing to assassination and then being disrupted by it, Hecate, goddess of the magic arts, represented as having three bodies (i.e., *Macbeth's* three witches) and, finally, the usurpation of the throne, wholesome life which, in the case of the Scottish tragedy, represents Duncan. In *Hamlet*, thoughts and hands working together point to the commitment of a unified self towards assassination. This is not the case in *Macbeth*, where there appears to be a distinction between the body, related with the will to murder ("I am settled, and bend up \ Each corporal agent to this terrible feat" (I, vii, 80-81), and conscience ("But in these cases, \ We still have judgment here;" [I, vii, 7-8])⁵⁸. Yet, in their analyses of *Macbeth*, critics use expressions such as "true self," "inner self," "inner being" or "divided selves," to portray the discrepancy between Macbeth's nature and his actions, as well as the difference between him and other characters in the tragedy.

The play seems to probe the relationship between mind and body. In a celebrated essay, A. C. Bradley grants importance to this aspect, when he describes Macbeth as a "bold ambitious man of action," which has, "within certain limits, the imagination of a poet"⁵⁹. While the body would be responsible for Macbeth's deeds (a depiction that includes both his

⁵⁸ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, 1951. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001. Quotations follow this edition.

⁵⁹ A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy - Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, 1957. London: Macmillan and Co, 1971, p. 295.

courageous nature in war and the King's assassination), the sensitiveness of some impressions, as well as Macbeth's supernatural fears, would be a result of imagination.

His imagination is thus the best of him, something usually deeper and higher than his conscious thoughts; and if he had obeyed it he would have been safe. (...) The terrifying images which deter him from crime and follow its commission, and which are really the protest of his deepest self, seem to his wife the creations of mere nervous fear, and are sometimes referred by himself to the dread of vengeance or the restlessness of insecurity⁶⁰.

Macbeth's imagination seems to be the portrait of a submerged inner self, capable of sending signals to the host subject so that he could, if listening attentively, be driven to the right direction, thus avoiding the crime. The problem is that both Macbeth and his wife understand these signals as indications of nervous anxiety and they try to ignore, hide or overcome them. At the same time, while Lady Macbeth's greatness resides in "courage and force of will"⁶¹, she lacks her husband's imagination, which prevents her from anticipating the effect their actions will have. Macbeth's terrible images, "productive of violent disturbance both of mind and body"⁶², differ from his conscious thoughts and are considered to be the revelation of his deepest self. According to Bradley: "His conscious or reflective mind, that is, moves chiefly among considerations of outward success and failure, while his inner being is convulsed by conscience"⁶³.

In this description, the deepest self, a synonym expression of both inner self and consciousness, is accountable for terrible fears which are projected into the imagination, and which may be found both in the mind and in the body. The mind, however, is the reflective being, moved by ambition and the fear of failure, which is ultimately responsible for Macbeth's actions. And yet: "The consciousness of guilt is stronger in him than the consciousness of failure, and it keeps him in a perpetual agony of restlessness, and forbids

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 295.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

⁶² *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁶³ *Op. cit.*, p. 295.

him simply to droop and pine. His mind is full of scorpions”⁶⁴. So, we have both a consciousness of guilt (the inner self?) and a consciousness of failure (the reflective mind?), the consequence of the first being a mind full of scorpions, such as sleeplessness and hallucinations. To this account, the idea of powerful, veiled forces, is added:

Shakespeare has concentrated attention on the obscurer regions of man’s being, on phenomena which make it seem that he is in the power of secret forces lurking below (...) the writing on his face of strange things he never meant to show⁶⁵.

The author is alluding to passages in the play where there is a difference between inner feelings visible in the face and someone’s wish to hide them (a possible example would be: “False face must hide what the false heart doth know,” [I, vii, 83]). Apart from an imaginative self and a reflective mind, Macbeth is possessed by these “hidden forces operating on minds unconscious of their influence”⁶⁶, i. e., the witches’ power, a “presence of inchoate evil in the soul itself”⁶⁷, described as terrifying. Therefore, in *Macbeth* we have an inner self, a conscious mind and hidden forces. The “location” of the hidden forces is unclear, but they seem to be linked to the self’s conscious mind. The witches’ prophecies represent “the union of the outward and inward,” where the “inward powers of the soul answer in their essence to vaster powers without, which support them and assure the effect of their exertion”⁶⁸.

At this point, the whole representation seems unclear, as Macbeth’s inner self and conscious mind are linked to the interior powers of the soul and the outward faculties of the witches, an account in which the various parts of Macbeth’s body, mind, consciousness and soul seem to be intertwined. The reason why A. C. Bradley’s depiction of Macbeth uses so many different terms to sketch the relationship between his character and his actions is due to the fact that he describes his nature by dividing it into fragments, such as imagination, body, hidden forces, etc., each responsible for a certain state of affairs. I would claim that in

⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 301.

⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 282.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 284.

⁶⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 291.

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 292.

Macbeth's case there is, as the play makes clear, an innocent self, but not a sole inner self.

In fact, Lady Macbeth's concerns point to what could be considered an important particularity of some modes of proof. Persons are described as if they possess two selves, to whom I will call, for clarity of exposition, the true self and the false self. Unlike, say, Bradley's description, the designation true/false corresponds in this case to the relationship between each person's intentions and their bodily reactions. Therefore, the untrue self makes us capable of deceit and of attempting to hide it, whereas the true self, due to guilt, attempts to show, through physical reactions, what the untrue wishes to hide. The true self manifests itself through visible bodily proof, such as perspiration, insomnia, nervousness, etc., and may be considered the body's reaction to the mischief of the former.

There are two points of interest in this description: firstly, the two selves coexist simultaneously, even if not peacefully, each attempting to deceive the other. Secondly, the fact that although body and mind act in unison in the case of the true self (both wish to say the truth and show it using the body), the same does not happen with the untrue self, since the mind has problems controlling the body (an extra effort of will is necessary to be in charge of bodily signs). This is not the classic representation of an interior world, one where the mind commands and the body obeys, but one where the untrue self is attempting to conceal something the couple body/mind reveals. The disparity between mind and body does not exist in the case of the true self, since consciousness seems to be directly linked to bodily signs, the public evidence of one's acts. It should be noted that this description does not differ from the traditional image of a person possessing a devil and angel arguing with each other, each attempting to win an (im)moral victory over the other. The specificity of the case presented relies on the fact that the battle is not as balanced as one might, at first, assume, since the angel, or the true self, has at his disposal a group of bodily signs ready to intervene when necessary, which the devil has to conceal.

In *Macbeth's* conceptualization of the relationship between people's faces and their inner feelings, those who are easy to read are differentiated from those who are not. The presupposition seems to be that virtuous persons naturally reveal their emotions, whereas an

evil character has to make an effort to conceal his or her hidden intentions. This correspondence between faces and thoughts takes place, for example, when the Thane of Rosse arrives, and Lenox claims: “What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look / That seems to speak things strange” (I, ii, 47-48). Not only Rosse’s eyes, which represent the weird events he has seen, are easy to read, as it is considered that there is a proper way for eyes to look like at the moment of describing strange events. In this case, the body of those depicting peculiar affairs does not have to make an effort to resemble what the person is describing. On the contrary, that is seen as the natural bodily response to the events observed. Traitors, however, should be defined by their ability to conceal emotion. Likewise, Duncan’s ironic comment towards the treason of the first Thane of Cawdor shows how he was unable to anticipate treason: “There’s no art / To find the mind’s construction in the face: / He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust” (I, iv, 11-13). For Duncan, if the face could be the mirror of the soul, he would have detected the traitor through the analysis of his expressions, instead of trusting him. Duncan should probably consider the possibility that he is not a good judge of character, something which will be proven in his failure to anticipate Macbeth’s treason, a fact underlined, as Bradley notes, when Shakespeare places Macbeth’s entrance in the play after this comment. Duncan’s observation seems to suggest that traitors have the skill we admire in actors, who make an art out of constructing a (false) mind in the face, and that no critic would be able to distinguish the true nature of a good performer. Nonetheless, unless Duncan imagines, it should be considered that the ability to hide emotions is not a character trait, we all do it consciously or unconsciously, at one time or another. What distinguishes us is the skill to lie, as Lady Macbeth knows so well:

Only look up clear;
To alter favour ever is to fear.
Leave all the rest to me.
(*Macbeth*, I, v, 71-73)

Your face, my Thane, is a book, where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like th’innocent flower,

But be the serpent under't.
(Macbeth, I, v, 62-66)

Shakespeare is showing how Lady Macbeth first identifies the disparity between her husband's feelings and the necessity to disguise them, as may be noticed in her repeated advice to him. These instructions make Lady Macbeth's fears clear, while presenting an interesting parallel between her advice to Macbeth and Hamlet's indications to his actors, different sides to the same story. The first quotation depicts her worries that Macbeth will not be able to disguise his face: if his appearance shows concern, the King may be able to understand their intentions before they have the chance to murder him. The second quotation also depicts Macbeth's face which, given his inability to naturally hide it, is clear as a book where strangeness might be found. To deceive time (to be able to be King before the due moment in time arrives), Macbeth has to speak like the time, which means he may not give indications of his intentions.

Additionally, he needs to give the impression of being like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it, which is a variation upon the image, exemplified in *Hamlet*, of how a serpent had stung Duncan on the ear. This passage, as noted in the Arden edition, is a deviation of Vergil's "*latet anguis in herba*" (a serpent is hidden in the middle of the grass). More importantly, the passage is an apt translation for Lady Macbeth's purposes, since "flower" is a term for "trope" (the flowers of rhetoric). Lady Macbeth is in some way suggesting that rhetoric is an instrument of deceit, a beautiful surface but one used for perverse ends. This association with rhetoric is made clearer by the mention of "tongue," which introduces both the flower and the serpent (note how Lady Macbeth is also using her tongue, i.e., her rhetoric, to persuade Macbeth to commit assassination). This is emphasized by Lady Macbeth's initial speech, which takes place before Macbeth arrives, at a time when she is preparing herself to help her husband accomplish his purposes: "That I may pour my spirits in thine ear, / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from

the golden round,” (I, v, 26-28). Lady Macbeth’s spirits echo the witches’ power and Claudius’s “leprous distilment” poured into King Hamlet’s ears⁶⁹.

At the same time, to chastise is associated with uses of the tongue, Lady Macbeth’s persuasive instrument, which recalls the way she will threaten her husband, claiming he is not manly (for example, “quite unman’d in folly” [III, iv, 72]). Lady Macbeth’s spirits will seal her husband’s ears, and chastise his hesitations. These “Spirits \ That tend on mortal thoughts” (I, v, 40-41) will be those she will later on ask to unsex her. When she is speaking with Macbeth she is the one being chastised, with the intention to “fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full \ Of direst cruelty” (I, v, 42-43). Thus, the golden of the crown binds both Lady Macbeth and her husband as a single element uniting their vaulting ambition⁷⁰. Yet, at the same time, the crown also portrays Duncan’s murder and the disparity between him and Macbeth. While Duncan is represented as a good King, Macbeth is depicted as a tyrant whose “Golden opinions from all sorts of people, / which would be worn now in their newest gloss, / Not cast aside so soon” (I, vii, 33-35). This sentence, claimed by Macbeth when he was still undecided towards assassination, describes Macbeth’s life before the murder and afterwards. He was well thought of, but that will cease with Duncan’s murder⁷¹. Unlike “gold,” which represents perpetuity and cannot disappear or deceive, golden opinions may not last forever.

Furthermore, Macbeth must be careful with his bodily behavior, a relevant indication of one’s intentions. Interestingly, Lady Macbeth refers eyes and hands, common signals of deceit, but also his tongue, meaning that she is frightened that his words will betray him. Lady Macbeth’s idea of bearing welcome in the tongue finds its echo in Hamlet’s lines, which have already been quoted, “For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak / With most miraculous organ” (II, ii, 589-590). Murder, left unspoken by the criminal, may still be discovered through the use of proof possessing a talkative nature (a point to be later

⁶⁹ Cf. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller. Cambridge: The New Cambridge Edition, 2008.

⁷⁰ See G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme: Further Considerations of Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, London: Methuen, 1963, p. 130.

⁷¹ For an account of the imagery of usurpation read the following: Caroline F. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and what it tell us*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.

characterized). To Lady Macbeth, words that weren't properly thought may denote guilt, while Hamlet's lines imply that murder is an act whose authorship is not difficult to determine, since it has a tongue (it is, as will be seen, self-evident proof). For Hamlet, and somehow to Lady Macbeth, murder is an act so cruel that there is always the possibility that it will be spoken, even if not through the most usual channels. There seems to be a relationship between the criminal (who does not desire to speak, but may betray himself), the corpse (which, as will be later seen, has sometimes the ability to denounce its murderer), and the ones trying to determine who committed the crime.

Also, the relationship between the murder and the tongue, or the ability to proclaim a crime, is made clear after Macduff discovers Duncan was murdered: "O horror! horror! horror! \ Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee!" (II, iii, 62-63). An innocent man cannot picture murder, much less name it, but, most of all, the blameless heart and tongue work in unison, there is no discrepancy between organs' intentions when the innocent is in charge (something that, we have seen, differs in the case of the guilty person). Although Macduff believes murder should not be spoken, he ends up telling the others what has happened. When Lady Macbeth arrives, however, Macduff resists the idea of revealing the nature of events: "'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak: / The repetition, in a woman's ear, / Would murder as it fell" (II, iii, 82-84). These lines imply that a fragile woman would not be able to bear the description of an atrocity such as murder: so it was not for him, whose tongue cannot conceive murder, to repeat it to her ear. Macduff does not imagine, of course, Lady Macbeth's degree of responsibility in the affair. She had been able not only to hear of a murder, but of devising its arrangements. In some way, Macduff's sentence may be considered a prophecy of Lady Macbeth's unfortunate destiny: hearing about a murder led to the loss of her mind and, consequently, to her death.

Returning to the relationship between bodily signs and innocent persons, one may understand how, when the accused is not guilty, the body does not represent his ordeal. The innocent person's true self has nothing to reveal, so his or her injuries do not manifest themselves in bodily signs (they heal faster than was supposed, for example). However, the

same does not apply in the case of the accused, and although he does try to control his body, his true self speaks louder, and causes physical signs to appear. When the suspect is guilty, he is unable to control the appearance of body expressions, thus leading to the manifestation of his guilt. However, what happens when physical signs do not seem to represent the body's guilt? Nowadays, it is common for the body of the victim of torture to present no scars, or obvious bodily proof to prove torture has taken place.

Contrast the following: a Brazilian police officer with a stun gun explains how “The main thing is not to leave any marks”⁷²; whereas the European Commission of Human Rights argues that “[The falaka] if skillfully done, breaks no bones, makes no skin lesions, and leaves no permanent and recognizable marks”⁷³. The sentences quoted portray two major forms of stealth, or clear, torture: electrotorture and falaka (or falanga). Commonly, in electrotorture an electric current is transmitted through electrodes that may be placed on any part of the body (the common areas being hands, feet, fingers, toes, ears, nipples, mouth, and genital area), producing excruciating pain. Unlike, for example, cigarette burns, which leave obvious visible traces, electrotorture may go unnoticed in an inspection, as this method leaves only visible small reddish patches, which are easily missed by those who are not experts in the detection of torture⁷⁴. Electrotorture started being used relatively lately, given that it was difficult for torturers to administer shocks that would inflict pain without killing their victims (the main problem was to balance high voltage with low amperage) while, at the same time, have the existing techniques performed well. Early police devices used electrotorture in countries such as Spain, which applied the electric chair during the civil war; Portugal, which resorted to batteries from 1932 to 1939; and Brazil, which started applying electric wires in 1935. In Argentina, the picaña eléctrica, used to prod cattle, was transformed into a portable device that could easily be employed in torture suspects. The magneto, a generator that produces a high voltage spark, was used by the French in Algeria. This form of torture was

⁷² Darius Rejalís, *Torture and Democracy*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007, p. 190.

⁷³ *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁷⁴ Michael Kerrigan, *Instruments of Torture*, 2001. London: Spellmount Publishers, 2007, p.150.

easy to apply, as magnetos generated power for telephones, cars, refrigerators and planes (which means that, like the saw during the Inquisition, they were easily available for torturers, and could go unnoticed in an inspection by a humanitarian organization). Both the picaña and the magneto were soon popularized, being joined by other common electrotorture techniques, such as tasers and stun guns, useful, as they provoke intense pain, while hardly leaving any visible marks.

Falanga, on the other hand, has been practiced worldwide, as testified by its various names (in Turkish, Arabic or Farsi, it is called falaka or falaqa, in Moroccan Arabic, karma or arma, while Europeans call this practice the bastinado, after bastón, bastóne or batons). Let me paraphrase Darius Rejalís's description and distinguish long whips, used to rule groups of workers, cattle and carriages, from short whips, meant for controlling a single worker or domestic slaves, for exorcism and penance in the Catholic church (a practice that passed on from Roman judges), for disciplining children in school and British sailors. There is a large family of whips, whose members vary in size and material. Even if most of them scar the body permanently, there has always been a small tradition of clean whipping (which left bruises, but no scars as some slaves were too valuable to be damaged by the procedure). The falanga, therefore, belongs to the old tradition of whipping and consists on the prolonged beating of the victim's feet, which causes acute swelling and pain, may produce chronic disability, muscle fatigue, among many other side effects, but does not leave visible traces to the untrained eye. As noticed in *Instruments of Torture*,

(...) although a very localized assault, the pain in fact reaches quickly though the body right up to the head. The torture is redoubled when, after the beating, the victim is made to walk on rough ground, perhaps giving the heaviest guard a piggyback. When administered by a master-torturer, the lightest rhythmic rapping on the sole produces, over the course of a few minutes, the most maddening pain and mental anguish in the victim⁷⁵.

When there is a need for a clean outcome, torturers usually pour water into the feet, make the victim jump in a pool of cold water to reduce the swelling, or apply yogurt or anti-inflammatory cream to the feet. After some days it is usually very difficult to identify that

⁷⁵ Michael Kerrigan, *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

torture has indeed taken place. Although the clean beating, as Rejalis argues, preceded the monitoring done by Human Right's groups, it gained importance in stealthy torture regimes.

The issue of identifying the victim of torture poses problems, such as the skeptic's question, "Was he truly tortured?," which is relevant, for example, when one is dealing with refugees who, if torture is proven, will gain political status and avoid being sent back to their countries. The question portrays the belief that visible proof rules out any skeptical doubts about other persons, as if every thought and occurrence that were exteriorized in visible evidence would not allow secrets. Medical organizations thus try to uncover what remains hidden and unexpressed, the exterior being used to pinpoint the interior's existence (the implication seems to be that visible proof would manifest its causality, making interpretation unnecessary). Medical staff and humanitarian organizations attempted to solve this type of problem and provided a pragmatic reply to the question posed. This means that institutions such as the RCT (Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims), in Copenhagen, are always attempting to find new ways to diagnose stealth torture. Hermann Vogel, a consultant radiologist at a Hospital in Hamburg, Germany, travels the world in an attempt to diagnose claims of torture. In an interview, he says the following:

The methods used in Turkey for torturing people with electric shocks have changed because of the efficient work of local activists in diagnosing torture. They used to apply one electrode to one of the victim's fingers and the other to the penis or toes. This left cell damage that could be detected in tissue samples taken from the site of the electrode. Now they are soaking the victim in water and applying larger electrodes, which does not cause local damage to tissue. My Turkish colleagues have asked me to investigate whether it will be possible to detect any effects of the electric current when it is applied this way. I am confident that it will by using MRI scan⁷⁶.

This is one of many testimonies explaining how electrotorture may be observed through the use of radiographs or MRIs⁷⁷. In fact, many studies concur with Vogel's perspective, and maintain that although this type of torture does not leave open wounds or

⁷⁶ John Bonne, "On the Trail of Torturers: interview with Hermann Vogel," *New Scientist*, 12 May 2001.

⁷⁷ Alejandro Moreno, Michael Grodin, "The Not So-Silent Marks of Torture," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 284, n.º 5, 2000, p. 538.

fractures, it indeed causes alterations in the body. The same happens with falanga. Kirstine Amris's study shows how this technique produces transformations in the musculoskeletal system only detected by specialists. According to this investigation, the bleeding, swelling and the oedemas in the soft tissues of the feet disappear after a few weeks (most lesions repair six weeks after torture has taken place), while ulcerations and fractures may be found, but are rare if the torturer is skilled. However, some vestiges of torture can still be traceable:

(...) at clinical examination reduced elasticity in the foot pads, loosening of the skin, soreness and coating of the plantar fascia (aponeurosis), sensory disturbances in the soles, joint dysfunction, and myofacial changes in the lower extremities are reported as being characteristic. (...) The use of imaging in substantiating the clinical diagnosis and documentation of falanga is based on MRI and ultrasound studies showing morphological changes with a layered plantar fascia in torture victims exposed to falanga⁷⁸.

The two quotations show how torture may be proven through the use of a scan made to the body. Firstly, the medical staff (correctly) assumes that torture leaves physical traces, no matter how hidden they may be. Even if bodily proof was not left for all to see, it is hidden on the body, the vessel where events took place. This makes the body a place where secrets are buried, but still likely to be found by a skilled observer. It should be noted that although there are many differences between these doctors' work and the activity of torturing, both presume that there are hidden secrets inside the human body that may come to light when the body is used as a place of inquiry. Secondly, techniques such as the MRI or the radiograph transform the idea of interiority in the body when their results are made public. From this point of view, different ways of scanning the body give a shared dimension to what were previously considered hidden contents. This means that physicians are attempting to externalize what the torturer tried so skillfully to hide, by turning visible the body's interior. Therefore, from an interpretative point of view, these interior morphological changes are paired to easily detected exterior physiological signs, such as perspiration.

⁷⁸ Kirstine Amris, Sofie Daneskiold-Samsøe, Søren Torp-Pedersen, Inge Genefke, Bente Danneskiold-Samsøe, "Producing medico-legal evidence: Documentation of torture versus the Saudi-Arabian State of Denial," *Torture*, n.º 17 (3), 2007, p. 181-95.

Even though scan tests can (and must) be interpreted, they do not show irrefutable evidence to those who look into them. A causal relationship between the morphological changes in the body and torture must be proved, and, in order to do so, doctors must show that the changes occurring in the body are a result of torture and not of prior injuries. Thus, for torture to be proven, the patient's history must be told in detail; it becomes necessary to find the relationship between his country's history of violence, his life previous to torture, his family and friends, as well as to thoroughly construe the story of his imprisonment and of the torture techniques used. Doctors must evaluate how the physical and psychological symptoms presented by the patient relate to the story patients tell and the knowledge of torture techniques applied in the country. When they do this, doctors are recognizing that the victim's status evaluation may not be limited to an analysis of his or her body. From this viewpoint, to learn the truth about a torture victim means to be able to tell their story and not just to extract the truth out of the body. This is, in addition, an extremely important difference between those practicing torture and those attempting to denounce it. To the victim, however, the body is a place of betrayal, of pain that cannot be proved without the use of hardly accessible sophisticated technology. For the majority of the cases in which falanga was applied, for example, the subjects feel prolonged pain for many years, but not until very recently could the trauma's marks be found, which means that victims remember what caused the pain, but are not able to point at it. The body in which no signs of torture are left visible is the one where no self (neither true nor untrue) of the victim is able to reveal itself.

At the same time, contrary to what happens with the medieval judicial ordeal or with the characters that have been described, such as Claudius and Macbeth, torturers do not analyze bodily signs in contemporary torture. What other modes of proof consider to be the causal relationship between the subject's culpability and his physiology is not taken into account in these cases, since contemporary torture is not based on an analysis of bodily signs. Torturers are not attempting to identify guilt through an evaluation of visible signs; they are trying to obtain a confession.

There is another relevant point when one considers stealth torture, which is the fact that although the invisible signs do not correspond in any way to the victim's intentions (who cannot control what appears and disappears in his or her own body), it demonstrates the torturer's wish to hide proof that torture has taken place. In the medieval ordeal the accused does not have control over his or her body, but either he committed the crime or not, so in some way he may be considered responsible for the outcome of the test. When one speaks about invisible signs in torture, one is describing the torturer's intentions, as well as his skill. The torturer's ambition of leaving no vestiges of what could be considered his crime equals Lady Macbeth's concern in hiding the evidence. There is equivalence between Lady Macbeth's efforts to mask her face and the torturer's need to conceal the victim's bodily signs. In fact, there is correspondence between the torturer's labors and Lady Macbeth's need to wipe away the intentions and the traces of murder from her husband's face.

While Lady Macbeth needs to control her own body and her husband's, the torturer has only to manage one other person's signs. Nevertheless, these modes of proof seem to imply that the difficulty in controlling one's body is as complex as the calculation of what will happen with another person's body. From this perspective, the criminal's body is as alien to him as the victim's is to the torturer. Another particularity is the fact that there is a waiting time required for each of these activities. The judges in the ordeal need three days in order to discover if the arm presents signs of the ordeal (if it is cured), whereas the torturer needs to wait for the tortured to heal before he discovers whether the signs of torture have scarred permanently the body (i. e., before he is able to move the prisoner).

The recognition of torture when there are no obvious physical traces requires a new understanding of the body and also that the concept of pain as torture be used as a way of punishment leaving indelible memories, but not permanent visible physical wounds. There is dissociation between memories of events and physical signs. The victim is thus left with a severed body: the corporeality which perjures itself by providing no testimony of the events, and the remembered body, in need to be acknowledged. The acknowledgement involves therefore not only the gathering of empirical data, but acknowledged sensibility, which is to

play a pivotal role in the inquiries. Thus, rules should be followed when interviewing a torture victim, both for the purposes of asylum or compensation⁷⁹.

Macbeth, one might argue, as Charles Altieri suggests in his course about the play⁸⁰, should be read having in mind Derek Parfit's theory of the self. In his essay⁸¹, Parfit questions the notion of personal identity, and attempts to explain how questions related with it may be explained without the use of the concept. Parfit describes the case of a person whose brain is transplanted into another body, successfully divided, and transferred into two different persons; as well as the case of special beings looking exactly like humans, but reproducing through a dividing process. Parfit's examples have the purpose of substituting the concepts of psychological continuity⁸² and psychological connectedness⁸³ for that of identity. The author aims to show that the existence of several selves is not as impossible as one may think. Thus, a self may correspond to a continuous self throughout time, but also to different selves, as many transformations of character or in life-style in a person may produce. This explains the common idea that we are no longer the same, whenever we undergo some life-changing transformation. Each person may possess different selves through time, to which it refers as my "anterior self" or "my future self". Parfit attempts to show that in the continuous existence of each person there are relations of degree between earlier selves and future selves. This is the reason why the author thinks that the person living with two halves of the brain of different persons, as well as those who possess the brain of another, may survive without the need to be described through the use of a principle of identity. Parfit uses the word "self" to designate the highest degree of psychological connectedness, claiming that the several selves

⁷⁹ Cf. Physicians for Human Rights, *Examining Asylum Seekers – A Health Professional Guide to Medical and Psychological Evaluations of Torture*. Boston: Physicians for Human Rights, 2001.

⁸⁰ Charles Altieri, "Macbeth", Berkeley University, accessed April 2009, http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course_details.php?seriesid=1906978525.

⁸¹ Derek Parfit, «Personal Identity» in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975, pp. 199-226.

⁸² For Parfit, although persons generally use the language of personal identity to explain the continuity existent in a person, psychological continuity does not create identity criteria. The author suggests that psychological continuity is not logical and does not derive from a bi-univocal relation.

⁸³ Psychological connectedness, unlike psychological continuity, is not transitive, since the relations between different expressions of "q-characteristics" are not transitive either. Psychological connectedness needs direct psychological relationships and what Parfit calls "q-memories" and "q-experience".

of persons whose brain was divided live just as a person who, after a violent emotional process, cannot describe herself as being the same. One would not find, in *Macbeth*, a single body and mind, but a series of selves which vary.

Altieri claims that we are presently accountable for our various future selves, which is the reason why we must try to act responsibly. But, unlike us, Macbeth assumes to know who his future self will be. Bradley is right to notice that the “the words of the Witches are fatal to the hero only because there is in him something which leaps into light at the sound of them”⁸⁴. The knowledge of the future makes it impossible for him to choose courses of action which do not involve a path towards what he considers to be his prophetic destiny, and which confirm his ambition. The witches’ insight not only eliminates other possibilities of action, but also presents the following dilemma: if Macbeth is meant to be King, why not become King (right now)? It soon becomes clear that Macbeth will not be able to delay the reward and wait for the proper time to come; he decides to transform his future self into his present self. The play debates usurpation, which critics have described as a jump in time, the desire to make instants elapse so that a distant future may be transformed into the present, an aspiration appearing in passages such as “We’d jump the life to come” (I, vii, 7) or “Away and mock the time with fairest show” (I, vii, 82), among so many others.

Macbeth’s several selves are, of course, described by the witches during the opening of the play (he is Macbeth and Cawdor, he will become Glamis and King). After Macbeth becomes Thane of Glamis, and before the assassination is committed, his several selves coexist in what is (or seems to be) the unity previously represented by the three witches. When Macbeth and his wife start to plan Duncan’s murder, the dissociation between their selves’ conscience and bodily signs acquires importance. Murder will, finally, change things, as may be perceived by the following passage, “Glamis hath murder’d Sleep, and therefore Cawdor \ Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!” (II, ii, 41-42). The various selves share the murder that has taken place and the impossibility of sleep, but the way

⁸⁴ A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy – Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, 1957. London: Macmillan and Co, 1971, p. 292.

Macbeth, Glamis and Cawdor are invoked indicates that there is not a single conscience at stake. Macbeth is dealing with the effects that his deeds have on his present and future self. Parfit's theory allows us, therefore, to introduce a temporal dimension to the difference between true and untrue selves. The degree of continuity between selves (this temporal dimension) allows us to understand how the actions of someone's anterior self have consequences in his present and future selves; whereas the concept of psychological continuity would explain the somatoform effects of murder, such as sleeplessness. After the assassination, therefore, there is a corporal continuity between Macbeth, Glamis and Cawdor (their body is the same), a causal continuity (the fact that Glamis murdered sleep makes both Cawdor and Macbeth suffer from insomnia), and a conscience which time transformed. From this perspective, Macbeth failed to anticipate the negative effects murder would have on his future self (he assumed his true self would deal with murder as he had dealt with assassination in battle before, and failed to realize that the nature of remorse resulting from usurpation would be very different). True and untrue selves, therefore, coexist through time, challenging each other and producing dilemmas on the person's body and soul.

This does not, however, solve entirely the problem, as Macbeth and his wife frequently seem to be a body and soul working in unison and suffering from a similar type of bodily pains. While there is dissociation between Macbeth's anterior and present selves, there is frequently correspondence between Lady Macbeth and her husband's consciences and bodies. Parfit's essay presents an interesting alternative to the one which has been provided by critics who tend to evaluate the tragedy through the discussion of the variation of strength between the two main characters during the play. Critical accounts may indeed fail to explain the theory that they briefly state. For example, A. C. Bradley notices how, in the beginning of the play, Macbeth and his wife seem to be "of equal importance"⁸⁵, and, more importantly, how "Her ambition for her husband and herself (there was no distinction to her mind) proved fatal to him"⁸⁶. The significant section of the phrase consists in the idea that in Lady

⁸⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 317.

Macbeth's mind there was no difference between what she envisioned for herself and for her husband. Bradley, however, considers each character separately, instead of taking them into account as a single entity. At the same time, Freud's essay on Lady Macbeth (almost) provides the explanation we have been looking for, as the author briefly mentions Ludwig Jekels' belief that Shakespeare divides a character into two personages "which taken separately, are not completely understandable and do not become so until they are brought together once more into unity"⁸⁷. Freud claims:

The germs of fear which break out in Macbeth on the night of the murder do not develop further in him but in her. It is he who has the hallucination of the dagger before the crime; but it is she who afterwards falls ill of a mental disorder. (...) Thus what he feared in his pangs of conscience is fulfilled in her; she becomes all remorse and he all defiance. Together they exhaust the possibilities of reaction to the crime, like two disunited parts of a single psychical individuality, and it may be that they are both copied from a single prototype⁸⁸.

This is the reason why Lady Macbeth may not be understood without "considering the Macbeth who completes her"⁸⁹. The relationship is, however, more complex than Freud's depiction, as the author fails to see how both of them suffer physically from the crime. Not only does Macbeth experience sleeplessness but he also has hallucinations (in a scene, to which I shall return, in which Lady Macbeth's role as his helper is determinant). This would mean that neither character would be entirely made of remorse or defiance; on the contrary, they both share similar feelings, even if at different times, as if they were the single prototype the author alludes to. Although Freud gives the interpretative clue and then inflects his argument, Parfit's account helps to understand how Macbeth's case seems to be similar to a situation where two people who were fused together have before them the difficult task of conciliating different desires, intentions and characteristics. They are not, unlike Freud's considerations, copied from a single prototype; rather, they are a single individual, one resulting from what Parfit would call a fusion, with compatible desires and characteristics:

⁸⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work," *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, vol. XIV, 1957. London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1973, p. 323.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 324.

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 323.

To give examples – first, of compatibility: I like Palladio and intend to visit Venice. I am about to fuse with a person who likes Giotto and intends to visit Padua. I can know that the one person we shall become will have both tastes and both intentions. Second, of incompatibility: I hate red hair, and always vote Labour. The other person loves red hair, and always votes Conservative. I can know that the one person we shall become will be indifferent to red hair and a floating voter⁹⁰.

The fusion of two beings “would involve the changing of some of our characteristics and some of our desires”⁹¹. This is a relevant point, for, at first, Macbeth’s conflicting selves made him unable, in Shakespeare’s words, to decide to go through with the deed, and what enables his actions is the incentive given to him by his wife (i. e. her rhetorical skills). This would explain why Lady Macbeth solves her husband’s hesitation towards murder and vice versa, as what made them compatible allows them to fight towards the same goals, share fears and intentions. Parfit is, though, also underlining the ambiguity in the fused subject’s behavior, making him become a floating voter with indifferent taste in hair. In *Macbeth* this would allow us to understand how the subject about to fuse has, like a couple to be married, little control over his (individual) actions. Interestingly, in Parfit’s terms, although each Macbeth is a unique individual, they seem to act as a fused subject with the degree of compatibility Parfit longs for. *Macbeth* is a case where two persons act as one and this is the characteristic that enables them to make decisions and overcome their individual anxieties. They are able to act in unison like a fused being, finding solutions to their problems. Shall we say they are the epitome of marriage?

Generations of critics argued that Macbeth’s fever of murder alters events. Charles Altieri, for example, considers that the tragedy begins, from the couple’s point of view, the moment Macbeth feels he should not share the details of the crime with his wife. If, in the beginning of the play, Macbeth received advice and emotional strength from his wife; if she sketched the murder plans for him, Macbeth ends up refusing to share his knowledge of events with her. Consider the following lines:

⁹⁰ Derek Parfit, *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 212.

Lady Macbeth: What's to be done?
Macbeth: Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.
(*Macbeth*, III, ii, 44-46)

For Altieri, something is said to have changed in the nature of their relationship, and she is expected to wait and applaud his actions, not to take part in them. Suddenly, Macbeth wishes not only for his wife to be unacquainted with the details of the crime, but also puts her in the position of having to applaud actions which she has not helped to devise. Another possibility should, however, be brought up, as Macbeth's sorrow in the end of the play does not appear to show the lack of consideration for his wife that critics deem to exist. It could be argued that Duncan's assassination makes Macbeth realize that such actions have consequences not only in his future self, but also in his wife's (that they are inseparable). Macbeth knows that caring for his own body and Lady Macbeth's is the same thing, which is why he realizes she will share the physical effects of the murder. He will, therefore, attempt to protect them both from further pain, which means safeguarding her from the knowledge of the other murders. This need for protecting his body (which is the same as Lady Macbeth's) had started a little earlier, when Lady Macbeth gives her husband her usual advice, suggesting that he should disguise his thoughts before their guests: "Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks; be bright and jovial among your guests to-night" (III, ii, 28-29). Macbeth's role was one of following her suggestions without commenting upon them, he now replies in a similar tone:

So shall I, Love; and so, I pray, be you.
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo:
Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:
Unsafe the while, that we
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
Disguising what they are.
(*Macbeth*, III, ii, 29-35)

Macbeth wants his wife to be innocent of the details of the plans, but asks her eye and tongue to deceive Banquo. More than that, she has to use her memories, her fond remembrance of Banquo, to make him feel safe, so that he does not suspect their intentions. Their faces must mask the mendacity of their hearts. Macbeth had already attempted this dissociation, as before the murder is carried out he wishes for a separation of the senses, hand and eye must be alienated: “The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be, / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.” (I, iv, 52-53). If his eyes could but be closed while the murder takes place, when the hand is in charge, then his moral conscience would not be able to interfere. Macbeth longs for the sensation of leaving one’s body while the crime is being committed (a very common desire among torture victims, who often experience the sensation of being out of their bodies during torture⁹²). Although the eye is afraid of murder, once it is committed there is, or so Macbeth thought, no longer the problem of seeing it. Lady Macbeth comments: “These deeds must not be thought / After these ways: so, it will make us mad” (II, ii, 32-33). Both share the erroneous assumption that if they somehow dissociate their conscious beings from their actions, murder will have no effect on them. The idea that thoughts may be stopped finds its parallel in Macbeth’s desire to close the senses during the time of the crime, different attempts to protect each other. In Parfit’s terms, this would be exemplary of the fused person thinking about herself in terms of survival and not of personal identity. The problem would be that Macbeth and his wife incur in what Parfit describes as one of the fallacies of self-interest. It is a case in which “what we ought to do can be against our interests. There is only the general problem that it may not be what we want to do”⁹³. According to Parfit, both egoism and altruism stem from the assumption that personal identity matters. If, however, one understands that several selves coexist in a relationship of degree, then the concern for my particular and present self is a mistake, as I should be concerned with the implications my actions may have on my several selves. In *Macbeth*,

⁹² For a recent account of “out of body experiences” see: Maxwell J.F. Cooper, “Near-death experience and out of body phenomenon during torture – a case report”, *Torture*, vol. 21, n.º 3, 2011, accessed 10 Oct. 2011, http://www.ircct.org/Files/Filer/TortureJournal/21_03_2011/Near-death-experience-3-2011.pdf.

⁹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

although the couple suspects that usurpation and further assassinations in the long run will be negative to their well being, they find excuses to do it, assuming it will fulfill their present desires. This would be a situation in which one goes against one's best interest, hoping to be able to avoid the consequences of one's own acts (and an act of egoism based on an erroneous assumption about personal identity). Had the couple realized this, they would have been able to avoid the tragedy.

At the same time, from the moment Duncan is assassinated, Macbeth and his wife try to delay the tribunal of interpretation that would make them responsible for their actions. This point is an interesting parallel with Hamlet's delay of Claudius's death. While Hamlet wishes to catch his uncle's reaction, Macbeth and his wife attempt to dissociate their bodies from their conscience, in the false assumption that 1) such a feat may be successfully accomplished, 2) that they possess a single body and mind, instead of a series of true and untrue selves fighting continuously through time, 3) that skill is not required to control bodily reactions, 4) that they are protecting each other, thus, safeguarding their fused being. Finally, they assume that to delay the tribunal is to avoid it entirely, which, as was seen, is not the case.

5. Bewitched, bothered and bewildered

One sits through *Othello* while successive inquests follow each other, the first in the play introducing a lesson on Venetian justice that the Moor will later reproduce when seemingly in doubt about Desdemona⁹⁴. The thought that this tragedy may reproduce a tribunal is represented in Stanley Cavell's essay, "Othello, The Stake of the Other," where the author defies readers to prove the presumption that the play describes a witch trial, a form of inquiry in which comprehension is typically obscured by individual prejudices and erroneous

⁹⁴ For an account of how Othello longed to be a part of Venetian society and live rigorously by its rules, read Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005.

theories about other persons. Such challenge is indeed the aim of the present text, and the author's perspective sets the tone for the discussion that follows:

I cannot think I am the first to say it out loud – to the hell and the demon staring out of the names of Othello and Desdemona. I mention this curiosity to prepare something meant as nearly pure conjecture, wishing others to prove it in one way or another, namely that underlying and shaping the events of this play are certain events of witch trials. Phrases such as “ocular proof” and “cords and knives \ Poison or fire, or suffocating dreams” (III, iii, 394-5), seem to me to call for location in a setting of judicial torture⁹⁵.

The skepticism in the trials of witches, each character's need for visible proof, Brabantio's accusations of bewitchment which echo throughout the play, the frequent mentions of devils, are portrayed in *Othello*, a play which problematizes the difficulty to acknowledge others. Although one could argue, against Cavell, that Othello's mention of cords and knives, poison, fire or suffocating dreams seems to be the characterization of his doubts on how to assassinate Desdemona, and not his choice of a mode of proof, the play does portray the inability to test other's minds and the skepticism which derives from this. The tragedy stages skepticism as the particular malady of an individual, but one which is reproduced by the Venetian State, which is why the ending of *Othello* consists in an argument favoring judicial torture.

Cavell diagnoses Othello's disease as one of skepticism, arguing that the Moor's surprise resides in the discovery that Desdemona is made of flesh and blood. The problem is not, as usually thought, the suspicion that his wife is unfaithful, but the incapacity to realize that she is not. The difficulty in dealing with such knowledge, with the way one is finite, incomplete and dependent on others, makes him choose to believe Iago's accusations:

I am claiming that we must understand Othello, on the contrary, to want to believe Iago, to be trying, against his knowledge, to believe him. (...) that the idea of Desdemona as an adulterous whore is more convenient to him than the idea of her as chaste⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, 1983. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 140.

⁹⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p. 133.

The torture of logic in his mind we might represent as follows: Either I shed her blood and scarred or I did not. If I did not then she is not a virgin and this is a stain upon me. Either way I am contaminated⁹⁷.

To Cavell, human sexuality in the play underlines what separates us from others, “turned toward splendor and toward horror, mixing beauty and ugliness”⁹⁸. Othello’s supposed impotence is not characterized in its physical sense, but related with the Moor’s surprise regarding Desdemona’s sexuality, “I think of him, rather, as having been surprised by her, at what he has elicited from her; at, so to speak, a success rather than a failure”⁹⁹. Othello is not, thus, moved by doubt, he did not lack certainty, “he knew everything, but he could not yield to what he knew”¹⁰⁰. The tragedy consists in this failure to want to acknowledge Desdemona, in Othello’s startling arousal of female sexuality, and the way he is horrified by it. Skepticism is not defined as being the refusal of the world as it presents itself, or even the fear that it does not exist, but rather that its presence is undeniable. It consists in the thought that there are individuals we could get to know, but choose not to. The capacity, of certain persons, to avoid the presence of others, about whom they possess some theories or beliefs (which are probably wrong), is, for Cavell, tragic. This is the reason why Othello’s choice to believe Iago against his knowledge of Desdemona characterizes the “truth of skepticism”, also present in the trial of witches. In the biblical justification for these trials (“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live,” Exodus), Cavell suggests one may find the explanation for Othello’s action and the reason why Desdemona is characterized as “a moth of peace,” i.e. a witch¹⁰¹. If Cavell’s assumption is correct, and Othello is trying to prove Desdemona’s culpability, then we must demonstrate how is this trial conducted and what is the nature of the evidence gathered.

When, in the beginning of the play, Brabantio encounters the Moor, his first words are: “Down with him, thief!” (I, ii, 57), followed by an explanation, which will be repeated

⁹⁷ *Op. Cit.*, p. 135.

⁹⁸ *Op. Cit.*, p. 137.

⁹⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁰⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 141.

¹⁰¹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 140.

before the elders, of how Othello bewitched Desdemona, enchanting her with chains of magic, “That thou hast practised on her with foul charms, \ Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals \That weakens motion:” (I, ii, 73-75)¹⁰². Witchcraft appears as the explanation for the course of action one would not normally take, to portray what is seen as a deviation of behavior, an abnormality provoked by others. In Brabantio’s accusation, the proof to Othello’s mischief relies on Desdemona’s conduct, in what is seen as his capacity to manipulate her. While Brabantio, who, as most fathers in similar circumstances, seems determined *a priori* to consider that his daughter is innocent, sets his heart to accuse Othello, establish a sentence and have him imprisoned, the Duke introduces order in the procedures:

To vouch this is no proof,
Without more certain and more overt test
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him.
(*Othello*, I, iii, 108-110)

While reflecting on what to do when the proof at his disposal is not clear enough to determine a verdict, the Duke claims that vouching for someone does not hold sufficient ground to determine a punishment, and so he mentions the necessity of a form of test that would allow him to control injurious accusations. The procedure seems to be fair, as those involved have the opportunity to make a claim about their case (accusation, accused and witness) and impartial judges provide a just verdict¹⁰³. The relevance of the Duke’s words does not depend merely on the fact that they are sensible. It should be noted that his judicial theory relies on the thought that “thin habits,” i.e., “insubstantial outward appearances,” and “poor likelihoods,” i.e. “weak inferences, tenuous indications”¹⁰⁴, should always be accompanied by other modes of explanation.

¹⁰² Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, 1999. London: The Arden Edition, 2001. Quotations follow this edition.

¹⁰³ Although Brabantio is not persuaded (“These sentences to sugar or to gall, \ Being strong on both sides, are equivocal.” [I, iii, 217-218]), he recognizes the authority of the procedures and allows matters of the state to proceed.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. notes in Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Norman Sanders. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 83.

Circumstantial proof, as vouching for someone, requires further evidence or mode of testing. In the case of this type of evidence observers should, it seems reasonable to suppose, be careful in their evaluations and search, as happens in *Hamlet*, for definite ways to test hypotheses. *Othello*'s specificity in determining the truth derives from the fact that the Moor chooses to believe that every word and visible proof stands for something else. This is not a case, unlike some authors argue, of erroneous interpretation, but one where the interpreter decides to supplement each bit of evidence in order to prove a pre-established theory. The idea, in *Othello*, that we may decide to imagine that the clues confirming our worst suspicions are everywhere is, thus, representative of a particular theory of interpretation. Brabantio's incapacity to convict Othello will remind the Moor that one must collect the necessary evidence before making an accusation. This is the reason why, as will be seen, Othello will devise a causal explanation about Desdemona's guilt that appears to make perfect sense. The Moor, like Hamlet, believes one's conjectures may be proved through the analysis of exterior bodily signs, which point to an interior, hidden, truth. Showing Desdemona's reactions as proof is conducting an exercise similar to that of Hamlet, but in Othello, as will be seen, the interpretation these reactions has been previously stipulated.

The second query, determinant to the tragedy's course of events, confirms Iago not only as a reliable witness, but also as one who knows much more than he is willing to say. In this inquest, also a result of Iago's influence upon those near him, Othello is to be the judge. The Moor gives Cassio the opportunity, as one of the Senators had in his case, to explain himself, but he is too mortified to speak and merely asks for pardon. Montano, wounded and unable to testify, is then questioned, but is unable to speak. Iago appears as the main witness and the sentence appears to be righteous. Iago's testimony is thought to be factual, and the idea that he sees others in a way that Othello does not, but fails to account for their true characters out of the goodness of his heart, will be present throughout the events that will follow:

I know, Iago,

Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio.
(*Othello*, II, iii, 242-244)

Nay, yet there's more in this:
I prithee speak to me, as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.
(*Othello*, III, iii, 132-135)

Why did I marry?
This honest creature doubtless
Sees and knows more – much more – than he unfolds.
(*Othello*, III, iii, 245-247)

These lines reveal that Othello presumes that Iago's words conceal something, as if his interlocutor is always explaining less than he knows, giving origin to gaps in interpretation that the interlocutor must fill. Iago's sentences, from this perspective, are always circumstantial evidence, as they provide part of the explanation one is looking for, but veil that which would allow us to make sense of their whole meaning (something Marjorie Garber describes as being "crime by suggestion"¹⁰⁵). In this respect, there is a correlation between the Ghost's words in *Hamlet* and Iago's suggestions. Although both characters' words give origin to the inquest that will occupy the main characters in the play, King Hamlet's accusations, unlike Iago's words, are extremely detailed (he clearly describes the culprit, as well as the method of assassination used¹⁰⁶). Hamlet's doubts do not derive from incomprehension of the Ghost's words, but from the necessity to understand whether the Ghost himself is truthful. Still, the Ghost provokes Hamlet's quest, much like Iago's words incite Othello's dogged pursuit of proof. What Iago leaves untold, the Moor must comprehend. In *Othello*, therefore, interpretation is the decision to understand something not clearly spoken, as if reality were the equivalent of the worst of thoughts and it was never given its counterpart in words. The presumption is that Iago's statements will never be properly understood if one does not supplement them with what he left unsaid, which is why

¹⁰⁵ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005, p. 607. [Kindle version]

¹⁰⁶ Claudius words read as follow: "Now, Hamlet, hear: \ 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, \ A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark \ Is by a forged process of my death \ Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth, \ The serpent that did sting thy father's life \ Now wears his crown" (I, v, 36-40).

to have no doubts is to be able to see and know the extra others failed to mention (a presumption which, as will be seen, is common to other truth tests). Here lies an important distinction between making erroneous suppositions (I see or hear A and understand it to mean B) and wishing to discover the supplement for what it is said (I see or hear A and consider it must mean A, plus something else).

Such theory of interpretation derives from the fact that Othello wishes to determine, in the presence of others, that someone's true self is not visible, but well concealed. Othello's vision about the self is slightly different from what was described in *Macbeth's* case. In the Scottish tragedy, evil characters need to hide bodily proof of their deeds. Virtuous figures, however, either are vessels where emotions and thoughts coincide and become visible (someone is frightened by the sight of horrors and shows it in the face); or the absence of bodily proof implies there is nothing being hidden. To the Moor, though, both honest and deceitful characters veil their views, every word and bodily sign is representative of an unmentioned, and potentially monstrous, idea about other persons. Iago's words, from an interpretative point of view, are thus very similar to the physiological signs that, for Othello, betray both Desdemona and Cassio's guilt. In this tragedy, hands and smiles are also the visible expression for what is only partly explained:

Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady.
(...)

This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart:
Hot, hot and moist. This hand of yours requires
A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,
Much castigation, exercise devout,
For here's a young and sweating devil, here,
That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand,
A frank one.

(*Othello*, III, iv, 36-44)

Moist hands, for Othello, find its correlative in the eyes, which is why, before killing Desdemona, the Moor demands: "Let me see your eyes. \ Look in my face". (IV, ii, 25-26). The incapacity to recognize "that some truthful people become emotional when suspected of

lying”¹⁰⁷ is, according to Paul Ekman, “the Othello error,” exemplified in the murder scene and in lines such as “Out, strumpet! Weep’st thou for him to my face?” (V, ii, 76). For Ekman, Othello is unable to understand that the faces of innocent subjects, as Desdemona, may show the same emotions as those lying, due to the fact that they feel guilty about something else, have a “strong unresolved guilt;” “feel excitement about proving their accusers wrong;” fear the punishment that may follow, among other reasons¹⁰⁸. Failure to analyze transformations in the pitch of voice, misinterpreting manipulators (movements in the body, such as massaging, pinches, scratches, etc.) or the manipulator’s actions (teeth biting lips, playing with pencils, etc.), and facial (squelched or micro) expressions, are all part of the “Othello error”. This is, as explained, a common fault in those catching liars, the “disbelieving-the-truth mistakes,” and the reason “why suspicious persons are terrible at understanding deceit, as they prefer to maintain that the subject is lying than to consider the alternative,” in Othello’s case, that he is “an unreasonable accusatory husband”¹⁰⁹.

In this respect, Ekman’s perspective should be related with the description about true and untrue selves. We have seen how the untrue self wishes to conceal the signs of deceit or mischief, which the true self, for a variety of reasons, longs to make noticeable (thus provoking a disparity between someone’s intentions and their unintentional bodily signs). But according to Ekman, Desdemona’s moist hands do not show her guilt, as she was innocent, but only fear, which, in fact, provokes physiological reactions such as those previously described. The fourth chapter of *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph* deals with this question¹¹⁰. In the terms of its complex explanation we read that in the center of the brain lies one of its regulatory mechanisms, the hypothalamus, which controls the autonomic nervous system. The hypothalamus is responsible, among other activities, for the regulation of the endocrine hormonal system, while the autonomic nervous system controls

¹⁰⁷ Paul Ekman, *Telling Lies – Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics and Marriage*. NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 132.

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 171.

¹¹⁰ James Allan Matte, *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection*. Lancashire: J. A. M. Publication, 1996.

the cardiac rhythm, the pulse rate and blood pressure. When the organism realizes that the body is being threatened, it sends a sign to the autonomic nervous system that, among other things, activates the sympathetic system, preparing the body for a fight and making the glands in the supra-renal medulla segregate hormones allowing blood redistribution where it is considered more necessary. At the same time, the salivary glands segregate different, thicker saliva, causing a feeling known as “dry mouth sensation”. The sweat glands are stimulated, which makes perspiration appear (thus provoking Desdemona’s moist hands). The sympathetic system makes the eye iris dilate, allowing more light to enter, in order to enhance vision and perception of what surrounds us (so a transformation could, indeed, be found in Desdemona’s eyes before she was assassinated). The autonomic nervous system is also composed of the parasympathetic system, which has the role to maintain the body’s homeostasis, necessary for it to work. Therefore, when the sympathetic system is activated, the parasympathetic follows it, reinstituting the body’s chemical balance, and avoiding blood pressure to increase in excess. This group of involuntary reactions makes persons react similarly when confronted by others. Desdemona was, therefore, reacting to Othello’s suspicions, whose nature she could not entirely understand. This could be a case where someone’s true self attempts to protect the person from harm through the appearance of bodily signs which are misinterpreted and lead to the subject’s death. Othello, according to Ekman, fails to understand how physical proof may be a symptom of fear and not deceit.

Ekman’s characterization should be considered having in mind Othello’s theory about other persons. Desdemona’s hands may signal fear – as Ekman argues –, but also what Othello considers to be her lustful nature – as critics have noticed. The point, however, seems to be that Othello does not believe these physical signs to be deceitful. On the contrary, eyes and hands are portrayed as being frank, which, of course, they are. Even when Desdemona cries after learning of Cassio’s death, she is, in fact, feeling sorry for him, as well as for her own life. So tears and eyes reveal true emotions, while Desdemona’s hands may well show a licentious nature (at least according to Othello’s interpretation of lust). If one assumes Othello is interpreting correctly Desdemona’s emotions, this implies that, as Cavell argues,

Othello knows she is innocent, but is nonetheless determined to prove her guilty. From this perspective, Ekman is wrong to assume Othello is making a mistake. The beast in Othello's jungle relies instead on the idea that every human being, i.e. all bodily proof, stands for what it appears to be and for an extra and well hidden horror.

For a woman accused of witchcraft, the question of the knowledge of other minds, and the difficulty of proving other persons have a mind like ours, is a matter of life and death. Monty Python's sketch "Burn the witch" allows a further understanding of this problem¹¹¹. Cases of witchery were traditionally difficult to judge, as it was considered that witches were masters at disguising themselves, thus being able to conceal their true identity through the use of artifices. They were frequently targeted by the wrath of populations, to whom the ordeal or torture was the only way of making sure they were correctly identified. In the sketch, a group of villagers clamors that they have found a witch and that they should burn her. When Sir Bedevere asks them how do they know she is, in fact, a witch, the villagers claim that she looks like one. It does not take much time to discover that they had dressed her as one, giving her, for example, a false nose. The enunciation of "She is a witch" is, of course, accompanied by the fact that she looks like the stereotype of a sorceress. The detail that they have fabricated these similarities does not seem to matter. The villagers do know, therefore, that she is probably not a witch, but they still choose to consider her as one, which reminds us of *Othello*. Dressing this woman and making an accusation is a form of convicting her, the tortuous rhetoric being that if she was a witch in disguise it made sense to dress her as one, so that she could be properly condemned. And, of course, if she is dressed like a witch, she is a witch. From this perspective, it does not matter whether she was a sorcerer before the accusation, as she becomes one the moment the villagers determine to accuse her. The verdict is thus transformed into the accusation (an accomplishment worthy of Iago's influence over Othello, as well as of Othello's determination to convict Desdemona). Contrast

¹¹¹ *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, 1975, dir. Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones, in *Monty Python - Almost Everything Box Set*, dir. Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2009. DVD

this thought with Cavell's description of Othello's demand for proof, i.e. his way of dressing Desdemona as an adulterous:

But what prompts my thought primarily is the crazed logic Othello's rage for proof and for "satisfaction" seems to require (like testing for a woman's witchcraft by seeing whether she will drown, declaring that if she does she was innocent but if she does not she is put to death for a witch)¹¹².

Cavell is portraying the request for evidence of those who know that some forms of testing others necessarily end in their conviction. From this perspective, claiming for evidence is a protocol with a predefined ending (either the woman is innocent and drowns or she is condemned as a witch). In Monty Python's sketch, the fact that a succession of ordeals is presented is important. Firstly, the villagers long to burn the witch, after an illogic reasoning they decide to throw her into the lake, to then test her on the ordeal of the scales, change their minds, and return to the first solution and choose to burn her. The suggestion appears to be that, no matter what is the chosen form of proof, the witch will not be saved. Observe the reasoning that leads to the verdict, representative of Sir Bedevere's claim that "There are ways of telling she is a witch":

1.
 - a) witches burn;
 - b) wood burns;
 - c) the witch is made of wood.

Therefore, in order to prove the woman is a witch, they must show she is made of wood.

2.
 - a) wood floats;
 - b) ducks float;
 - c) if the woman weights the same as a duck, she is made of wood.

These syllogisms depend on wild analogies and this does seem to be a case of faulty logic. Ordeals are not only portrayed as a form of imperfect reasoning, as Sir Bedevere appears to be suggesting that, when one knows what to do with the supposed witch, there is

¹¹² Cavell, *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

no logic, either good or bad, that may save her. Even if the arguments of the villagers are biased, as shown by the clothes, the nose, etc. – Sir Bedevere, in a manner of speaking, attempts to conduct a rational trial (much like Desdemona’s hands and eyes). Interestingly, in this scene, the verdict does not appeal to a divine form of Judgment; on the contrary, it is shown as a scientific mode of reasoning. It is not a coincidence that, at the end of the sketch, it is asked: “Who are you who are so wise in the ways of science?” Wisdom is equivalent to a proper understanding of the logic of Sir Bedevere’s illogic rules. More importantly than understanding facts such as “wood burns,” it is determinant to realize that if the woman weighs the same as a duck, she is a duck, and therefore a witch. At the end of the sketch one laughs at those who believe in witches, and those who choose to convict them arbitrarily. Still, the demand for proof is seen as the guarantee of degree of certainty to the accusation and to a process whose ending had previously been established. It is interesting how the sketch underlines the fact that sometimes one’s decisions are sustained in senseless analogies that, vehemently justified, appear to be evident.

Returning to *Othello*, consider the Moor’s quest for proof. Desdemona’s hand is frank in the sense that Iago’s words are truthful; they reveal her supposedly liberal heart, hot and moist standing for an immodest nature. Saying that the hand is humid is not considering it dishonest; on the contrary, it is a good hand for it is a clue to her character that may only be properly seen when considered with other information. A moist hand without Othello’s imagination is not representative, but with it, it stands for that needing punishment, fasting and prayer. Similarly, demanding to look at Desdemona’s eyes equals asking for Iago’s truthful inner thoughts, the eyes signaling that extra something which he wishes had remained untold. This is, thus, a case where what one sees or hears only provides a partial knowledge, and, to be justified, information requires an interpretative effort on the part of the observer, which must use his own knowledge in order to understand a certain state of affairs. It should be noticed how Iago’s insinuations are accompanied by the manner he skillfully handles his own physical reactions in a way that will make Othello mad:

In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst 'Indeed'?
 And didst contract and purse thy brow together
 As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
 Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me
 Show me thy thought.
 (*Othello*, III, iii, 115-119)

To Othello, crying "Indeed?" and contracting the brows together have the same value, as he longs to consider them signs in need of interpretation. These expressions are the footsteps that indicate the horrible secrets inside a person's mind. Othello desires what, in the next chapter, will be considered an ostensive mode of showing things, which departs from the presupposition that, in certain situations, it is possible to point at something and understand it completely, without the need for further explanations. For now, though, the lesson, courtesy of skepticism, seems to be the assumption that every term argues for something else:

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad.
 And his unbookish jealousy must construe
 Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures and light behaviour
 Quite in the wrong.
 (*Othello*, IV, i, 101-104)

The pantomime created to make Othello mad (so similar to the way Hamlet deployed his *Mousetrap*) works because Iago knows Othello builds upon what he sees, instead of relying on his previous knowledge about Cassio. "Construe" means "to connect grammatically," "to combine (words or parts of speech) grammatically," "to admit of grammatical analysis or interpretation," "to expound, interpret, or take in a specified way," but also, "to explain or interpret for legal purposes"¹¹³. Smiles, gestures and light behavior, like Iago's expressions and Desdemona's hands and eyes, are the basis upon which Othello legally, and illogically, interprets affairs. To construe is the Moor's form of completing the information he knows to be lacking, but which in his case acquires the negative sense of interpretative excess, as he attributes to Cassio intentions that exist merely in Iago's insinuations.

¹¹³ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. II, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

From the Moor's point of view, visible proof allows the avoidance of skeptical doubts about other persons, as if every thought and occurrence were exteriorized in observable evidence and did not allow secrets. But this type of proof, much like Iago's words, leaves room for interpretation, as speech is used to suggest what remains hidden and unexpressed, the exterior being used to pinpoint the interior's existence. The difference (one of many, needless to say) between Iago's enunciations and full proof (that which leads to someone's conviction without further doubts, such as a confession), derives from the fact that he plays with this opposition between what is supposedly hidden, and thus interior, and what is exterior, and would thus be visible. The way Iago conceals things from Othello does not derive from a particular use of grammar, but from the way he chooses to allude to things he is not willing to fully explain. Such technique consists in suggesting things which cannot be entirely clarified, so that an obsessive interpreter faces the need to fill those interpretative gaps. The implication seems to be that full proof would manifest its causality, making interpretation unnecessary, unlike circumstantial proof which the interpreter must complete. Othello's necessity for exteriorization is represented in his quest for unequivocal evidence. In *Othello*, the aspiration for the interior's exteriorization is sought out in his accounts about the need for full proof:

No: to be once in doubt
Is once to be resolved.
(*Othello*, III, iii, 182-183)

No, Iago,
I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove,
And on the proof there is no more but this:
Away at once with love and jealousy!
(*Othello*, III, iii, 192-195)

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
Be sure of it, give me the ocular proof.
(*Othello*, III, iii, 362-363)

We know, after Cavell, that Othello is lost the moment he asks for proof of Desdemona's treason and chooses to believe Iago, instead of his wife. But, more importantly, when Othello asks for ocular proof he is assuming that what is visible would dismiss the need

for supplementary explanations. While doubt is to be related with undesired interiority, to be resolute would be the equivalent of settling a certain affair externally. Visible proof, thus, allows the denial of an inner state of doubt, but also of feelings generally portrayed as interior, such as love and jealousy. Evidence is, thus, the exterior element that possesses the ability to explain a certain state of affairs and to supposedly solve inner fears. Although the first and the second quotation seem to be contradictory, the initial lines describing how to doubt is to be certain, and the others the way uncertainty requires proof, the main thought in both passages is the assumption that suspicion must always be accompanied by further evidence or certainty. Even though the Moor seems to think otherwise, for him proof requires accessories. This is truly Othello's mistake: the thought that what is visible and completely externalized does not compel further inquiry or interpretation, and the lack of understanding of his own mind and process of reasoning, based upon the idea that everything is accompanied by an inner and horrible truth which is left untold. In fact, it does not matter which is the type of proof Othello is given, as he will always attempt to transform it, following Iago's advice, into an explanation about deception.

An employee of the CIA for twenty-eight years wrote: 'As a causal explanation, deception is intrinsically satisfying precisely because it is so orderly and rational. When other persuasive explanations are not (perhaps because the phenomena we are seeking to explain were actually caused by mistakes, failures to follow orders, or other factors unknown to us), deception offers a convenient and easy explanation. It is convenient because intelligence officers are generally sensible to the possibility of deception, and its detection is often taken as indicative of sophisticated penetrating analysis'¹¹⁴.

In this representation, rationalizations about duplicity have the advantage of being more perfect than others, as they have the benefit of appearing to be orderly and rational. Such descriptions seem to be superior to other possibilities given the fact that they are never portrayed as a result of error, mistake or failure. This is, it could be argued, due to the fact that the interpreter outlines clearly the proof at hand, neglecting what does not appear to

¹¹⁴ Richards J. Heuer, "Cognitive factors in Deception and Counterdeception," *Strategic Military Deception*, in Paul Ekman, *Telling Lies – Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics and Marriage*. NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 173.

make sense in this light, and favoring evidence which is in agreement with this previously established theory. One's preference for conspiratorial theories, or what Cavell sees as Othello's wish to prove his wife's guilt, would justify the timeliness of these clarifications. The need for ocular proof is also related with Othello's fallacious assumption that the explanation for all events is hidden in Iago's mind, but may be ascertained if visible evidence is found. What he does not understand is that this is a truth that was previously determined, and that all proof will end up, as it depends on his biased interpretation, proving Iago's words.

At the same time, in his quest for an absolute certainty where inference would not play a role, Othello inaccurately assumes that visible proof is not circumstantial and that its *prima facie* validity does not require a supplement. In *Othello*, as mentioned, interpretation appears as a necessity due to Iago's purposeful insinuations. Here, it is of great interest to us the thought that Iago, the figure of Vice, uses language as a form of insinuation, accompanied by Marjorie Garber's description of how to imply is a form of pulling dark things out of people's imaginations:

For just as we noticed that he never *does* anything, but instead moves other people to do things, so he never really says anything, but uses language to insinuate, to imply, to pull out of people's imaginations the dark things that are already there¹¹⁵.

Garber maintains that "Iago is inside as well as outside Othello"¹¹⁶: as he uses language as a form of suggesting vile thoughts that are already present in each character's mind, he echoes them, as Othello himself notices. In this form of insinuation relies Iago's torture of Othello, which resides in highlighting the idea that there is an unbearable truth to be learned. Notice how to insinuate signifies "1. To introduce tortuously, sinuously, indirectly or by devious methods; to introduce by imperceptible degrees or subtle means"; "2. To introduce (a person) by sinuous, stealthy, or artful ways into some position or relation; esp. *refl.* to worm oneself in, or make one's way sinuously or stealthily into the company, society,

¹¹⁵ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005, p. 606.

¹¹⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p. 608.

favour, affection, etc. of another”¹¹⁷. The notion of insinuation in the play does not portray merely the way someone has introduced himself (as Iago has into Othello’s close circle of acquaintances in order to do him harm), but also how he tortuously gave voice to thoughts and fears in Othello’s mind. Notice how this aspect is similar to Hamlet’s pantomime, in the sense that he, too, was predisposing the suspect to the interrogation, emphasizing his emotional tension in order to obtain the required outcome (a mode of proceeding, you will recall, that appears to be similar to how a torturer obtains a confession from a suspect). From this perspective, returning to Garber’s sentence, if the act of torturing may be described as a technique of extracting dark things, such as confessions of crimes, from people’s minds, perhaps it is not an overstatement to deem Iago as Othello’s torturer:

Avaunt, be gone, thou hast set me on the rack!
I swear ‘tis better to be much abused
Than but to know’t a little.
(*Othello*, III, iii, 338-340)

As it is commonly known, references to torture occur in *Othello*, as in other Shakespeare’s plays. Take the rack, one of the oldest and most common instruments of torture, is a rectangular wooden table, where the accused is placed with his arms and legs stretched and tied to weights or rollers. Once working, the torturers pull the strings, dislocating the articulations, bones and muscles of the accused, and leading the body to its breaking point. It is a particularly painful technique, accentuated by the cracking sound made by the disjuncting of the limbs, which produces a devastating effect on the accused. When Othello argues that Iago has put him on the rack, he is complaining about how his own skeptical doubts are represented in Iago’s words. The rack appears as the skeptical instrument of truth, which provides the type of proof one is looking for. The fact that Othello is the one on the rack, and the way Iago is to blame for it, is telling, as Iago is helping him in this pre-established quest for certainty. In *Othello*, such dismembering may be perceived in the following passage, which is worth quoting, as is its analysis:

¹¹⁷ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

Handkerchief! confessions! handkerchief! – To confess and be hanged for his labour! First to be hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it. Nature would not invest such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is't possible? Confess! Handkerchief! O devil!"
(*Othello*, IV, 1, 41-43)

The breakdown of Othello's speech follows the loss of his faith in Desdemona. Iago's manipulation of language through subtraction, insinuation, artful echo, pause, and silence – ultimately outlaws and outwits the grand speeches and resounding periods. (...) Othello says, 'It is not words that shakes me thus' - yet it is only words that do, Iago's words ¹¹⁸.

The idea that the language of Othello, his "music," in G. Wilson Knight's expression, collapses in this scene, is sensible. Marjorie Garber considers that the outcome of Iago's maneuvering of language is the loss of Othello's language, which, as in other plays, is deemed the emblem of his loss of humanity. Incoherence, "fragments of sentences about fragments of bodies," signals the breakdown of Othello's personality, and of what was important to him, in Garber's words, his reputation, sense of soldier, diplomat, Venetian hero and husband. But Othello's complaint that he is not being shaken by words must be read having in mind the way he argues that he has been set on the rack, which is why noses, ears and lips appear to be disjointed, and are followed by the word "confess". What makes him quiver is the form of test he knows to be demanding and the way Iago's words are a preview of what will happen to Desdemona. The confirmation of his skeptical doubts are those noises during torture that will end up producing his fit, the consequence of excessive pain in a subject who perishes during the torment. Confessions under torture are seldom great speeches, which is the reason Othello recovers his voice only after Iago is under arrest. For Cavell, in the previously quoted sentence, "First to be hanged, and then to confess: I tremble at it" (IV, i, 38-39), Othello does not know whether he is a torturer or victim. It may be argued that Othello is Desdemona's torturer (he certainly is her executioner), but in this passage he is also the tortured one¹¹⁹. So, on the one side, Othello is Iago's victim of torture, who leads him to the rack with the aim to extract from him the truth about Othello's conviction regarding Desdemona's culpability.

¹¹⁸ Marjorie Garber, *Op. cit.*, p. 612.

¹¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

But, on the other side, Othello is indeed Desdemona's torturer, in the sense that he construes the evidence leading to her guilt, and establishes his own tribunal of interpretation with the pre-determined purpose to convict her.

Lastly, when speaking of "torment" it is fitting that the word derive from the Latin *torqueo*, to twist, while the *tortor* is the one who twists or tightens the ropes on the rack, which is a good description of Iago's procedure, as Othello suspects. Insinuation appears, therefore, as the form that allows the rack's ropes to be pulled, thus increasing the amount of pain to be inflicted on the subject. This is why even if, at some point, Othello understands the need for such a test, he threatens his torturer regarding the consequences of erroneously administering the proof.

If thou dost slander her and torture me
Never pray more, abandon all remorse;
On horror's head horrors accumulate,
(*Othello*, III, iii, 371-373)

Torture appears as the form of manipulation Garber described, but also as a way of making someone believe, as was mentioned, that everything is what it appears to be and something else, those horrors that gather on horror's head. Torturing, a form of twisting someone to give shape to his meanings, thus making a confession emerge, is here described both as a mode of inflicting pain, and as a way of twisting thoughts into ideas of jealousy. These horrors are also the threat which Othello, as a tortured subject, will wish to impose upon Iago, his torturer. This accumulation of terrors, or the collecting of inferred evidence that "may help to thicken other proofs" (III, iii, 433) is Iago's manner of tightening the ropes, while making Othello be content with circumstantial proof: "But yet, I say, \ If imputation and strong circumstances \ Which lead directly to the door of truth \ Will give you satisfaction, you may have' t. (III, iii, 409-411). Iago's lines redefine Hamlet's more reasonable words¹²⁰, which aim to represent the possibility of finding favorable

¹²⁰ Cf. "If circumstances lead me, I will find \ Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed \ Within the centre". (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 157-159)

circumstances leading to the hidden truth. Othello, however, will be guided to the entrance of certainty, but left at its doorstep. This passage helps us consider the reasons of Othello's failure to ascertain the truth: the fact that he, unlike Hamlet, did not wish to be a good evaluator of other's bodily expressions, that he chose his Horatio thinking about the desired outcome for his trial, and that he devised his group of ordeals sustained in circumstantial proof. Othello's tribunal of interpretation, unlike ordinary courts, departs from the idea that someone has a hidden self and that it may be put to the test. But it considered the judge's function to supplement the information given with what he considers to be left untold, as if circumstantial proof obliges its interpreter to make sense of its meaning, to construe its sense¹²¹.

As was seen, Othello's theory proves to be the result of someone's interpretative excesses, but the play ends showing that the Moor's malady is that of the Venetian state. Judicial torture is portrayed as allowing characters to control such excesses, punish the guilty one, and, hopefully, make him speak. Observe this argument in favor of the use of torture (it is unimportant whether it is Shakespeare's or what the Venetian State deems to be a proper mode of solving difficult affairs):

For this slave,
If there be any cunning cruelty
That can torment him much and hold him long,
It shall be his.
(*Othello*, V, ii, 330-333)

(...)

To you, lord governor,
Remains the censure of this hellish villain,
The time, the place, the torture: O, enforce it!
(*Othello*, V, ii, 365-367)

The last scene, focused on Iago's motivations, is an attempt to deny his words, "From this time forth I never will speak a word.", to which Gratiano replies "Torments will ope your

¹²¹ Such thought, which Desdemona intuitively shares, but is unable to fully comprehend, is represented in her line, "O, my fear interprets!" (V, ii, 73), which in some editions appears as "O Feare interprets then...", and is followed by "What he is dead?" (V, ii, 74). This verse, the best description of Othello's theory of interpretation, exemplifies a way of analyzing situations that tends to extrapolate affairs.

lips” (V, ii, 301-302). Torture is not, however, being used to extract a confession, but as a form of punishing Iago. An admission under torture has the advantage of dismissing the need for other evidence (it is the “queen of proof”), thus making causal explanations unnecessary. A confession under torture would thus enable the truth to appear, the whole truth, leading to Iago’s conviction without further doubt. Torture, in *Othello*, has the value of Hamlet’s theatre show, and of blood, the witness Macbeth longs to avoid. At the same time, torture is the reply given by the Venetian state to the Duke’s initial critique of forms of obtaining the truth based on weak inferences. Torture appears, therefore, as a mode of obtaining certainty, dealing with intractable subjects and of controlling interpretation.

In the ending of each play lies an important difference between *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello*. Hamlet’s last lines portray his advice to Horatio: “I am dead, / Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied.” (V, ii, 343-345), or “If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, / Absent thee from felicity awhile, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story” (V, ii, 351-354). Horatio remains alive with the task of explaining the tragedy of Denmark to others, he needs to justify Hamlet’s actions and explain on whom laid the guilt of his father’s murder. On the contrary, *Macbeth*’s finale consists on the other characters’ unkind words to the diseased tyrant. According to Siward: “He’s worth no more; / And so God be with him! – Here comes new comfort” (V, ix, 17-19). Both plays conclude with the beginning of a new reign, but it is known that *Hamlet* will be perpetuated, while in *Macbeth* everyone aims to forget what has happened: measure, time and place are in order, so there is no need to look back and pay attention to what was an attempt to pervert time and power. Hamlet wished to make people acquainted with the truth and wanted Claudius to publicly confess, so he conjures a strategy to this effect. Macbeth and his wife, on the contrary, spend their time trying to conceal their actions and making sure no one will know them; they are trying to hide their story during the whole duration of the play. In *Othello* the case is slightly different, as successive inquiries follow each other, different attempts to fathom the characters’ honesty. In the other tragedies, it was possible to realize what the truth was (considering Hamlet is able to provide the evidence in need, and Macbeth knows he

committed the assassination and understands the nature of the punishment which follows). In *Othello*, at first sight, characters tend to extrapolate and assume their worst conjectures are facts, failing to understand the evidence at their disposal and to test the truth. If this were so, Othello's skill would differ from Hamlet's and he could not be seen as an accurate interpreter. But when we consider Cavell's theory correct, we understand that Othello was, indeed, trying to prove Desdemona's guilt; we realize that his talent (as well as his misfortune) lies in the ability to construe a causal story of deceit from circumstantial evidence. In fact, *Othello*'s plot seems to conclude without a conclusive answer to the problems posed as, unlike the other plays, it ends with the threat of torture and the establishment of a court (as well as the interrogation on whether Iago's motives will ever be clarified).

There is another important point in Hamlet's wishes for his saga to be told: while he knows that a truth test may help to uncover a criminal, he understands that sometimes to pronounce a verdict about someone's culpability is a way of telling a story. When *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* are read and juxtaposed side by side, paying attention to the way bodily signs and physical reactions are described, one understands two things. Firstly, that it is assumed these signs do not need to be interpreted, they are considered to be so clear that the only thing to do is to look at them attentively. This is the reason why Horatio and Hamlet seem to see the same when they look at Claudius and, ultimately, why the Macbeths attempt to veil their faces. This type of evidence seems to demonstrate a dichotomy between forms of proof: if, on the one hand, they seem to work through an ostensive definition (pointing to an object and defining it), on the other, they also depend on the observer's ability to tell, or justify, a story. Both forms of description will be object of discussion in the following chapter.

Chapter II

The Truth in a Nutshell

A drop of patience; but alas, to make me
The fixed figure for the time of scorn,
To point his flow, and moving finger at!
(*Othello*, IV, ii, 54-56)

Bleeding corpses, doll's houses for forensic use, some Shakespeare's lines or someone's bodily signs, will be the object of the following pages. Interpreters look upon these contradictory entities, which, at first sight, appear to be simultaneously secretive and talkative, both resisting and demanding analysis, as a key that allows the comprehension of intricate situations.

The chapter deals with two complementary attempts to control interpretation. The possibility that a problem may be solved – if the observer is both attentive and skillful, if he possesses the ability to point to a certain object, or characteristic, and make (truthful) assertions about it – is considered. However, the act of pointing to something gives the impression that interpretation is not being used as a tool for the object's comprehension, which, as will be seen, is not always the case. This way of understanding intricate problems considers that certain objects, used as touchstones, allow us to make truthful judgments. In such cases, the interpreter must manage the touchstone appropriately, thereby associating the technique of pointing to interpretative tools such as comparison and analysis.

The case of Frances Glessner Lee's nutshell models, small doll-houses built to help police investigators in their analysis of crime scenes, allows us to understand how observation and the ability to point to the features of a certain object may help to decipher complex enigmas. In *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, interpreters fear or attempt to ignore evidence which may be seen by all and denied by no one. For example, when, in the first act of the play, Lady Anne maintains that King Edward's corpse, her father-in-law, is bleeding in accusation of Richard of Gloucester's crimes, no one disagrees. This is a situation where the entity, i.e. the corpse; the one making the accusation, Lady Anne; and the offender, Richard, seem to be of a similar mind (even if, at first sight, the corpse does not seem to possess a mind). Entities considered as fluent as bleeding corpses are, as will be seen, used as a touchstone. This is exemplified by Hamlet's way of showing Gertrude the superiority of his father over Claudius, or by Matthew Arnold's defense of a touchstone critical method. The following pages deal with modes of pointing that seem to be more than a way of indicating something, rather a means of understanding and of proving the veracity or falseness of an accusation.

1. Observing and pointing



In a crime scene, the unexposed part of a pillow has marks of lipstick. Is this indication of natural death, suicide or murder? Learning how to distinguish different hypotheses will be the investigator's task. Frances Glessner Lee, a wealthy woman with an unusual interest in death, forensic medicine, crime investigation and doll's houses, searched

for a way to deal with such problems. Lee was responsible, among other feats, for the establishment of the Department of Legal Medicine at Harvard, in 1931. She is mostly remembered, however, for building “The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death,” a group of dioramas that reproduce crime scenes on a one-inch to one-foot scale. The “nutshell models,” small doll's houses featuring gruesome details, have the purpose to teach policemen to be attentive, and to reflect upon the type of proof one may find in a crime scene¹²². Inside the nutshell called “Unpapered Bedroom,” one encounters a miniature doll lying dead in bed. In the police report, it is explained that Mrs. Bessie Collins had rented a room to a couple that identified themselves as Mr. and Mrs. John Smith¹²³. On Monday morning the man leaves early, paying for the room and asking the landlady to leave his wife undisturbed, as she wished to sleep in. At three in the afternoon, Mrs. Bessie Collins asks the maid, Stella Walsh, to see if the area may be tidied. At five, the servant says something is wrong, as she is unable to wake Mrs. John Smith. Both women enter the room and discover the body is cold, therefore calling the police. Investigators find the place exactly as the landlady had left it.

This educational tool has the purpose to train police officers, in order to improve their observation skills, avoid the destruction of valuable evidence, and notice small details, without which the crime scene would be misunderstood (policemen were given the information usually available in investigations, such as witnesses’ testimonies). Charles Dickens, in *Bleak House*, characterized Inspector Bucket as an intelligent man with a “cunning eye,” one who “mounts a high tower in his mind and looks out far and wide”¹²⁴. In the diorama's case, police officers should possess intelligence and observation skills, but instead of looking far and wide, they had to concentrate on the particular elements of the

¹²² Composed over the years, and in obedience to the most rigorous principles of representation, the models were extremely detailed, as Glessner Lee considered that the policemen would only take the exercise seriously if they felt the crime scenes were real. Varying according to each crime, the dioramas contain, for example, droplets of blood on the floor or in a baby's nursery room wall, a dead miniature body in a cabin, a box of tiny chocolates beneath a bed, cigarettes, newspapers, an open window. All models have a calendar on the wall, which indicates the day of the murder.

¹²³ There is a calendar five years behind hanging on the wall (a sign that Mrs. Collins is not the most attentive housekeeper), the entry rug is showing signs of wear and tear, and simple fabrics indicate that this is a modest establishment.

¹²⁴ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*. London: Wordsworth Classics, 2001, p. 655.

crime scene. Glessner explains the exercise by saying: “The inspector may best imagine them by imagining himself a trifle less than six inches tall. With that firmly in mind, a few moments of observation will then make him able to step into the scene and there find many tiny details that might otherwise escape notice”¹²⁵. Whereas Dickens’s Inspector Buckley searched in his mind for an explanation, Lee’s investigators must concentrate their attention on each object. To properly see them, the viewer had to position himself in the correct angle, given that the puzzle proposed by Glessner Lee could only be solved if the observer were in the right place. This was not, however, the entirety of what the investigator had to envision:

Because continuous actions cannot be represented, each model is a tableau depicting the scene at the most effective moment, very much as if a motion picture were stopped at such a point. (...) In presenting these cases the Nutshell laboratories are acting as a consulting agency, the time and date when a case is presented to them is not necessarily the same as the time and date when it is reported to the police. Each case is based on actual facts, altered to avoid identification and enlarged to create a more intricate problem¹²⁶.

Although the dolls’ dresses, as well as their houses, obeyed to strict principles of verisimilitude, varying according to social status, the crime scenes were a modification of murders that had taken place. Not only were certain facts altered, as Lee felt the need to make the puzzle more complex (it is intriguing to consider how cases that troubled investigators for months were not deemed sufficiently elaborate to her eyes). Interestingly, the exercise seems to reproduce not the work of a police investigator, but that of the author of sleuth mystery novels, somewhat like Lee’s friend, Erle Stanley Gardner, who devised murder stories and had to come up with a plausible explanation for them. Instead of writing a narrative, Lee chose a moment and used it to represent a problem needing to be solved. Another difference between the two friends had to do with the fact that, for Frances Lee, the crime’s resolution was less important than the valuable lesson of teaching policemen how to be attentive. Here lies an important specificity of Glessner’s method: although the crime scene is taken as a whole, each object represents a particular problem needing to be

¹²⁵ Frances Glessner Lee, “Foreword to the Investigator,” in Corinne May Botz, *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*. New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004, p. 47.

¹²⁶ Frances Glessner Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

disentangled and without which it becomes impossible to find the solution to the case.

For this to be possible, it is necessary to have method¹²⁷. Lee provided the material which would usually be at the investigators' disposal when approaching the crime scene, as well as initial statements from witnesses. It should be considered that a crime scene represents a place where something extraordinary takes place. The occurrence of a murder, whose meaning has to be disclosed, is frequently compared with an enigmatic site that resists interpretation. Yet, the crime scene is also a location where, unlike the coffee you order every morning at the usual coffee shop, a problem is presented, thus calling for interpretation. The difference between both places seems to reside in the fact that, although I may look for inordinate things in the former, and even find them, ordering a coffee daily is not a problem that requires a solution. Perhaps a reasonable account for this would be to consider that crime scenes and, consequently, the objects inside them, are difficult to explain, but do demand explanation. In her "Foreword to the Investigator," Lee observes:

It will simplify the examiner's work if he will first choose the point at which he enters the scene and, beginning at his left at the place, describe the premises in a clockwise direction back to the starting point, thence to the centre of the scene and ending with the body and its immediate surroundings¹²⁸.

Each article presents a problem needing to be solved. Lee's skilled observer should point carefully to an object, in an attempt to underline otherwise unnoticed features, which exist, and are potentially visible, only to be seen by particularly good observers or specialists. This perspective results from the idea that the interpreter's surveillance brings forth hidden characteristics of things or situations. Such mode of understanding assumes that doubtful things can be exhaustively analyzed through observation. The description of the scene in a clockwise direction turned police officers into systematic analysts, and had the purpose of

¹²⁷ In the Harvard Department of Legal Medicine, the nutshell models were included in the *curricula* of the seminars for training policemen (the dioramas, now in Baltimore, are still used to improve investigators' skills). Glessner, who paid for the sessions, was the only woman present, and would give examiners a limited amount of time to take notes of the crime scenes and then tell others what they had seen (achievement was always rewarded with a dinner at the Ritz Carlton, where policemen were taught to be at their best behaviour, while enjoying the exquisite china Glessner had especially bought for the occasion).

¹²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

making them acknowledge every article in the room, whether the item had, or not, relevance. Assumptions should only be made after the categorization of the objects had taken place, as every detail could be of importance for the solving of the crime. To see a scene clockwise implies, firstly, the act of collecting information and, secondly, the transformation of that information into proof. Lee does not, however, portray this as an explanation of evidence. Her aim with the nutshells is to observe something and not to interpret it (as will be later seen, in these modes of proof interpretation seems to be considered something the observer adds to the facts previously analyzed, which should be dismissed in accurate evaluations).

A point in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* helps to enlighten Glessner Lee's theory of observation, as the possibility of showing an object without explaining it is perhaps better understood if one considers ostensive definitions¹²⁹. Wittgenstein argues that, to understand what "red" is, we do not need to hear an explanation of what red means, but only to point to a red object or to say: "That is red". Hence, the color may be demonstrated through the application of the word "red" to a red object (to understand an object is to be able to name it and to comprehend its use). P. M. S. Hacker refers that ostensive explanations may appear in the form of: "a deictic gesture; something pointed at; a verbal formula that is, or that is called"¹³⁰. These definitions are not, though, a description or a justification, "what it does is provide a *standard of correctness* for the use of the word red"¹³¹. There are important differences, which will be later discussed, between Lee's perspective and Wittgenstein's claim, thus abruptly abridged. Still, the notion that "an ostensive definition explains the use"¹³² of a certain word accurately represents these investigators' ambition, as their main purpose in a crime scene is to be able to point to some objects and determine what their use was in that context. This process may be learned through what Wittgenstein calls "ostensive teaching of words":

¹²⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, transl. G. E. M. Anscombe, 1953. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, § 27 to § 39, p. 11-17.

¹³⁰ G. P. Baker, P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning*, 1980. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 85.

¹³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹³² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Op. cit.*, § 30, p. 12.

An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word; for instance, the word 'slab' as he point to that shape. (I do not want to call this 'ostensive definition', because the child cannot as yet ask what the name is. I will call it 'ostensive teaching of words'. – I will say it will form an important part of the training, because it is so with human beings; not because it could not be imagined otherwise¹³³).

Wittgenstein is describing the way children may learn to relate a certain object, color or shape with its name, thus associating "the word and the thing". Unlike an ostensive definition, which requires someone to acknowledge and understand what names are, this introductory process merely aims to teach students to name objects. Such procedure, which in Lee's theory of observation would consist of the making of a list with the name of the objects in the crime scene, is the first step in Wittgenstein's process of learning. After this, one could be taught how to describe them, as:

"naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game – any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess"¹³⁴.

This separation between naming and describing is what Lee aims to highlight, even if policemen, unlike children, already know the names of objects. They must, however, return to a state in which the eye is trained to point to something and label it without further considerations. This is why, I think, Lee would appreciate the idea that giving a name is placing the object on the board, a preparation for what follows, as relating that object within a description would be, as for Wittgenstein, step two. Theoretically, the role of interpretation must be limited, since the viewer should only apprehend what he observes in an attempt to understand which features are relevant to the object's perception. Consider that, to portray the dioramas' main attributes, the investigator will have to categorize the hierarchy of details as relevant, which will lead to a redefinition of the object as it was initially observed. It would be necessary to point to a group of traces that could have been previously ignored and fit

¹³³ *Op. cit.*, §6, p. 4.

¹³⁴ *Op. cit.*, §49, p. 21.

them in the object's perception, adding such information to what was later found. The facts presented should be self-explanatory, so that different persons could understand them in a similar way. Unlike what happens in Wittgenstein's discussion of ostensive definitions, Lee is concerned with the necessity to give police officers technical tools. Pointing to something is, therefore, not only a way of understanding the object but also of showing others what was perceived.

Although listing the objects in the nutshell consists in the enumeration of what was found, step two in Lee's proposal would be to advise investigators to employ them as what Wittgenstein would call "samples". This vast group of entities includes colors, actions, objects, events, shapes, among many others, depending on how they are used, and which may acquire a different function¹³⁵. They are, thus, an example for something else.

The observer must therefore view each case with an entirely open mind. The Nutshell Studies are not presented as crimes to be solved – they are, rather, designed as exercises in observing and evaluating indirect evidence, especially that which may have medical importance¹³⁶.

The type of indirect evidence that can make a difference in investigative decisions could, then, be considered a sample with an unusual role. The occurrence of a murder transforms the common meaning of the objects that lie inside the crime scene; and they are often described as possessing something that needs to be reinterpreted, so that they may be understood. Each diorama presents a fiction requiring a justification and, more importantly, endows objects with a secondary, but highly important, meaning. In Lee's doll's houses, some coffee cups and bloodstains have a double function: as certain objects obey the particular purpose with which they were made, they are also evidence for something else. Although the use of the objects does not change in itself (a pillow is still a pillow), they acquire an additional function, their place in the scene is transformed in this context where they work as proof.

¹³⁵ As P. M. S. Hacker notices: "When used as samples, functional objects typically do not have their usual functions nor actions their standard roles". G. P. Baker, P. M. S. Hacker, *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹³⁶ Frances Glessner Lee, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.

In the models, therefore, evidence is distinguished from regular objects, given that it is, somehow, dissonant. The strangeness of the clue may derive from diverse reasons. An object may, for example, be misplaced, as happens in the nutshell "Attic," where policemen should understand why, if the victim committed suicide by hanging herself, is one of her shoes on her foot and the other on the stairs that lead to the attic? Attention should be paid to the doll's face, which presents scratches and bruises that could suggest murder. There is equally proof which contradicts other evidence. In "Attic," the love letters on the floor could reveal nostalgia for a lost past, but the scratches on the woman's face indicate violence, which means that when all the evidence is taken into account homicide makes more sense than suicide. Missing clues are also significant. If a man was shot and the bullet is not in his body, police officers should search the premises for it until it is discovered, as the bullet trajectory gives indications about the location where the murder took place.

The establishment of a hierarchy of evidence is relevant in the "nutshell models". Objects, such as alcohol bottles and shoes, are different from fingerprints or spots of blood, which are a consequence of the crime. Likewise, shoes and spots of blood should also be distinguished from the corpse, a body which had an existence prior to the crime, but which has become something else with it. One could argue that, from this perspective, the corpse would equal the first type of objects mentioned, but the fact is, while other objects are considered proof, the corpse is taken as a testimony of events. The same happens with the murder weapon, which may be portrayed as an everyday object, such as a knife, or a rope, whose function mutated with the crime. The murder weapon, like the corpse, seems to be more similar to the case of a witness, not only because it possesses forensic evidence which could lead investigators to identify the murderer, but also because it helps to make clear how the murder was committed. The police officer could be considered the expert at evaluating and distinguishing types of objects according to their function in the crime scene. Investigators would, then, have to put those everyday, but misplaced, objects, in a context where they could be explained. But, while Wittgenstein's samples have "a normative role" (they are "standard of comparison"), Lee's objects can only be associated within a theory

about murder. They may not be combined in the category of green objects, but may perhaps be considered like specimens in a museum, i. e., models which are associated, by comparison, in a certain group and used as examples.

In the diorama's case, objects are only significant when Lee wishes them to be so, as they translate her deliberate intentions in the construction of the models. As it happens with a riddle, policemen have to discover Lee's intentions and explain them. In a crime scene, for example, when both criminal and victim touch these entities, they bestow meaning on them. Not only would assassination be responsible for endowing objects with new, and talkative, features, the investigators' interpretation also plays a significant role in their explanation. Lee devised the objects and the investigators interpret them. The query here is, however, to understand how they distinguish truthful and untruthful entities, so that it becomes possible to parenthetically dwell upon the possibility that those who endow these things with meaning may be speaking the truth, lying or attempting to mislead us.

This type of proof would, therefore, be taciturn due to its complexity, but talkative as it reveals someone's actions and intentions in a certain situation. In the case of the dioramas, while objects speak as they reveal Glessner Lee's intentions, the models only tell us what she wished them to say, they are intentional objects. If the same could be said of a crime scene, then each object could be explained according to the way it had been handled by the murderer, the victim, or both. The explanation for their transformation of status could not be found in the object itself, but through the way someone had manipulated them. Pointing to objects and writing lists are, after all, forms of making choices, of picking something from a context and underlining it. The objects in a certain museum, returning to Wittgenstein's samples, were chosen by someone, most likely an expert, who considered them, for example, illustrative of the art of a given period. These choices are often reason for disagreement between connoisseurs, who must also find factual evidence for not accepting others' point of view. The reason why disagreement and erroneous conclusions are limited in Lee's doll's houses results from the fact that she is responsible for the writing of a history of each object, she is able to distinguish those which have, or not, a relation with the crime and she may

correct the investigator's conclusions. Although it makes sense to assume that our observation skills improve with experience, it should not be presumed that pointing to something is an act which does not involve interpretation or require previous judgment (in a literary text, as will be seen, the critic may point to a certain passage and underline it through the use of quotation, but this does not, in itself, help to elucidate his thoughts about the text or even the text itself). Neither the act of observing nor that of "describing the premises" may be considered neutral activities; they rely upon a worldview and prior experiences which so often determine our gaze. Lee recognizes this, which makes her understand the need to systematize observation and, still, when depicting the necessity to "evaluate indirect evidence" she seems to consider that this assessment will be mainly factual.

Not all cases are, however, like the models. Evidence which is considered self-sufficient, requiring no other proof or explanation, is seldom, if ever, refuted as falsely inducing or mistaken by interpreters. The correlation between innocence and clear bodily signs is ancient, as the ordeal proves. Although there is critical disagreement regarding the purpose, or social function, of the medieval ordeal, it may be considered that one of its relevant characteristics is the idea that God interferes in the proof's outcome so that self-explanatory marks may appear in the guilty one's body¹³⁷. The ordeal's execution obeyed to rigorous principles, described by Eberhard of Bamberg¹³⁸. In the hot water ordeal (*judicium aquae ferventis*), three days before the proof took place the accused was blessed and began his fasting period, in which he would only eat bread, salt, herbs, and was required to pray. The priest entered the Church followed by the jury and the accused. While the others waited, the Priest chose the place where the fire was lit and blessed it, as well as the instruments which were to be used in the exorcism of the Devil's presence, and he would then celebrate Mass. The suspect's arm would then be cleansed with soap and observed by the jury while the

¹³⁷ I am only portraying ordeals in which the proof's outcome depends on involuntary body signs, such as burns, vomiting, blood or flotation in water. I will not deal with ordeals in which the outcome depends on the skill of the accused, such as in the duel, or battle ordeal, or endurance, as happens with the ordeal of the cross. John M. Roberts, defines this type of proof as autonomic ordeal. Cf. John M. Roberts, "Oaths, Autonomic Ordeals and Power," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, vol. 67, n.º 6, Part.2: The Ethnography of the Law, Dez. 1965, p. 187.

¹³⁸ *The Breviary of Eberhard of Bamberg*, ed. Zeumer em MG.LL. Sec. V, *Formulae*, p. 650, transl. in University of Pennsylvania Translations and Reprints. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1898, vol. 4, pp. 7-9.

water was boiled. If it was a simple ordeal, used to try misdemeanors, the accused would be asked to put his arm in the water at wrist length, or to take a ring or a stone from the water in a previously established distance. When the accusations were more serious, the accused was submitted to the triple ordeal, in which the whole arm was immersed in water until it reached the shoulder, whether there was, or not, an object inside the cauldron. When the proof ended the suspect's arm was bandaged with a clean cloth and sealed with a seal of the church. After three days, the limb would be untied, and if the wound was clean and the injuries were healing well, he was considered innocent. Although there was a jury present at the ceremony which would, sometimes, disagree¹³⁹, most ordeals were solved without further inquiry. The meaning of the bodily signs was deemed incontrovertible, and not the mere outcome of an observation which determined a state of affairs. The criteria presiding the application of the ordeal were based on the consideration that it was validated by Divine intervention, thus there was not a role for human interpretation in it. It was not supposed to be uncertain; it was an objective mode of proof based on fact.

In Glessner Lee's dioramas, the investigator's skill relies on his capacity to observe the evidence. In the ordeal, the ritual needs to be thoroughly followed so that a clear result may appear. Failure to do so will produce dubious bodily signs, such as an arm which the jury is unable to evaluate with certitude. The inconclusive outcome of the proof is not related with the subject's eventual guilt, with God's role on the test, or the jury's evaluation, but with the inability to follow the procedure. In this case, the interpreter's role does not rely on his capacity to be a good judge. This means that observation is not considered a technical tool. In theory, if the priest followed instructions, the jury's role would only be that of claiming a verdict and making it clear to others (publicly showing an obvious result).

As with Lee's objects, the arm is a sample, proof of the test which has taken place. It is, however, a sample that may not and does not need to be grouped with other evidence; it is the single proof that allows the jury to pronounce a verdict and to dismiss all other types of evidence. Pointing to the limb follows its observation, and its importance is derived from the

¹³⁹ Cf. Bartlett, Robert, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

fact that it is used as a way of distinguishing truthful and untruthful bodily signs, as well as proclaiming a verdict. In the ordeal, judges are not naming something, but reaching a verdict. This would, then, correspond to the type of proof which may be portrayed as talkative. To assume so, yet, is to ignore that ordeals were acts of God, and to disregard the idea that it is God who endows objects and limbs with uncommon abilities. Ordeals reveal God's intervention in the proof (the same way Lee devised her models) and they are, from this perspective, intentional objects. I would, thus, deny the notion that these things do, themselves, utter the truth. Ventriloquism, in this situation, is expressed by God's intervention in the proof.

The idea that judgments sustained by factual knowledge should be encouraged seems to stem from another relevant point of view. As shown earlier, in the medieval judicial ordeal it is presumed that to put something on trial is to submit it to a physical test from which clear conclusions will ensue. This is to consider that ordeals are a nonintellectual way of determining the truth¹⁴⁰. The implication seems to be that a judgment of fact is clearer than intellectual forms of proof, since it does not depend on human speculation, but on evidence based on facts that may be seen by all. While human reasoning is individual and may lead to differentiated conclusions, facts are universal. The ordeal is seen as a way to put something to the test, an experiment dealing with the purpose of making the truth appear and interpretation unnecessary.

The similarity between the ordeal and Lee's models relies on the fact that pointing is a way to form a verdict, even if in Lee's case it is required that one should indicate more than one type of proof. The act of ostensibly showing something in the ordeal is accompanied by the ambition of proving its truthfulness or falsity. Lee believes that if the investigator shows an object and establishes its correct use the truth is determined. In this context, the truth is

¹⁴⁰ In the medieval cold water ordeal (*judicium aquae frigidae*) it was assumed, as Hincmar de Reims upholds, that water was a divine, purified element, which would not receive in it those who had been stained by a crime. After the ritual had taken place, the suspect would be tied with a rope and lowered into a pond or a reservoir of water. If Nature took its normal course, the suspect was innocent, for this form of proof differed from others in requiring a miracle to convict the accused. The outcome of the ordeal was self-explainable and did not require the use of complex intellectual judgments. The fact that a miracle was required for the accused's body not to be taken in the waters made the verdict easy to justify. Hincmar de Reims, *De Divortio Lotharii Regis et Theutbergae reginae*, introd. Letha Böhringer. Hannover: Hahn, 1992, p.155.

not necessarily equivalent to the solving of the diorama (even if that is desirable), but to the depiction of the objects' accurate use\meaning in the nutshell. Lee regards ostensive definitions as the ability to clarify ambiguous things, as they seem to solve the need for a definite, and unequivocal, mode of proof. Moreover, she seems to consider that if the true use of the object is found, then different persons will understand it in the same way (pointing allows us to dismiss further explanations). For Lee or, as was seen, in the ordeal, there is only one use for some expressions.

For Wittgenstein, though, ostensive definitions regulate the use of a term, but are neither true nor false and can be subjected to interpretation and misinterpretation (just like, in fact, any other explanation). Accordingly, its meaning can be further specified. Lee's procedure aims to depict the contrary: investigators claim to be pointing to the proper use of an object or a state of mind, when they are actually stipulating a state of affairs, by considering it to be true or false. There is always, of course, the possibility of an erroneous determination of the object's use within the nutshell, but that would be considered a failed attempt to properly observe the object. Wittgenstein argues:

“We name things and then we can talk about them: can refer to them in talk” – As if what we did next were given with the mere act of naming. As if there were only one thing called ‘talking about a thing’. Whereas in fact we do the most various things with our sentences¹⁴¹.

Naming things gives us the possibility of talking about them, but Wittgenstein alerts us to the fact that the act of naming does not limit what we do next. He is being cautious with the idea that if we name things (if they have one name) we assume there is only one way of speaking about them, when in fact we may do diverse things with sentences. Without thinking, as Lee, about the truthfulness or falsity of certain enunciations, Wittgenstein advises us against the idea that definitions comprise all that may be said about a certain thing. What is curious about the forms of proof which have been depicted is that they seem to be a way to deal with bodily proof (and language) which departs from the presupposition that

¹⁴¹ Wittgenstein, *Op. cit.*, § 27, p. 11.

some things, in the proper context, may only be described in one way. It probably seems now that the only similarity between ostensive definitions and the act of eliciting the verdict in the ordeal is the assumption that both interpreters point to something as a way of clarification. Still, the notion that some expressions, or samples, may be defined without the need for explanation is a common ambition in these procedures.

In the ordeal, bodily proof is what allows us to determine someone's state of mind despite his best efforts to hide it. One may understand how, when the accused is innocent, the body does not represent his guilt. The innocent person's self has nothing to reveal, so his or her injuries do not manifest themselves in bodily signs (they heal faster than was supposed, for example). However, the same does not apply if the accused is the culprit, and although he does try to control his body, his guilt speaks louder, and causes bodily signs to appear. These modes of proof attempt to bring forward something the suspect tries to hide. This exteriorization has an ambiguous structure, however. On the one hand, interpreters believe in hidden matters to which they don't have access, since there exists an exterior hiding them. On the other hand, the exterior is really the only surface for the revelation to occur. It seems peculiar to consider that that which we cannot control is true, the presumption being that intentional behavior is what makes us untrue. The body's behavior contradicts the subject's intentional actions (for example, his denial of having killed before) without his consent, and only so much can be done to control it. This means that, when one wants to discover the guilty person, involuntary bodily reactions are more valued than the subject's intentional affirmations.

In Lee's dioramas, it is presumed that the way the objects were handled gives us information about a certain person's behavior. In this case, it is necessary to understand if the subject intentionally manipulated an object in a certain way, or if, on the contrary, the object reveals unintentional actions.

He [the investigator] should look for and record indications of the social and financial status of the persons involved in each model as well as anything that might indicate their state of mind up to or at the time of the demonstration¹⁴².

According to Lee's advice, there is little difference in discerning the social class of someone through the analysis of his or her objects and finding out what the deceased was thinking. Like Hamlet, Lee is looking for visible (and public) evidence of things that are usually considered inner properties of someone's mind. In her nutshells, police officers learn to distinguish someone's intention of committing suicide from that of murder. The reason for this lies, as Lee makes clear, in the fact that objects inside a house tell us things about the subject who lives there, about his daily habits, ways of living and (public) intentions. For example, "Unpapered Bedroom," the first nutshell described, presents two problems: the investigators have to identify the woman and attempt to understand what caused her death. Lee explains how investigators were required to search the trash for evidence leading to the identification of the culprit. Likewise, they should look into a pillbox at the top of a table, where they would discover ten capsules of barbiturate (Seconal), a dangerous substance if mixed with alcohol. The empty bottle of rum would provide part of the explanation they were looking for. Lee equally sustains that, by examining the pillbox, it would be possible for the policemen to find out the apothecary that had sold the pills as well as the doctor's name, in an attempt to identify the woman. At the same time, attention should be paid to hidden clues, such as marks of lipstick on the underside of the pillow. A woman always removes her make-up before going to sleep, so this could indicate that Jane Doe was "incapacitated to some degree and went to bed with her lipstick on"¹⁴³.

Unless it could be proven that Mrs. Smith frequently forgot to remove her make up, this was a sign that something out of the ordinary had presented itself. In the case which inspired Lee, the lipstick gave the medical examiner the clue he was looking for, as, despite the fact that there was no evidence of violence in Mrs. Smith's body, her eyes presented a strange color. Together with the lipstick, it was revealed that the spouse had drugged his wife

¹⁴² Frances Glessner Lee, *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁴³ Corinne May Botz, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

and then placed a pillow over her head until she stopped breathing (the husband's confession would later prove that this had been the case). The lipstick on, then, made investigators know the state of mind Lee was speaking about.

Interestingly, this perspective relates to Wittgenstein's denial of the relationship between sensations, their names and the impossibility to define feelings such as "pain" ostensibly. Contrary to what happens with a blue shirt, which may be a sample for the color "blue," there is not, for Wittgenstein, a sample for sensations or memories of pain. Unlike colors, which are learned by association, expressions of pain may not be understood by linking a sensation, its memory, and the name given to the feeling. When one says "I feel pain," this is not an expression of an inner phenomenon or of an inner experience, but a process of learning acquired through "expressive behavior": "A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior"¹⁴⁴. Although Lee would probably agree with Wittgenstein in what concerns the notion that one could not define feelings or interior processes ostensibly, she is looking for public samples of what are generally taken as mental states. The dioramas were based on the assumption that the objects found in the crime scene (as well as the objects that surround us) may be used as a criterion for the correction of what people consider to be private thoughts. These objects are not, in themselves, expressive, but they are a manifestation of the use we generally give them, and, therefore, allow us to distinguish someone's intention of committing suicide from natural death, for example.

For Lee, social status and states of mind may equally be understood through the evaluation of someone's objects, samples which are deemed to be public indications of a person's intentions. While not claiming that there is a correlation between private thoughts and some objects, I believe that when Mrs. Smith is numbed due to the joint effect of barbiturates and alcohol, she is unable to remove her lipstick, which produces a stain on the pillow. Evaluating this stain is not a form of gaining access to the hidden contents of Mrs.

¹⁴⁴ Wittgenstein, *Op. cit.*, § 244, p. 75. Cf. M. R. Bennett, P. M. S. Hacker, eds, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006, p.102.

Smith mind, but of understanding that our behavior (which includes thoughts and sensations) may be depicted through public evidence. Understanding a “mental state” implies getting acquainted with the victim’s way of life, her use of the objects that surround her (if there were numerous bottles of alcohol in the apartment one could probably conclude that either the victim or someone else drank too much). Lee does not define emotions by referring to a sensation, but to a certain object, which she takes as a sample for something else.

Glessner Lee’s procedure to clarify crime cases does not presuppose that there is a specific key, or a single answer, with which they can be properly understood. But it does imply that the sense of these objects and situations depends on the viewer’s ability to decipher the riddle they present. After solving the enigma, the true meaning of the object, person or situation is supposed to emerge, and the problem-solver is then able to redefine what he had previously seen and to give a proper sense to what had been an obscure situation. Interpretation will be brought to an end. This idea being central to my text, it is relevant to consider that interpretation ceases after the solving of the diorama, as speculation generally stops once the murder has been solved and the culprit caught.

The ability to categorize each object does not mean that the policemen understood the diorama or even that they were able to describe it correctly, but it does imply that they have succeeded in solving one of the problems posed by it. If, however, the investigator has the capacity to look adequately at the rest of the model’s different parts and to redescribe them, that would eventually signify that he is an accurate observer. The viewer’s purpose is, then, to depict the nutshell so accurately that in his explanation those crucial features become clear to others (in a poem this would be equivalent to describing it). Still, pointing to those previously unseen characteristics and highlighting them is, of course, an interpretative act, and I will later sustain that singling out something and underlining specific attributes is to give relevance to a particular trait, one which other interpreters would have failed to see.

2. Fearing, ignoring and misinterpreting self-explainable proof

A singular link between *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III* consists in the fact that these three plays allude, even if briefly, to the ordeal as a mode of proof. Let me begin with *Macbeth*, where the reference to a bleeding corpse becomes known after the King's assassination, when Lady Macbeth sees her husband bringing the daggers back with him, and realizes she will have to return to the crime scene and place the instrument of murder near the grooms, so that they may be accused. Consider the following passage: "If he do bleed, \ I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, \ For it must seem their guilt." (II, ii, 54-56). "He" refers to Duncan, and one might ask if it would not be natural for a man who was just murdered to bleed. Lady Macbeth is, however, referring to an unusual way of shedding blood, namely to the corpse that endows wounds with meaning in order to expose his slaughterer.

Strange as it may sound, corpses have, indeed, been accusing their killers for centuries. Take the bier-right ordeal, the bier being "the movable stand on which a corpse, whether in a coffin or not, is placed before burial; that on which it is carried to the grave"¹⁴⁵. In this ancient mode of proof, it was assumed that the corpse would hold its murderer responsible, so the victim's body was put to the test. Thus, several suspects would take an oath testifying their innocence and then take turns visiting the body. When blood ran out of the victim's nose or wounds, the judges knew they faced the guilty party and they would formally accuse him. In this mode of proof, the idea that the human body is the place where the truth is hidden seems to be explicit, for it was thought that the guilty party's identity was encrypted in the victim's corpse, which would denounce him. It was assumed, as in other medieval ordeals, that God, who knew all, would interfere in the test and blame the guilty one¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. I, 1933. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.

¹⁴⁶ It should be mentioned that the Catholic Church formally forbade the ordeal in 1215, following the deliberations of the Fourth Lateran Council (in which canon 18 dealt with the ordeal), enacted by Pope Innocent III. Nevertheless, this way of judging persisted, and modes of proof such as the cold, hot water and bier-right ordeal, were known in Shakespeare's time. Although, as George Lyman Kittredge notices, the importance of

Lady Macbeth's dilemma reveals the concern to understand if bleeding corpses identify those physically accountable for their murder, or those who were morally guilty for it. She is anticipating the possibility that Duncan's corpse would identify her as being liable for the assassination, and claim that she would have used the accusative blood to imply the grooms in the murder. The scene takes place off stage, so one would suppose there would be no way of knowing whether Duncan's body had, in fact, accused her. It should not be forgotten, however, that in the end of the play Lady Macbeth, already delusional, will comment: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" (V, i, 37-38). The King, therefore, shed too much blood because he had been murdered and was determined to accuse his killers, a possibility reinforced when we recall Macbeth's reference to the "secret'st man of blood" (III, iv, 125).

In fact, the auguries which Macbeth will describe in the third act as a mere possibility to bring forth the man of blood, are but a redefinition of Lennox's comments, in the second act, immediately before the revelation of the murder:

Lennox
 The night has been unruly: where we lay,
 Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
 Lamentings heard i'th'air; strange screams of death,
 And, prophesying with accents terrible
 Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
 New hatch'd to th'woeful time, the obscure bird
 Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
 Was feverous, and did shake.
 (*Macbeth*, II, iii, 53-59)

It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood:
 Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;
 Augures, and understood relations, have
 By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth
 The secret'st man of blood.
 (*Macbeth*, III, iv, 121-125)

James I's *Demonology* has been exaggerated, use of the ordeal as a way of judging witches is proof of a way of thinking that, even if not legally applied as often as one would think, echoes common opinions of the period.

Cf. John W. Baldwin, "The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 against Ordeals", *Speculum*, vol. 36, n.º 4, Oct. 1961, pp.613-636. Also, for a detailed discussion of the subject, *vide* Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

Cf. George Lyman Kittredge, "English Witchcraft and James I," *Studies in the History of Religions*, ed. D. G. Lyon, George Foot, Moore. N.p.: BiblioBazaar, 2009, p. 1-66.

This is Macbeth's fever of assassination, murder which follows murder. The passage also represents the horrid circumstances that accompany such a crime, all indications that the usual course of events has been disrupted. In this passage, the secrecy of the assassination is contradicted by the physical elements surrounding the crime, whose uncommon behavior, instead of hiding events, underlines them (something that, as was seen, occurs frequently in *Macbeth*)¹⁴⁷. Despite the similarity between lines, Macbeth transforms Lennox's impressions. Notice how he describes stones moving, while in Lennox we witness blown-down chimneys and trees speaking, i. e., laments heard in the air and screams of death. The obscure bird prophesying, usually considered to be an owl, could stand for either the magpie, an imitator of the human speech, or the chough, both birds of ill omen. While Lennox's thoughts are put to an end by the idea that such unnatural behavior among the elements even made the earth tremble, a political metaphor for a Kingdom which has found its ending, Macbeth conjures up the man of blood. He is, therefore, transforming Lennox's lines concerning an unruly night into an account of what took place, and we now understand how these entities have, indeed, brought forth the man of blood, as Duncan was assassinated and, I would claim, bled to accuse his murderers¹⁴⁸. God reveals this secret murder as a Divine punishment for an unnatural crime (as if God himself points to the corpse and discloses its murderer)¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁷ The Arden edition quotes James I's book, *Demonology*, as the source for this passage: "for as in a secret murder, if the dead carkasse bee at any time thereafter handled by the murderer, God hauing appoynted that secret supernaturall signe, for tryall of that secret unnaturall crime". In William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir, 1951. London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001, p. 67.

¹⁴⁸ It should not be forgotten how, in the fourth scene of the third act, Macbeth, who had just killed Banquo, was in a good mood while entering the banquet room: "Now good digestion wait on appetite, \ and health on both!" (III, iv, 37). I would sustain that it is Lennox's appearance, and his remark, "May it please your Highness sit?" (III, iv, 39), that brings to mind past assassinations and makes Banquo's ghost occupy Macbeth's seat. Not until seeing Lennox does Macbeth's humor alter, thus assuming that the table is full, and trembling when Lennox points him to his seat. This is also the reason why Macbeth will (rightly) consider that the Ghost's apparition was produced by one of the Lords present. None of them is, obviously, responsible for Macbeth's guilty conscience, but Lennox's presence is disruptive to such an extent that it will trigger his inner horrors (namely the fear of being caught for his first crime) and make him remember Lennox's words in the morning of Duncan's assassination. There then follow the aforementioned lines in Macbeth's speech.

¹⁴⁹ Two things are exteriorized in the passage. Following Clarendon and Wilson's perspective, as the Arden edition does, we assume the possibility that the stones are the entities covering the body, which would mean that their displacement would allow the corpse to be uncovered and, thus, made visible, a thought reinforced by the other elements in the passage, all moving or speaking, leading to the crime. At the same time, blood emerges from the corpse in a clear accusation, as if all other elements' movements had the unique purpose of producing unequivocal

The clear nature of some forms of proof leads to Lady Macbeth's commentary after the King's murder takes place: "Go, get some water, \ And wash this filthy witness from your hand." (II, ii, 45-46). This blood, so often mentioned both in the play and in its criticism, the one that will return to haunt Lady Macbeth, possesses such an ostensive character that it does not require interpretation; it is a witness. There is an undeniable link between blood as testimony, Duncan's body excess of it and auguries bringing forth the bleeding cadaver. Just like the trees, the blood in Macbeth's hands has the ability to speak, not literally, I would say, since it is considered to possess an unquestionable nature. Notice how "filthy" is both being applied to the murder and to the possibility that the act is discovered through the use of a proof which needs not to be interpreted.

The scene takes place after Macbeth notices the Ghost, a sight which makes the King nostalgically ponder how "the time has been, \ That, when the brains were out, the man would die, \ And there an end;" (III, iv, 77-79). Now, however, men die and "they rise again, \ With twenty mortal murders on their crowns, \ And push us from our stools." (III, iv, 79-81). Shakespeare's passage is clear, as it reminds Macbeth of a period, which most likely occurred in battle, where men would find definite death, in the sense of a justified ending that would not return to haunt them. The appearance of the Ghost reinforces the King's assassination, making Macbeth fear the double consequences of such murders, and not only his most recent one, as it is the memory of the first crime which still provokes sleeplessness, as well as the disorder of "natural events". Macbeth is, thus, afraid of these unjustified murders which return to accuse him, an expression related with the first quotation about a secret made public by "the secret'st man," which uncovers himself to make Macbeth leave his royal stool. Such man is dangerous in the sense that it exposes simultaneously the crime and its murderer in a public way that will be understood by all. It is unclear whether Macbeth is lamenting the assassination or the numerous evidences of the accusation he is now being confronted with, thus bringing to our minds Macbeth's lines: "I'll go no more: \ I am afraid to think what I have done; \ Look on' t again I dare not" (II, ii, 49-51).

proof and of disclosing the assassination. The fear of being discovered is accentuated by the notion that Macbeth's will of power is impotent before these uncontrollable forces.

The judicial nature of the proof, however, is never made clear. It takes place in secrecy, it is an affair between Lady Macbeth and Duncan, an affair which Macbeth both acknowledges and dreads, but which nobody else comments upon. It may not be doubted that Macbeth and his wife worry they will be exposed through the use of a proof so unyielding as the ordeal's, still, such fear does not represent solely the possibility of being discovered. Self-evident proof is not only recognizable by other persons; its clarity accuses Lady Macbeth, bringing her nature to light, pointing to her. In the case of Lee's nutshells, observers had to learn to identify evidence and make a claim about it. Duncan's corpse seems to possess the capacity to be equally perceived by all observing it, but, more importantly, of letting its killers know things about themselves that they would prefer to ignore. From the moment Duncan was murdered, its corpse encloses the truth about the couple's character; it describes them in a way they would both prefer to disregard, but know to be truthful. The problem with this type of proof, for Macbeth and his wife, is that there is no end to it, it may not be refuted, redescribed or, as will be seen, ignored.

Such ambiguity, learned by Shakespeare after describing, in *Richard III*, a bier-right ordeal in detail, implies that there is no need for explaining Duncan's accusation to his murderers, the allusion to the ordeal suffices for an audience familiar with the procedure to suspect, rather than claim, what in fact has taken place. *Richard III*, the story of a villain determined to be King, starts *in medias res*; initial malefactions in due course, devious plan in place. Before its analysis, let me dwell on Marjorie Garber's essay, insightfully entitled "Richard III; The Problem of Fact". This text portrays two main questions which are of interest to the present chapter, namely, the play's debate between fact and fiction (or interpretation); and a description of "this double effect of inside and outside," present in the soliloquies¹⁵⁰. Let me begin with the latter:

Richard of Gloucester's soliloquies – especially those spoken before he becomes King Richard, when he will try to consolidate his inner and outer voices in the service of political power – show us something different, although something that could with equal persuasiveness be described as something "human": manipulation, calculation, self-division as a strategy rather than a

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005. [Kindle version]

metaphysical condition¹⁵¹.

Garber is differentiating Hamlet's soliloquies, a conscience pondering life's mysteries, from Richard's demonstration of the ability to manipulate in order to achieve political gain. The essay represents the duality between an inner and outer voice, as the first is related to the soliloquies and the second to Gloucester's ability to openly manipulate others. The two voices are, nonetheless, public. The inner voice represents not only Richard's thoughts out loud, but also his conversation with the audience, his accomplice in the affair, whereas Richard, the other characters and the spectators all hear the outer voice. These voices cannot exist separately, as the inner voice is responsible for devising the plots that the outer voice will put into practice. Garber sees manipulation and calculation as self-division, in the sense that they require the inner voice to be disguised. As in other cases previously mentioned, for her the inner voice is the truthful one, as it illustrates Richard's intentions and lets us know which course of action he will take.

In this confession of intentions, one that only the theater audience will hear, Richard devises strategies to be used publicly as well. The soliloquies give meaning to a series of actions the spectator is already seeing on stage. Witnessing these deeds does not imply understanding them; the spectator may, as the other characters, fail to acknowledge them. The signs of Richard's inner and outer voices, according to Garber, appear in lines such as those where he is being self-deprecatory to achieve favor from others. Lines such as "Because I cannot flatter, and look fair, \ Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog," (I, iii, 47-48)¹⁵² are quoted as an example of the way Richard uses self-exposure in order to achieve political gain.

Throughout the play Shakespeare has the character of Richard deploy both self-exposure (even what a modern audience might conceive as self-pity) and the mocking, ironical aside to create this double effect of inside and outside¹⁵³.

¹⁵¹ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009, p. 114. [Kindle version]

¹⁵² Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. James R. Siemon. London: The Arden Edition, 2009. Quotations follow this edition.

¹⁵³ Marjorie Garber, *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

I would argue that Richard is not using self-pity as a political advantage. His skill consists rather in anticipating the way others view him, and in telling them exactly what they are thinking, therefore vehemently denying their accusations. He knows he is able to persuade others, and his varying strategies are used to that effect alone. Richard perversely enjoys telling half-truths, which capable interpreters would understand and fear, but that those around him fail to comprehend (Clarence's death, due to the prophecy beginning with G, would be one of the many examples which illustrate this point). Garber's claims:

"Now is the winter of our discontent" set out a double frame of reference from the beginning. (...) The first line seems for a moment to be declarative and confessional: *now* – "at the present moment" – we, or I, are, or am, discontented. But the second line rewrites or recasts the meaning of *now* retrospectively, turning it into a word that means "in view of what has happened". Instead of "now I am discontented" we get "we [the Yorkish faction in England] used to be discontented but now we are pleased". But in fact, of course, the audience hears both, gets both: I ought to be contented but (I am telling you privately) I am not. The effect is one of interior disclosure. Nothing makes us believe we are actually in touch with the "reality" of a character like encountering both inner conflict and secret motives¹⁵⁴.

This analysis of the opening of the play, Richard's soliloquy, exemplifies a double frame of reference, which, according to Garber, will be present throughout the entire story. We thus find an inner voice that is not only continually being explained but, somehow, rewriting the contents of the outer voice. Both voices are heard by the audience, which is able to provide a meaning to Richard's actions, and to feel identified with this character, due to the fact that his secrets are being made public. According to Garber, in the last line of the soliloquy, "Dive, thoughts, down to my soul; here Clarence comes" (I, i, 41), Richard is also speaking to us, the audience who has become "his confidants and coconspirators". But Garber's distinction between inner and outer voice presupposes that those of us who hear and understand the inner voice are closer to Richard and, hence, to the comprehension of the play. When Garber considers that "Richard's startling modernity emerges out of his intimacy with us, his private thoughts, and his constant awareness of his own social performance," she is portraying the inner voice as veracious, even when it does not tell us the truth, even when

¹⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 112.

she contemplates the possibility that we, too, are “Richard’s dupes,” even when she considers Richard’s art as stage management. In another essay, entitled *Richard III*, Garber considers the use of the voice in the soliloquies:

Richard’s first voice is the voice of the Devil, the voice of the Vice. But this second voice, the voice in which he presents himself to the world, is, as we should perhaps expect, the voice of absolute virtue, the voice of Christianity, and the voice of the innocent child. A voice that claims “plainness” as its virtue, rejecting flattery, artifice, deception¹⁵⁵.

Vice, a figure from the tradition of the morality plays, presents itself in the soliloquies, while the childlike voice comes across in public. Garber is, of course, analyzing passages such as “And thus I clothe my naked villainy \ With old ends, stol’n out of Holy Writ, \ And seem a saint when most I play the devil.” (I, iii, 335-337). And yet, even if we assume the inner voice is always truthful, how do we know we are not being deceived by Richard’s skilled use of words? I would claim that neither of Richard’s voices allows us to entirely comprehend him.

These voices may only be understood with the help of the notion of “outward action,” an expression Garber quotes, but fails to analyze. In order to know Richard, it is not enough to be acquainted with his inner or outer voice: the play demands that we are able to make sense of his actions. One should think that Richard’s skillful manipulation makes it impossible, either in private conversations or in the soliloquies, to ignore his charm. The audience, readers of the play, and literary critics such as Garber, are being maneuvered, just like other characters, by the notion that Richard is being sincere, that his inner voice is reliable, that they will not be deceived. Two things contradict this opinion: Richard’s behavior in public and the presentation of facts in the play are so strong that they become impossible to ignore. Notice, firstly, Gloucester’s advice to Prince Edward:

Nor more can you distinguish of a man
Than his outward show, which, God He knows,
Seldom or never jumpeth with the heart.
Those uncles which you want were dangerous;
Your grace attended to their sugared words
But looked not on the poison of their hearts.

¹⁵⁵ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*. New York: Anchor Books, 2005, loc., 3441. [Kindle book]

God keep you from them and from such false friends.
 (*Richard III*, III, i, 9-15)

Richard is describing, in words probably meant more to himself than to young Prince Edward, how one should not listen to sugared words and ignore the poison in the hearts of others; Edward is still unable to distinguish in a man more than what he shows, which seldom or never agrees with someone's true thoughts. In the last line, God, and not Richard, is asked to protect Edward from those uncles and "such false friends" as, one would be tempted to say, Richard himself. The idea of "outward show" seems to be a continuation of the outer voice, one which disguises someone's true intentions, but Richard is implying the following: if everyone is staging a show, then being able to understand what type of spectacle we are given to watch would be to comprehend the private and public nature of a certain person's actions, i. e., getting to know that person. When in public, it is possible to observe Richard from afar, and understand the way others are being used, making therefore sense of his actions (the only character in the play who is able to do this is Margaret, who has nothing to gain and nothing to lose, and is, therefore, in the perfect position to consider Richard's "outward show"). Such notion is shared by Iago, in *Othello*:

In following him, I follow but myself:
 Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty
 But seeming so, for my peculiar end,
 For when my outward action doth demonstrate
 The native act and figure of my heart
 In complement extern, 'tis not long after
 But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve,
 For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.
 (*Othello*, I, i, 57-64)

Iago is explaining to Roderigo how he is determined to make Othello believe he is complying with him when, in reality, he will be guided by his own wishes. Appearing to act in the name of love and duty, Iago will choose to consider his own particular ends. His outward action translates into what others consider to be his native self, the figure of his heart. In this passage, "outward show" is replaced by "outward action," the first describing Richard's theatrical abilities, the second pointing to Iago's plots. In both cases, however, the expression

accounts for the difference between what men show, what they do, and their intentions while doing it. In *Othello*, Shakespeare ponders the consequences of our failure to understand that other persons may be presenting a spectacle, as, for example, characters never doubt Iago is an honest man. In *Richard III*, however, characters distrust each other. In fact, the play begins with a divided court, a dying King, in the aftermath of a civil war. That they are well aware of Richard's vile nature may be understood, for example, in the Queen's words.

The King, on his own royal disposition
 And not provoked by any suitor else,
 Aiming, belike, at your interior hatred,
 That in your outward actions shows itself
 Against my children, brothers and myself,
 Makes him to send, that he may learn the ground.
 (*Richard III*, I, iii, 63-68)

Although the Queen is unable to anticipate the extent of Richard's plots, she perceives the general meaning of his "outward actions," of his dislike of her family and friends. More importantly, the Queen does not need to distinguish between inner and outer feelings; she is implying that if attention is paid to Richard's actions, they will be able to see him as he really is. These actions must, however, be differentiated from the previously mentioned self-explainable proof. Unlike Duncan's corpse, whose value as evidence was systematically represented as being unequivocal, observers do not equally interpret Richard's actions. The distinction between both types of proof seems to rely on the fact that interpreters consider that the first dismisses interpretation, while the understanding of actions requires an effort from observers. To make sense of "outward actions," therefore, implies the capacity to ponder what one has seen, and to be able to describe it thoughtfully. This means, of course, that while the possibility of error seems to be almost inexistent in the case of self-explainable proof, Richard's actions are prone to misunderstanding. One of the reasons is due to the fact that Richard's words are persuasive to the point that they may not be ignored, and characters invariably end up being misled. Those who ignore Richard's actions and listen only to his words while observing his face are bound to a premature death. Take, for example, Hastings:

Hastings
 His grace looks cheerfully and smooth this morning.
 There's some conceit or other likes him well
 When that he bids good morrow with such spirit.
 I think there's never a man in Christendom
 Can lesser hide his love or hate than he,
 For by his face straight shall you know his heart.

Stanley
 What of his heart perceive you in his face
 By any livelihood he showed today?

Hastings:
 Marry that with no man here he is offended,
 For were he, he had shown it in his looks.
 (*Richard III*, III, iv, 48-57)

If Hastings were able to understand Richard, he would have noticed how the latter was always joyful before someone's death. Moreover, Hastings should have been careful. In an act which could have been performed by Richard himself, Buckingham had already advised him about the difficulties of knowing others' hearts from their faces: "We know each other's faces; for our hearts, \ He knows no more of mine than I of yours, \ Or I of his, my lord, than you of mine. (III, iv, 10-12). The face is not, in these villains' case, the mirror of the soul¹⁵⁶. Attentive interpreters should be aware of the divergence between the reactions conveyed by the face and the intentions of the heart.

The second point in Garber's analysis is Richard's historical figure, the way he was neither deformed nor unfinished, which she uses to consider whether facts are more powerful than fictions, and every era's temptation to rewrite history. The debate, in the play, between fact and fiction, proof and persuasion, makes the author comment on how "the play suggests that literary truth and literary facts are, or can be, as compelling as historical truth and historical facts, or even biographical truth and biographical facts"¹⁵⁷. According to Garber, not only did Shakespeare win the battle over History (a victory accounted for by Richard's rhetoric, charisma and seductive personality), public and other characters ignore the most

¹⁵⁶ In fact, the play systematically contradicts the idea that faces are truthful. For example, after learning Clarence had died, Buckingham asked: "Look I so pale, Lord Dorset, as the rest?" (II, i, 82). Even though all seem to be affected by the news, Richard will later redescribe the situation, implying that the Queen's sons looked guilty: "Marked you not \ How that the guilty kindred of the Queen \ Looked pale when they did hear of Clarence's death?" (II, i, 135).

¹⁵⁷ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. New York: Doubleday Publishing Group, 2009, p. 117.

obvious facts:

The debate about truth and fiction, truth and lying, truth and interpretation, is staged within the play – and indeed, within Richard's own soliloquies from the beginning of the play to the end. In this way, Shakespeare can be seen to have anticipated the tension between fact and fiction that troubles modern-day commentators: it is that very tension that animated both Richard III and his play¹⁵⁸.

History aside, one should ask if the play stages a debate between fact and fiction, whether either of these sides win, if this is a play in favor of interpretation or, as I would maintain, a play about the legitimacy of fact over interpretation. I use Garber's thoughts to highlight the contrast between Richard's duplicitous voice and Henry's body prerogative, as his wounds depict the case of an inner and outer voice working in unison (a device underlining the idea of a King with a single voice, as one who claims the rightful ownership to the throne should have). In one of the most significant, although often ignored, scenes of the play, Lady Anne, whose husband and father-in-law have been cruelly murdered by Richard of Gloucester, is seen accompanying the corpse of King Henry the Sixth. A group of men is carrying the body when Richard instructs the guards to put it down. While they tremble in fear, Lady Anne defends the corpse, which bleeds in accusation of Richard's deeds:

Foul devil, for God's sake hence, and trouble us not,
 For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
 Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclaims.
 If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
 Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.
 – O, gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds
 Open their congealed mouths, and bleed afresh.
 – Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity,
 For 'tis thy presence that exhales this blood
 From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells.
 Thy deeds, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge most unnatural.
 – O God! which this blood mad'st, revenge his death.
 O earth! which this blood drink'st, revenge his death.
 Either heav'n with lightning strike the murderer dead,
 Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick,
 As thou dost swallow up this King's blood,
 Which his hell-governed arm hath butchered.
 (*Richard III*, I, ii, 50-67)

¹⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 110.

Before Richard's entrance in the scene, Anne had commented upon the "untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster" (I, ii, 4), noticing how all that is left is the "key-cold figure of a King," a "bloodless remnant of that royal blood" (I, ii, 7). Such lines have the purpose of singling out Henry's death and making the audience see that the body has no life left in it, which, in turn, will isolate the phenomenon consisting on the shedding of blood by the corpse. Anne points to the body and claims it is bleeding due to the presence of his vile murderer, Richard, who is responsible not only for the murder, but also for the denunciation intended by the body of his victim. This passage, very similar to its source, Holinshead¹⁵⁹, enunciates the way a lifeless body is substituted for a living entity, not exactly a human being, but rather an element empowered with the ability to produce a remark upon a given state of affairs. In *Richard III*, pointing to something and claiming that it is X effectively works, as interpreters concur with the meaning of the scene. Within the play, the contents of the accusation also seem very plausible, as both the guards and Richard accept Anne's comments.

In both cases, Anne's and Lady Macbeth's, the sense of the two corpses is never questioned. Blood is so strong an accusation that no one ever distrusts it; much to the contrary, the characters seem to share the notion that its appearance occurs for a particular reason. This is why, in *Richard III*, this episode is so important. It is also why, although Richard has been considered a close relative of the Macbeths (hence enabling a series of correspondences between the two plays), this story seems to be the perfect counterpoint to *Othello*, not in the Bloomian sense that the figure of Richard acts as a precursor of Iago, but insofar as Othello enacts the seducer which would woe Desdemona into Lady Anne's destiny.

Henry's corpse presents a dilemma for the readers of *Richard III*: namely, the fact

¹⁵⁹ "The dead corpse (...) was conveyed with bills and glaives [halberds] pompously, if you will call that a funeral pomp, from the Tower to the church of St Paul, and there laid on a bier or coffin bare-faced – the same in the presence of the beholders did bleed - where it rested the space of one whole day. From thence he was carried to the Blackfriars, and bled there likewise, and on the next day after it was conveyed in a boat, without priest or clerk, torch or taper, singing or saying, unto the monastery of Chertsey, distant from London fifteen miles, and there was it first buried'. Cf. *Holinshead*, p. 324, in *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, ed. John Jowett. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, p. 157.

The origin of the story was tracked to that of Richard-Coeur-de-Lion and the way blood ran out of Henry II, his father, nostrils' during the procession at Fontevraud, in accusation of Richard's disobedience, considered to have lead to his father's end. Cf. Henry C. Lea, *Superstition and Force - Torture, Ordeal and Trial by Combat in Medieval Law*, 1870. New York: Barnes & Nobles, 1996, p. 278.

that Lady Anne and the Duke of Gloucester alike ignore such an obvious manifestation of guilt. In Henry's ordeal, the body clearly enunciates in a non-verbal way an accusation and, as in previous examples, the corpse's meaning is unequivocal proof. The body, which had already been modified by death, is now transformed during the ordeal, and while its exterior is "congealed," the body's interior, its blood, is brought to life through the wounds. With no tongue, the King's voice is unuttered, but its language is endlessly stronger.

One of the points of interest in the corpse as an object of analysis is the fact that the mind/body distinction does not seem to work: the cadaver does not accuse its killer based on a process of mental recognition. While, for some, the medieval ordeal is a miracle, similar to that of the liquefaction of blood, for others it illustrates a soul in refusal of leaving its body until justice has been done¹⁶⁰. It was, nevertheless, consensual to consider the corpse devoid of cognitive abilities: it was an intentional object manipulated by God so that justice could take place. God endowed the body with the ability to bleed, making it the most truthful testimony one could find, for a body without cognition is unable to lie. This notion is somewhat different from another one, previously described: that bodily reactions, because difficult to control, are more truthful than words. In the case of the corpse, one does not contemplate the possibility of enunciation, the wounds being the substitute for the tongue (the substitution of wound for mouth can also be traced in *Macbeth's* "twenty mortal murders," even if, as Marjorie Garber notices, "The trope of wounds as speaking mouths was common in the poetry of the period"¹⁶¹).

The discussion of unintelligent beings capable of truthful testimonies calls upon the mention of the case of torture in Ancient Greece. Although I will not dwell upon it, it is relevant to briefly contrast the importance of this truthful, but unintelligent, cadaver, with the Greek conception about slaves' testimonies. In *Torture and Truth*, Page duBois, quoting from a variety of texts, both literary and political, from the tragedies to Aristotle's *Politics*, explains how the evidence provided by slaves was only accepted when given under torture, as

¹⁶⁰ Cf. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. White Fish: Kessinger Publishing, vol. 18, 2003, p. 511.

¹⁶¹ Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, loc. 3503.

“In the Greek legal system, torture of slaves figured as a guarantor of truth, as a process of truth-making”¹⁶². DuBois describes how slaves’ testimony would not be heard in court, as only the written statement produced under torture could be shown as evidence. Therefore, those wishing to obtain the slave’s testimony would write down the questions, which the torturer would ask (parties had also to agree to pay the slave owner if permanent damages were inflicted on his servant). One of the reasons given for this procedure was the fact that slaves, when not under torture, could be afraid to tell anything contrary to their master’s wishes. The point of interest here, however, is the notion that slaves’ testimony differed from other type of evidence, in the sense that it was considered more valuable and trustworthy than other witnesses’: “The *basanos* assumes first that the slave always lies, then that torture makes him or her always tell the truth, then that the truth produced through torture will always expose the truth or falsehood of the free man’s evidence”¹⁶³. *Basanos* (Βάσανος), the Greek word for test and torture (a pregnant term to which I will later return), portrays the ability to make the slave speak the truth without failing. The reason why it is presumed the slave always lies is due to the fact that: “Free citizen men will be deceived by clever arguments; slaves by nature will not be misled because they think with their bodies. Slaves are bodies; citizens possess *logos*, reason”¹⁶⁴. So, while the master possesses *logos*, which makes him capable of reasoning in court, and of distinguishing truth from falsehood, thus understanding the consequences of lying, the slave is unable to anticipate rationally the repercussions of falsehood. Following Aristotle’s *Politics*, DuBois explains how the slave: “Unlike an animal, a being that possesses only feelings, and therefore can neither apprehend reason, *logos*, nor speak, *legein*, the slave can testify when his body is tortured because he recognizes reason without possessing it himself”¹⁶⁵.

In the slave’s case, we have a body without cognition, but which recognizes reason; a body which always lies, unless under torture, when it always tells the truth. It should be

¹⁶² Page duBois, *Torture and Truth*. New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 47.

¹⁶³ *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 66.

questioned whether telling the truth under torture was a physical reflex, something the slave could not control and which would explain why the outcome of the proof was truthful. Torture, from this perspective, would be the means enabling proper physical reflexes to appear, the verbal testimony of the slave being the physical recognition of reason. Physical reactions belong to the sphere of irrational behavior, irrationality (or merely that which is not thought upon) appearing as what allows us to be truthful despite ourselves.

The slave's wounds, unlike what happened in the ordeal, were not subject to analysis, the body being merely a vessel for the testimony to appear, and God was absent from the proof, as it was not assumed that it was He who endowed the body with the ability to be truthful¹⁶⁶. Torturing the slave gives origin not to self-evident proof, but to the irrevocable truth itself which, when heard in court, will enable a verdict. Torture is not a form of punishment, but a way to extract the truth from a body possessing a knowledge that might not be recognized by its owner. In most ordeals, guilty subjects knew the reasons for their accusation (and the probability of being discovered by the proof). The body of the murdered one in the bier-right proof was acquainted with the identity of his assassin. But torturing the slave stemmed from the assumption that he might have seen or heard things whose importance he did not recognize, or did not consciously remember.

This is not meant to contrast the Greek judicial system, or its notion of the body, with the medieval concept of justice, or even with the Elizabethans' thoughts of either the body or justice. It is, however, relevant to point out how such different civilizations contemplate, firstly, the notion of a body which knows more than its subjects, secondly, the idea of a person without cognition, but which is a vessel for the truth, and thirdly, how the tested body may not be the one who was accused. Notice how in the medieval ordeal, especially in battle, ordeals, duels, or when the accused was a member of the gentry, it was common practice for

¹⁶⁶ I would parenthetically add that this mode of proof subsists today in our structure of beliefs. The beginning of forensic science may be related with the ancient certainty that the truth about the crime is inscribed in the victim's body. For example, Esther Cohen maintains that the bier-right ordeal entered directly in the judicial system at the time the ordeal was abolished by the Catholic Church. When torture was reintroduced as a procedure in the Italian and French judicial systems the orders to initiate it had to be preceded by previous indications of guilt, such as blood in the cadaver's body. Cf. Cohen, Esther, *The Crossroads of Justice – Law and Culture in Late Medieval France*. Boston: BRILL, 1992. Silverman, Lisa, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.

the suspect to ask a retainer to submit to the ordeal on his behalf. This represents an interesting alternative to the concept of bodily proof: since the body under scrutiny was not the suspect's body, then its physiological reactions should not be the element that determined the proof. In some cases, we may think of the retainer as the person the suspect confided in, which means that the retainer would also have to know the truth, and, thus, that his body could be a proof. But often a champion was called upon, and it was unlikely that he knew what had really happened. This meant that the body presented to God need not be the body of the accused.

In such cases, the body wasn't exactly used as a testimony, but as an instrument to prove the truth. This point allows us to differentiate bodies that serve as witnesses of events from bodies that are used as instruments to prove facts. In ordeals, the body was a relevant form of proof and it actually didn't matter which body was tested, because what was significant was the idea that God would act on the proffered body and produce evidence through it. As long as the ritual practice that belonged to the ordeal was strictly followed, God would give his true testimony about a given state of affairs. Accordingly, truth was found in the divine intervention of the retainer's body, meaning that the body's signs were always truthful and trustworthy.

Nowadays, the murdered corpse is simultaneously seen as an intentional object (a responsibility belonging to the author of the crime) and as a testimony of events. It is assumed, in the tradition of the ordeal, that the corpse's analysis will be factual and that the place attributed to its interpretation is limited. One of the corpse's qualities as a factual object may be the fact that it seems more authentic than other living beings, for it cannot be intentionally false (even if the possibility that others may manipulate it should be considered). Death seems to crystallize, even if for a short period of time, a group of facts left at the investigator's disposal, and the corpse's bodily signs are considered true, because the subject may no longer control them, and fudge them if he will. From this perspective, forensic science helps us distinguish false corpses (belonging to those who wrote false suicide letters or attempted to fabricate their death) and forgers (those who manipulate the

victim's corpse so that it does not point at its killer). Although there are considerable differences between the cadaver's interpretation in the medieval ordeal and forensic science, it should be noted that in both cases the corpse is the example of an entity that can only be properly understood by a skilled observer (in the medieval ordeal there was a jury appointed to make sure that procedures followed the rules, nowadays police and judicial experts analyze corpses).

I have been describing the case of bodies that observers accurately interpret. A point in Euripides's play, *Hippolytus*, illustrates the contrary, a failed attempt to discover the truth about the death of one of the main characters, Phaedra, through a determination of what is considered to be the main proof. While it is presumed that both Duncan's body and Henry VI's tell us the truth without need for further analysis, *Hippolytus* theorizes the question of proof which seems to be self-explainable, but that is, in fact, misinterpreted by those observing it. Theseus arrives home and discovers that his wife, Phaedra, is dead. When he finds a tablet in Phaedra's hand (without knowing that Aphrodite had devised such plot as a way to punish his son Hippolytus for his devotion to Artemis), Theseus wrongly believes that Hippolytus is to blame for the tragedy. The letter is considered a true testimony of Phaedra's last words, and proof of Hippolytus's actions. Once the letter's authenticity had been proved, as Phaedra's golden signet validates it, Theseus does not doubt its value and considers it the highest form of proof available. As he states when confronted by Hippolytus: "This [Phaedra's death] is the fact that most serves to convict you, villainous man!"¹⁶⁷. For him, the letter cannot be differentiated from Phaedra's corpse, both are unambiguous proof of his son's actions. Theseus's mistake is to presume that if the letter truly belongs to Phaedra, it must contain true words, never questioning the possibility that Phaedra might lie as, for him, there is an indissoluble relationship between the dead corpse, the letter and the guilty person. Theseus does not consider the possibility that the meaning of proof could not be its most visible sense, or the hypothesis that his wife's letter could possess hidden meanings or intentions.

¹⁶⁷ Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 217.

Father and son diverge on which would be the proper way to find the truth: Theseus looks upon the letter as a fact, disregarding Hippolytus's oath, and asking him: "For what oaths, what arguments, could be more powerful than she is, to win your acquittal on the charge?"¹⁶⁸. In this hierarchy of evidence Theseus considered Phaedra's corpse to be the queen of proof, which allows him to presuppose that it is not necessary to conduct further inquiry. When Hippolytus inquires if his father will banish him without pausing to "examine my oath, and sworn testimony or the words of seers? Will you banish me without a trial?"¹⁶⁹; Theseus replies: "This tablet contains no divination by lot, and its charge against you is convincing"¹⁷⁰. Notice how Theseus intertwines "tablet" and "corpse," as if they were synonyms and the single self-evident proof he requires to determine the truth. His perspective is opposed to that of Hippolytus, who mentions four procedures to determine the truth, such as the oath, testimony, the words of seers and a trial.

Later in the play, when Hippolytus is dying, Artemis will also notice how Theseus gave more importance to Phaedra's false words than to Hippolytus's oath, and how he failed to seek other forms of proving the truth, such as instruction from the prophets or cross questioning. Artemis is condemning Theseus for assuming proof could be self-evident and for stipulating the truth instead of "put[ing] the charge to the proof nor grant[ing] Time the right to investigate it"¹⁷¹. According to Artemis, the burden of proof stands with the accusation, who should not only demand a test to what is considered evidence (the type of test Frances Lee Glessner was describing) but also an investigation throughout time. This is a particularly relevant point, as self-explainable proof seems to do without a period of research. Artemis is, however, underlining the thought that proof requires interpretation and analysis demands time. She is criticizing Theseus's belief that all that is necessary to find the truth is to point to a single entity and show what one deems to be true.

The play's insistence upon the use of more than one type of proof seems to deny the

¹⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

¹⁶⁹ *Op. cit.*, p.225

¹⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

importance of self-evidence and to question the thought that we may always know how to distinguish regular proof from that which seems to be self-explainable. All other mentioned corpses were truthful in such a clear way to those observing them that they did not need to be understood, explained or discussed. What had been previously considered the main advantages of such type of evidence (the fact that it appears to be irrefutable or the quality of being fast ways to determine the truth) are here problematized as its main problems, that which precipitates tragedy. It should perhaps be questioned whether the problem relies on Theseus's misjudgment of proof or if this is a particularity of the type of evidence itself. The corpse, if it had been properly understood, would reveal that Phaedra had committed suicide, but it would not, unlike Theseus assumes, provide the reasons that led her to kill herself. From this perspective, Phaedra's corpse was truthful evidence, while her letter was erroneous, and thus we find, again, an opposition between a truth-telling body and an intentionally false testimony. In this case, saying "this is a corpse", understanding it was suicide and finding a reason (or a culprit) are not the same. Theseus's reasoning lacks systematization due to the fact that he considers the ability to identify truthful proof and to find a justification for it to be the same thing.

The problem was not, unlike Artemis and Hippolytus presume, the fact that the corpse was not self-evident (Theseus was right in taking it as the main form of proof and in considering that it pointed correctly to suicide). But he believed the letter and the corpse to signify only one thing, he assumed they were interchangeable and ignored the possibility that the letter might lie. The play problematizes the notion that, unlike Theseus's assumptions, there is a limit to self-explainable proof and suggests that understanding a piece of evidence (even a determinant one) does not equal comprehending the context where it appeared or giving reasons to explain it.

In *Richard III*, however, Henry's body represents the idea of truth in a nutshell. It narrates a story of usurpation and undue murder, while at the same time it accuses the responsible person for the assassinations. I would argue that the corpse could be taken as the most relevant fact in the play, since, on the one hand, it highlights the murders which have

taken place, and those which will follow, while, on the other, it also portrays Richard (and even Anne's) failed attempt to ignore it. Although murder is taken as a fact, Richard is able to persuade Anne as to the reasons that led to the deed and imply her in the affair, making her, at least partially, to blame. Richard considers Anne's beauty the cause of his wish to assassinate others: "Nay, do not pause; for I did kill King Henry, \ But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me. \ Nay, now dispatch; 'twas I that stabbed young Edward, \ But 'twas thy beauty that set me on" (I, ii, 182-185). The idea that both King Henry and Anne's husband were assassinated for love, the thought that only Anne would be able to regenerate Richard, will appear to make both characters ignore the murder. The corpse, which had been the main dramatic element in the play, lies now in the background. In the soliloquy which will follow, Richard states: "To take her in her heart's extremest hate, \ With curses in her mouth, tears in her eyes, \ The bleeding witness of my hatred by," (I, ii, 234-336). The corpse highlights Anne's hatred and, unlike Richard's personality, it is reliable in its physical manifestations. These instances make Richard's victory extreme and, at this point, it seems as if persuasion will ply the starkest of facts.

Other figures in the play, immobile bodies pointing to the truth, will highlight the corpse. These speechless entities denying Richard are the facts which will be opposed to his interpretations. That these are ignored until the very last moment, when it is impossible to keep dismissing them, only makes Richard's fall more noticeable. A first example of the redefinition of the corpse appears when Richard and Buckingham need to understand if Hastings would be willing to play along with them: "If thou dost find him tractable to us, \ Encourage him, and tell him all our reasons, \ If he be leaden, icy, cold, unwilling, \ Be thou so too." (III, i, 174-176). Buckingham could be describing Henry's leaden, icy, cold and unwilling corpse. The expression is anticipating what will happen to Hastings if he denies assisting Richard, but the relationship between someone's refusal to participate in the plot and his coldness should not be ignored. The fact that, unlike Lady Macbeth, Richard does not seem to be afraid of either Henry's corpse or those which will follow only shows his self-deception, his belief that facts will not return to haunt him, or a jovial trust in his own powers

of persuasion. But Hastings, as Henry, will reappear as a Ghost: “Bloody and guilty, guiltily awake, \ And in a bloody battle end thy days.” (V, iii, 154-155). “Cold” could no longer be used to describe the nature of this bloody apparition, and if, in the aforementioned quotation, Hastings stood as a substitute to Henry’s corpse, the apparition highlights both blood and guilt. This body, like Henry’s, finds itself in the possession of a single, accusative voice. This topic is equally represented in the citizens’ lack of enthusiasm with the idea of having Richard as King:

Richard:
How now, how now, what say the citizens?

Buckingham:
Now, by the Holy Mother of our Lord,
The citizens are mum, say not a word.
(...)

No, so God help me, they spake not a word,
But like dumb statues or breathing stones
Gazed each on other and looked deadly pale;
Which when I saw, I reprehended them
And asked the Mayor what meant this willful silence?
(...)

Richard:
What tongueless blocks were they! Would they not speak?
(*Richard III*, III, vii, 1-28)

Unlike Richard and his allies, who know how to be persuasive, those opposing them do not speak, they are like statues, marble which breathes but does not talk. In both these passages, factual entities are irrefutable. Unlike other characters in the play, which were persuaded by Richard, these figures join the corpse, as cognitive entities without speech. The Mayor speaks for them, and Buckingham depicts the citizens as willfully silent, which reinforces the notion that they have made a conscious decision. Although Richard attempts to ignore and persuade them he does not yet fear them, which shows that, unlike Lady Macbeth, he has not yet learned the significance of factual entities. The allusion to the corpse appears in the notion that they are the tongueless blocks, a thought which will reappear in Richard’s last soliloquy:

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
 And every tongue brings in a several tale,
 And every tale condemns for a villain.
 Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree,
 Murder, stern murder, in the direst degree;
 All several sins, all used in each degree,
 Throng to the bar, crying all, 'Guilty, guilty!'
 (*Richard III*, V, iii, 193-199)

The topic of wounds as tongues reappears, portraying a conscience wounded by each killing, a reference to that initial body in blood. Each tongue, i. e. open wound, reveals and condemns Richard as murderer, they are the image of the Ghosts of those which were slaughtered and appeared in the tent to claim their revenge. Blood returns in Richard's last moments to remind him of past actions, facts take over interpretations before the guilty one dies. Henry's body works, as Anne had said, as a key figure for events and facts are, thus, responsible for Richard's fall. *Richard III*, much like *Macbeth*, narrates the story of those who assumed that facts could be ignored, to learn later that they could not. The lesson in both plays differs from that in *Hippolytus*, as here murder returns to haunt the guilty ones. The discovery that these silent factual entities are descriptions of events, "as every tongue brings in a several tale, \ And every tale condemns for a villain" is more important.

The idea of a body that leads to factual knowledge is associated with the notion that all that is needed in a situation like this is to point to the corpse (a fact) and to claim it as evidence. If the characters in the play had been able to do so, this case would not have required interpretation. Anne's claim while showing the body illustrates this notion, and the act of pointing to something is thought to clarify something hidden inside and now exteriorized, or at least clarified with the enunciation of its nature. This is why I would argue that the play does stage the dichotomy between fact and fiction; at the end of the day, the certitude of facts wins over interpretation.

In the aforementioned cases, it was seen how characters or investigators point to objects, as well as what their purposes are while doing it. Lady Anne is stating something which all perceive: "O gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds \ Open their congealed mouths and bleed afresh." (I, ii, 53-54) and all interpret the scene similarly. The fact that the

corpse is bleeding is taken as evidence for its reliability. In this situation, pointing is more than a way of giving an example; it is an assertion that aims at depicting a fact. And yet, one would say there is a difference between stating this is a corpse, noticing it is a bleeding corpse, and considering it is a truth-telling corpse. Interestingly, in Anne's case, or in Lady Macbeth's fear of blood as a witness, is the fact that they ignore such distinction, they consider that stating something as a fact and being truthful is the same. Moreover, this type of evidence is truth-telling because human forces, or will power, may not control it. In plays where villains are continually deceiving others, certitude appears in the idea that facts such as these are, by nature, trustworthy. They may not be subject to discussion; they may not be redefined, nor misunderstood.

Glessner Lee's dioramas show the investigators' belief that if they point to a relevant feature of an object, and ascertain its meaning, truth will follow. Indicating is regarded as the ability to clarify ambiguous things, for it solves the need for a definite, and incontrovertible, mode of proof. Moreover, Lee considers that if the meaning of the object is found, then different persons will understand it in the same way. Contrary to what happens in Anne's case, the evidence in the dioramas must be looked for; it is not evident, or equally seen by all, it must be proven. Even though saying "this is a coffee cup" and claiming a certain object is proof seems to be more than just pointing or exemplifying. For Lee, showing is considered a form of proof and not as mere interpretation.

4. Touchstones

Wishing to be certain is not a rare ambition. Most persons enjoy being right, some making an actual effort to be accurate in their judgments, some setting their hearts at finding a method which allows them to diminish erroneous conclusions. Such need for organization may derive from an individual desire for orderliness, a difficult context, or a specific profession, among other reasons. These pages deal with entities that believe there are

considerable advantages in finding ways that allow us to dismiss, or at least diminish the need for multiple explanations. This way of understanding intricate problems considers that some entities may be used as a touchstone for the comprehension of the authenticity, or veracity, of other entities (whether they are persons, objects or texts).

Such anxiety for an explicit and valid mode of proof which could be similarly understood by different persons was characterized in Euripides's play *Hippolytus*. Theseus used Phaedra's letter as indictment, but earlier he had grieved over the absence of a truth test, which would allow him to make a distinction between friends and enemies: "Oh, there ought to be for mortals some reliable test for friends, some way to know their minds, which of them is a true friend and which is not (...)"¹⁷². Theseus portrays the well-known ambition for a form of evaluation used to distinguish types of persons, to differentiate the meaning of their actions and intentions, so that one is able to properly identify friends and enemies. Paradoxically, the moment Theseus enunciates the absence of such a mode of proof corresponds to the instant where he misjudges the situation, accusing Hippolytus.

I have mentioned how *basanos* (βάσανος) denotes torture and test. It should be noted that the word also refers to *basanite*, i. e., touchstone, as well as expressions such as "put to the test," "question by applying torture," "to be put to torture" and "touchstone"¹⁷³. The analysis of the concept is the departing point of *Torture and Truth*, in which the classicist Page DuBois studies a group of literary, judicial and philosophical texts, in an attempt to delineate the evolution of the word *basanos*, and how it relates to the idea that the truth is hidden inside the human body. *Basanos* is a term at first exclusively applied in mercantile contexts to name the touchstone through which the purity of gold was tested, a stone which was generally fieldstone, slate or lydite. As DuBois points out, authors such as Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles used the word, as Theseus' reference to "test" (in Greek *basanos*, βάσανος) exemplifies, to characterize a procedure meant to determine if someone or something was genuine. Later on, the term acquired the meaning of ordeal and torture.

¹⁷² Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 215.

¹⁷³ *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 1843. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948.

The touchstone may be "a very smooth, fine grained, black or dark-colored variety of quartz or jasper (...), used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by the color of the streak produced by rubbing them upon it"¹⁷⁴. As the dictionary makes clear, "touchstone" means the act of trying the authenticity of gold, but also, "That which serves to test or try the genuineness or value of anything; a test, criterion"¹⁷⁵. The procedure consists in drawing the alloy across the surface of the stone being tested, the color of its trace being compared with the color left by the pure metals, thus obtaining, by simple ocular inspection, a relatively accurate knowledge of the purity of the alloy. Therefore, the use of a touchstone requires the right stone, the metals under analysis, and an observer of the results of the process. The fact that any observer is expected to reach identical results (to see what others witnessed without the need for further justification) is also relevant. In such cases, the interpreter must manage the touchstone appropriately, thereby associating the technique of pointing at to interpretative tools such as comparison and analysis. In the case of entities which are viewed as touchstones, but that are not quartz, the accuracy of the interpreters' assumptions derives, in part, from prior experience and insight. It will, however, be seen how observers tend to focus on the method which allowed them to reach what they regard to be, and sometimes are, truthful conclusions.

It should be noticed that using objects as touchstones is a way to give them a supplementary use, of transforming a stone, a painting or certain lines into a form of testing other entities. These objects are retrieved from their original context in order to be given the use of touchstone. In literary texts, selected passages to be used as criteria are contrasted with other passages, so that a conclusion may be reached. Objects employed as criteria for the value of others do not necessarily lose the features that made them apt for the purpose (quartz is still quartz after the test of gold takes place, in the same way certain Shakespearean passages remain unchanged). These entities do acquire, however, a supplementary function, as they are transformed into the vessel that allows us to test other things. While, in some

¹⁷⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XI, 1933. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.

¹⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*.

cases, objects may be used to try entities which are different from themselves, as the *basanite* exemplifies, others tend to be applied to test objects belonging to their own category, as it would be unusual for someone to use a literary passage to examine the quality of gold. As previously described, it is considered that these entities possess, in a condensed form, special features. Either they are considered genuine, which is the reason why they may accurately be used in contrast with other things; or they represent (or are the image of) someone who was authentic, and whose qualities were, somehow, transferred to the object.

In some procedures it is necessary to evaluate whether the value of the different methods is to be found in the use of the touchstone itself, if it relies on the interpreter's unique ability, or in the association of the two. It should also be inquired whether the result is pre-determined or if it derives from the use of the method. The case of *basanite* is relevant as it portrays the ambition for the identification of the substance's authenticity, as long as the procedure is followed. Moreover, the result is not determined *a priori*, it is a consequence of the procedure, which the observer may not influence. To possess a touchstone, a touchstone method, or being a touchstone are, thus, considered techniques of putting entities to a test which will yield truthful results.

While "using a touchstone" requires quartz, the golden alloy, the substance to be tested and someone to do the test and observe the results, the modes of proof to be surveyed here tend to compound some of these functions. Although the quest for certainty and authenticity is present, the way the procedure is systematized is often metaphorical, as the golden alloy is mistaken for the touchstone, the one observing the process considers himself to be also the stone validating the procedure, and the surface scratched by the test might (literally) be the subject.

There is another interesting feature in the touchstone, as the stone allows to distinguish if what possesses the appearance of gold is, indeed, authentic. A similar ambition is to be found in those using literary touchstones, passages that are criteria for the value of certain texts, or those quoting lines of poetry as a self-sufficient argument about their value. Still, many other cases discussed represent the attempt to prove the contrary, namely, if

those we suspect to be untrue are, indeed, as conjectured, inauthentic. While in mercantile contexts substances had to be necessarily tested even if there was no suspicion of inauthenticity, in these modes of proof there is a prior assumption of guilt that must be demonstrated, or dispelled, by the test.

Hamlet's conversation with his mother in the closet scene exemplifies the way an entity, i. e., the portrait of his father, may be used to test the value of another entity, in this case (the portrait of) another human being, Claudius:

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
 The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
 See what a grace was seated on this brow,
 Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
 An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
 A station like the herald Mercury
 New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,
 A combination and a form indeed
 Where every god did seem to seat his seal
 To give the world assurance of a man.
 This was your husband. Look now what follows.
 Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
 Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
 And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?
 You cannot call it love; for at your age
 The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
 And waits upon judgment, and what a judgment
 Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have -
 Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
 Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
 But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
 To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
 That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
 Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense
 Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush?
 (*Hamlet*, III, iv, 53-81)

In this scene, which follows Hamlet's dumb-show and his failed attempt to kill Claudius, the Prince seeks to confront his mother, in the hope of making her understand the

difference between King Hamlet and Claudius. Critics have mentioned how frequent¹⁷⁶ was the use of miniatures, small-scale detailed portraits, in the scene, while some illustrations suggest that in the Restoration two paintings were hanged on the wall. Both the Cambridge and the Oxford editions notice how either Hamlet drew miniatures from his pocket, or retrieved a locket of his father and placed it opposite Claudius's locket on Gertrude's neck. Regardless of the method used, it is interesting to consider that the representation of both Kings is a reduced image, but one which is considered to possess, in a condensed form, the most relevant features of both men, i. e. the truthful version about Gertrude's two husbands. Hamlet is, as will be seen, assuming that these features are facts, and not descriptions or interpretations of affairs.

While Lady Anne claims: "Behold this pattern of thy butcheries" (I, ii, 52), Hamlet asks his mother to "Look here upon this picture, and on this, \ The counterfeit presentment of two brothers" (III, iv, 54-55). In Anne's scene, there is equivalence between her statement and what she is showing, whereas Hamlet, presuming that what he observes may be perceived by everyone, sees in his father's portrait what he considers to be his qualities. Although the procedure duplicates Anne's, in this case there is a distinction between what Hamlet sees, the object being looked at, and his mother's own look upon the paintings. The presentation of two brothers, a common act amongst families, generally with the purpose of underlining the existence of family traces, here aims at showing the superiority of one sibling over the other. When looking at King Hamlet's portrait, thus, one should see the combination of Hyperion's curls and Jove's front, eyes of Mars, a posture like Mercury. All of these divine qualities were sealed by the Gods "to give the world assurance of a man" that knew how to threaten or command.

It was previously seen how Glessner Lee assumed that ostensive definitions could be a way to clarify problems during a crime investigation. At first sight, it seems that Hamlet is reproducing Lee's method, or the ordeal, when he points to each locket and claims "This was

¹⁷⁶ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, 1934. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 177.

your husband". The Prince, however, accompanies the gesture of pointing at with a description of what he is seeing, as if he is determined to avoid the possibility that, like an ostensive definition, the paintings could be subject to misinterpretation. Before the King's description is portrayed, one should, nevertheless, examine Hamlet's procedure and consider the possibility that both the act of pointing at and the verbal formula "that" are more than a mere introduction for the description which will follow.

When, after describing his father, Hamlet claims "Look you now what follows. \ Here is your husband," (III, iv, 63-64), he is claiming his mother misapplies the word "husband," arguing that King Hamlet, unlike Claudius, has a claim to the proper use for the term. Hamlet's mistake is to assume that an idealized version of a word's meaning could be defined through ostension (and that a relational word such as "husband" may be ostensively defined). In fact, those who do not suspect that it was Hamlet's glorified version of his father that inspired the representation, just have to remember his comment on the first act of the play, in lines such as "So excellent a King, that was to this \ Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother \ That he might not beteem the winds of heaven \ Visit her face too roughly" (I, ii, 139-142). At this time, there was no locket to work as reference, which suggests Hamlet was not looking at the object and attempting to understand it, or to depict its main features. Hamlet's conversation with his mother, therefore, depends on his prior assumption of what a husband should be; he is erroneously assuming that our ideals may be defined through ostensive procedures; that they are not subject to interpretation. Hamlet is representing King Hamlet's image as it existed in his mind's eye, as he had told Horatio in the very beginning of the play.

There is, thus, a difference between what Hamlet thinks he is doing and his actions. The method with which he attempts to explain what he sees, as well as to persuade his mother, makes clear that he is determined to find truth in the representations of the two men. The act of pointing reflects the wish to state the obvious, in an attempt to persuade his mother. Hamlet aims to show there is a leap of judgment between her decision to marry his father and Claudius: "and what judgment \ Would step from this to this?" More importantly,

Claudius is described as infecting the idea of King Hamlet, causing him to wither away, preventing his growth. Hamlet was hoping that, similarly to other widows, the image of King Hamlet might flourish in his mother's heart, and that Claudius would be blamed for preventing it. This is the reason why Hamlet asks: "Have you eyes?" an expression referring both to the eyes which should be looking at the paintings, but also into her memory, in which King Hamlet should have played an important part. That Hamlet is able to produce the required effect may be seen in the Queen's reply:

O Hamlet, speak no more.
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul
 And there I see such black and grained spots
 As will not leave their tinct.
 (*Hamlet*, III, iv, 88-91)

While, in other cases, pointing is used as a way to exteriorize hidden features, Hamlet is using it to get to his mother's soul, to turn her observation inward. At this point, Hamlet seems indeed not only to be seeing more than others, but also to possess the ability to produce the desired effect over the Queen, as she appears to be seeing the same that he does. But the Ghost will enter the room, and Hamlet will try to point at him, as he had done with the paintings. If, however, in the first case he possessed a clear referent, even one he was not looking at, now the Queen is unable to perceive the image of the Ghost, and the act of directing seems to lose its validity:

Gertrudes: Wheron do you look?

Hamlet: On him, on him. Look you now how pale he glares.
 His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
 Would make them capable. (...)

Gertrude: To whom do you speak this?

Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?

Gertrudes: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see. (...)

Hamlet: Why, look you there, look how it steals away.
 My father, in his habit as he liv'd!

Look where he goes even now at the portal.
(Hamlet, III, iv, 124-138)

In the case of the portraits, Hamlet was depicting qualities that could not, unless looked at with the mind's eye, be observed. His mother is able to see the same as he, because she recognizes an idealized description of King Hamlet. In the case of the portraits, even if they do not represent the opposition between Hyperion and a satyr, his persuasive use of language seems to provoke the desired effect. Paradoxically, in the case of the Ghost, Hamlet is indeed seeing an apparition, and cannot share what he is observing with the Queen, which makes her assume he is, indeed, mad. The fact that Hamlet uses the same strategy in both cases indicates that he believes there is no distinction between what he shows and what others are able to see. But the entrance of the Ghost changes the notion that all that is necessary is to point to something and make a claim, no explanations being required.

It is not madness
 That I have utter'd. Bring me to the test,
 And I the matter will re-word, which madness.
 Would gambol from.
(Hamlet, III, iv, 143-146)

He is willing to be put to the test, as he has the conviction that any mode of proof would allow him to show his was not madness. In this discussion, for Hamlet, his alleged madness is a matter of phrasing, so the test would give him the possibility of re-wording his sentences, of making matters clear. Yet, here Hamlet's criteria seem to be duplicitous, as he is questioning the very same belief that guided him during the play. It was seen, in the previous chapter, how Hamlet assumed that to put someone or something to the test would lead to indisputable facts, those which required the observer to be capable of showing results. Here, however, failure to be understood produces obscurity, as Hamlet fails to understand that, without a publicly shared referent, he is unable to demonstrate a point of view.

Hamlet's situation is ambiguous. When he is showing the portraits he seems to be using his thoughts about his father to describe what he considers to be the evidence revealed

by the miniatures. When Hamlet sees the Ghost afterwards, he is, in fact, pointing to a certain entity and attempting to indicate it, which somehow would be a case similar to saying “this is a corpse.” His mother’s inability to see King Hamlet’s figure, however, will lead to the assumption that the act of showing should be supplemented. His evidence, since other interpreters do not share it, must be re-phrased, and transformed into a narrative. Both Glessner Lee and the medieval ordeal use the act of pointing as a way to reduce multiple explanations. Hamlet, however, feels the need to describe what he is seeing.

Two contradictory justifications could, perhaps, be given for such a procedure: either the lockets are so eloquent that they produce excitability in the subject watching them; or these are objects that require explanation. The first justification leads us to assume that these lockets, unlike other objects, are communicative, that they possess special properties and produce effects on the subject, while the latter considers that the task of explaining objects relies on the person looking at them. While in the first hypothesis the interpretative work is done by the object, in the second, the effort relies upon the subject. The possibility that Hamlet is using King Hamlet’s painting as a way to test Claudius’s image and produce an effect over his mother clarifies the problem. The lockets do not produce excitement, nor do they need to be explained. But to merely show them does not, as in Claudius’s truth test, provoke the desired effect. It is required for Hamlet to utter the words that will make the difference. Interestingly, in both cases, Hamlet’s interlocutor has the passive role of looking at the paintings and seeing the evidence he is showing. The act of explaining appears to be an intricate procedure; whereas to account for, or to perceive what is being shown, as long as there is a proper referent, seems to be simple.

Moreover, one realizes that one of the portraits’ description has primacy over the other: that Claudius’s miniature exists solely in relation to King Hamlet’s portrait, a translation of Hamlet’s perspective about both men, namely, the thought that one appears to have

importance only if it is contrasted with the other¹⁷⁷. Hamlet's procedure seems to stem from the assumption that one of the paintings is authentic, that it is by looking at the first and comparing it with the second that the Queen would be able to discover the key to both men's character. In this case, King Hamlet's painting reproduces the authenticity of its referent, which, as will be seen, seems to be a relevant condition for these procedures to work.

In the truth test being performed it is, nevertheless, unclear who the touchstone might be. There is no doubt that Hamlet is using his father's painting as a golden alloy for his uncle's analysis. Claudius is the substance Hamlet wishes to test, but it is difficult to determine if the touchstone is his mother, King Hamlet's portrait, or Hamlet. The line "These words like daggers enter in my ears" (III, iv, 95) seems to point to the fact that his mother is the touchstone being scratched by the procedure, and having both alloys contrasted on her surface. This could indicate that the Queen would accumulate the role of observer with that of the touchstone. This does not, however, seem plausible, as there is no indication that the Queen possesses the capacity of quartz (which, as mentioned before, requires special

¹⁷⁷ In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* there is equally a painting being used as referent for the judgment of two brothers whose personalities are being compared, but a serious test is not conducted and the observer's previous opinion is maintained after the comparison takes place.

Molly arrives for the first time to the Hamley's house, and she is shown a crayon-sketch featuring Mrs Hamley's two sons. Molly is told: "Tell me just what you think of them, my dear; it will amuse me to compare your impressions with what they really are". Molly's ability to judge others is here being tested, given that Mrs Hamley assumes she holds the truth to the character of her sons (a perspective which readers will later discover to be erroneous). Although Molly adequately replies that she "can only speak about their faces as I see them in the picture," her description will be influenced by Mrs Hamley's not so subtle remarks.

The eldest boy, Osborne, is considered to be very beautiful, even if Molly notices that his head is down and his eyes may not be seen. The key to Mrs Hamley's opinion of her sons is, however, to be found in her remark: "He is not quite so handsome now; but he was a beautiful boy. Roger was never to be compared with him". Mrs Hamley's consideration of the drawings has the purpose to underline the physical and intellectual qualities of one sibling over the other. As in the case of the Claudius painting, one sibling is the alloy to which the other will be compared, in a test where one must be portrayed as superior. In this case, there is not a painting to be used as an alloy to contrast, both brothers are represented in the same picture, and the depiction itself seems to portray the differences between them. But judgment is not retrieved from the comparison between figures and the observers do not seem to be affected by the test. Even though Molly politely agrees with Mrs. Hamley's opinion, she is able to find qualities in Roger's looks: "No, he is not handsome. And yet I like his face. I can see his eyes. They are grave and solemn-looking; but all the rest of his face is rather merry than otherwise". Mrs Hamley replies: "He is a good, steady fellow, though, and gives us great satisfaction, but he is not likely to have such a brilliant career as Osborne"⁶⁸. Readers of the novel will discover that Mrs Hamley's opinions derived from her special appreciation of one sibling over the other, and not from accurate judgment, as Osborne is denied the Cambridge scholarship, while Roger's scientific work will be publicly recognized. In his own house, however, Osborne will always be the one used to judge Roger.

Cf. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters*, introd. Amy M. King. NY: Spark Educational Publishing, 2005, p. 66.

characteristics). It is also difficult to know whether his mother is truly affected by the test or by Hamlet's performance, i.e. the violence of his words, or the appearance of madness in his performance, as the sentence "Alas, he's mad" would seem to prove (III, iv, 106).

King Hamlet's portrait, the golden substance, could equally accumulate the role of touchstone with that of pure entity, but in the case of the portrait there are no indications that the miniature is ever affected by the test. Hamlet seems, therefore, to be the quartz in this procedure. If Hamlet is the touchstone, then the result of the proof seems to be established *a priori*, since before the test begins we already know what its outcome will be. It could be argued that Hamlet's capacity as a touchstone is what allows him to previously possess the key to Claudius's character and provokes his instability (he is able to see what others do not). In this case, it is safer to be the pure substance or the subject to be tested, than being the touchstone or the observer, as both are affected by the trial being performed. The truth test seems to be a way to amend the Queen's judgment about Claudius and make her understand that, although he appears to be authentic, he is in fact the forgery of a husband. Hamlet is, therefore, correcting his mother's criteria through the presentation of what he considers to be visible proof.

Just like the use of quartz, the outcome of Hamlet's test depends on the specific relationship between both alloys and Hamlet as a touchstone. It should be noticed how Hamlet describes himself as possessing a privileged insight to both his father and Claudius's character. In this case, as in the use of quartz, the bond between the three entities is determinant for the procedure to be accurate. In the second illustration, which follows, concerning the use of an entity as touchstone, the connection between certain passages and their interpreter is also indispensable.

In "The Study of Poetry" Matthew Arnold describes a way to rectify our criteria about literature, suggesting that the critic must seek a "touchstone method" as a way of avoiding the fallacy of historical and personal appreciations and provide poetry's "real estimate". Arnold's test has the purpose of helping to identify, against Sainte-Beuve, for whom art, unlike politics, was truthful, charlatanism:

Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is impermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance¹⁷⁸.

The problem of authenticity in poetry, much similar to some descriptions about persons, the CIA would say, resides in the difficulty of evaluating degrees of truthfulness. If poems and persons were merely truthful or untruthful it would perhaps be easier to distinguish, or at least to categorize them. Charlatanism blurs distinctions, it is something the critic may do consciously or not, but that makes him argue in favor of inauthenticity. Although one could suppose that testing poetry has as main purpose the evaluation of its degree of authenticity, the trial appears as a form to detect fraud and untruthfulness both in literary texts and in the way critics write about them. The thought that authors, poems and critics may possess inauthentic convictions despite their best intentions differs from other cases in which subjects knew they were guilty of something and had to hide their emotions so that they would not be caught. But when one is not consciously being untruthful, there might not be signals of deception to be found.

Moreover, the poem, the entity which could help the critic make accurate judgments, may also be only half-truthful, as if the text is bound to describe itself positively so that the critic will appreciate it. Such representation implies that only the highest form of poetry is authentic about itself, all other texts pretending to be something they are not. In this case, it would be necessary to identify signs that a text, intentionally or despite itself, was lying. Arnold's solution to avoid giving too much importance to a certain author's context (historical fallacy) or to our particular taste (personal fallacy) resides in the use of some lines as contrast:

¹⁷⁸ Matthew Arnold, *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961, p. 307.

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar¹⁷⁹.

The value of the great masters' lines is taken as self-explanatory, they are prototypes which, when compared to other texts, may validate their quality and allow us to do without interpretation. To Matthew Arnold, the touchstone consists of a group of passages from classic authors, such as Homer, Dante or Shakespeare, who would then be contrasted with the lines in appreciation, so that their real value might be understood. The best poetry, the one with a high degree of seriousness, would then appear before the critic. This procedure seems to possess the ability to bring to light characteristics in the tested poems that the critics might ignore, as well as make obvious the signs of their falseness. Interestingly, Arnold's method, like some of the ways used to analyze taciturn objects previously described, stems from the assumption that inauthentic literary texts, unlike those that are authentic, have hidden secrets. Everyone will, therefore, understand the touchstone passages as Arnold intends them to (even if it is unclear whether these lines have already been previously tested and proved to be truthful).

It should be noted how Arnold's procedure is an illustration of what it is to ostensibly demonstrate a point of view about a particular text. While explaining the reason why the *Chanson de Roland* deserves some praise, but claiming it does not possess "high poetic quality," Arnold claims: "Let us try, then, the Chanson de Roland at its best"¹⁸⁰. Submitting poetry to a trial is quoting a passage from it (not one considered plain, but what the critic deems to be the very best of the poem). When the exemplification takes place, Arnold refers, in a phrase that resembles Hamlet's procedure: "That is primitive work. (...) But now turn to Homer"¹⁸¹. A selection of two lines is quoted, and the author notes how "We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether; here is rightly due such supreme praise as

¹⁷⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁸⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁸¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

that M. Vitet gives to the *Chanson de Roland*".¹⁸² The lines are used as if they are self-explanatory, Arnold does not paraphrase or explain them, but takes them as evidence and assumes the reader will be able to conclude the same he did, and see the superiority of one passage over the other. Homer's touchstone lines dismiss the need for justification.

In this prescription for critical success, Arnold suggests us to "take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep," or to "Take of Milton that Miltonic passage" (...) "add two such lines as" (...), "and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine"¹⁸³. These choice of ingredients, representative of what Arnold considers to be each author's most distinguishable features (the Miltonic in Milton), seem to be a figure of the critic's particular taste, as they translate his admiration not only for certain authors, but also for certain segments of their work. It seems Arnold is pointing to lines that he particularly likes, thus validating the quality of passages in need of critical appreciation. At the same time, however, all lines belong to what is generally considered to be the canon and their quality would not be easily questioned. Even critics with different literary preferences would probably agree with Arnold's choice of Shakespeare or Dante. This would mean that, although one may argue against the use of such method, and even prefer the use of different lines, the selection of Arnold's passages seems, paradoxically, to make perfect sense. Somehow, we may disagree with the reasons why he chooses such passages (among the important characteristics of the passages are to be found "high seriousness"; "highest poetical quality"; "discussion of the matter and substance of poetry"; "style and manner," "mark, accent, high beauty, worth and power; poetic truth, poetic beauty," "truth and seriousness"), as well as with his translation of the lines, but not exactly with the passages.

To solely use the lines does not, however, produce the required outcome for the proof:

But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of its quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸² *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

¹⁸³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

¹⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 311.

This passage determines the set of requisites necessary for the method to work, such as using expressions of great masters, the interpreter's mind and the poetry in need of contrast. It should be noted how the critic must not only possess the ability to bear the lines in his mind, but also to discover them. This would mean that the mind, and not the golden passages, is the infallible touchstone. The contradiction in Arnold's essay relies on the fact that he assumes that both the lines and the mind are the touchstone when, in fact, the proper use of the *basanite* relies on the existence of passages that work as a golden alloy, the tested substance, and a mind which, as quartz, allows the proof to take place. Arnold considers the results of the test to be that of allowing us to form a verdict; it should be questioned if, in this reunion of kindred spirits between the subject and its touchstone passages, the outcome derives from the test, or from the subject's prior assumptions, his worldview, particular tastes, etc. It would be interesting to understand, for example, if the test ever surprised Arnold, if he really thought Burns was an extraordinary poet, but after the proof discovered his poems to be merely interesting, or whether Arnold already had an intuition (or even some certainty) about the outcome of the procedure. One could, of course, argue in favor of such intuition, and claim that, as happens with Hamlet, these interpreters are able to reach accurate conclusions due to the fact that they already are good interpreters, which makes them capable of finding the adequate alloys.

Consider how, to point out the obvious, the term "touchstone" is a composition of two words, "touch" and "stone". "Touch" comes from the Old French "*touchier*, or *toucher*, literally 'touched'". The Oxford Dictionary describes it as "To put the hand or finger, or some other part of the body, upon, or in contact with (something) as to feel it"¹⁸⁵. When one wishes to put gold on trial through the use of quartz, the alloy must have contact with the stone. In Arnold's assessment of poetry, the relationship between the critic's mind and the lines is also important, as he must "touch" the passages and be "touched" by them. Such may be understood by the fact that Arnold underlines how the student of poetry must learn how to

¹⁸⁵ *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, ed. Julia Cresswell. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. New York University: School of Law, n.º 4, accessed August, 2010: <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t292.e5072>

apply the golden lines in order to understand the passages' "whole force":

And I wish every student of poetry to make their [touchstone passages] applications of them for himself. Made by himself [the student], the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me¹⁸⁶.

Without memorization, the student may only understand intellectually Arnold's proposal, he will be unable to reproduce it, as he will not have experienced the lines. Such experience may be thought upon in the sense of "being touched" by the lines, being moved by them. "Touch" is also "said in fencing to acknowledge a hit made by your opponent and more generally in recognition of a good or clever point in a discussion"¹⁸⁷, an acknowledgement Arnold describes when in contact with good poetry: a poet has "grand, genuine touches"¹⁸⁸; "at moments he [Burns] touches it [high seriousness] in a profound and passionate melancholy"¹⁸⁹; or "we may be inclined to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos"¹⁹⁰. At stake is not only the poet's ability to move us, but also the critic's skill to recognize such moments in poetry and reproduce them in his texts. The critic's essay would, then, be the exact reproduction of the trial and would have the capacity to make us see the results of the method's application, which, similarly to *basanite*, are supposed to be "in itself evident".

Arnold takes his picking of lines to be so exemplary that he never considers there is an act of selection implied in the choice. But his procedure does not differ from what most critics do when they try to understand if a book they like may be compared to a long lineage of books usually thought of as having quality. For example, T. S. Eliot, in spite of his best objections to Matthew Arnold, concurs that classics are useful as a standard, arguing in "What is a Classic?" that "The value of Virgil to us, in literary terms, is in providing us with a

¹⁸⁶ Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 314.

¹⁸⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, ed. Julia Cresswell. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. New York University: School of Law, n. 4, accessed August, 2010: <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t292.e5072>

¹⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 324. Cf. Roland Barthes' Arnoldian *punctum* in photography.

¹⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 325.

¹⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

criterion”¹⁹¹. What differs is the idea that these “golden single sentences”¹⁹², as Arnold refers to them in the essay “A Friend of God,” constitute a group of lines with an autonomous value. John S. Eells Jr.’s classic study compiles and quotes extensively every reference to the touchstone passages in Arnold’s essays, noting how sometimes Arnold misquotes the lines and pointing to translation peculiarities (such as the fact that Arnold considers that the best Homer translation is the one which attempts to maintain an hexameter measure)¹⁹³. Eells argues that Arnold’s obsession with examples is due to his incapacity to make an abstract approach to problems in his essays. Arnold’s empiricist use of quotations may be considered a way to display, *a posteriori*, a group of facts in a specific order. T. S. Eliot would probably agree with this point of view, since he makes use of Arnold’s touchstone method when he applies quotations as a way to demonstrate arguments in his essays (a point to which I will return). In fact, it can be argued that his essays are organized through a progression of passages considered representative. From this point of view, both authors believe there are facts in need of evaluation, which must be displayed in a proper order and unified within a cohesive description. Let me briefly mention how Paul de Man rejected, in his “A Review of *The Anxiety of Influence*,” the idea that some passages have an intrinsic value that does not require explanation:

There is an abundance of poetic quotation and, in the case of Milton, Blake, Stevens, Emerson, and others, implicit interpretation on an advanced level, but always embedded within the argument and without clarifying comment, as if the inferred meaning of difficult and ambiguous passages could be taken for granted¹⁹⁴.

De Man objects to Harold Bloom’s use of sentences “stated as if they spoke for themselves,” pointing out to the disparity between the use of quotation and the need for comment. It is considered that Bloom uses the passages in order to sustain his main line of

¹⁹¹ T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode. London: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 129.

¹⁹² Matthew Arnold, *Essays, Letters and Reviews by Matthew Arnold*, ed. Fraser Neiman. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, p. 335.

¹⁹³ John S. Eells, *The Touchstones of Matthew Arnold*. NY: Bookman Associates, 1955.

¹⁹⁴ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 268.

reasoning, but lacks detailed explanations of the quotations. Bloom is, according to De Man, presupposing that his assortment of literary examples is self-explanatory, and giving an ostensive use to the quotations. To consider that a certain quotation's meaning may be implicitly inferred is to assume that it works as a touchstone and, therefore, that different readers will be able to equally understand it. De Man objects to the perspective that the use of quotations is less ambiguous than their explanations and attempts to show that a difficult passage without a proper clarification is no more than just that, a passage requiring an interpretative exercise from the reader. What seems to be in question here is a matter of use: not only it is necessary to be able to point out the golden passages, but also to justify the use given to those choices.

It might initially seem that, according to Paul de Man, Bloom shares with Arnold the problem of taking passages' meaning for granted. While, however, in the beginning of Arnold's essay, the touchstone passages and the contrast are presented with no further explanations, as the text progresses Arnold starts to describe the reasons why, for example, Burns's poetry does not belong to the category of passages representative of high standards:

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent of poetic virtue of the highest masters¹⁹⁵.

Here, too, the interpreter plays an important role, as he needs to distinguish the reasons why a certain poet failed the test. Comparison with other poets is used as contrast, but the interpreter is required to understand the nature of the difference between those who are masters and those who are not. As with Hamlet, pointing to the contrast between figures\texts is no longer sufficient as the test must be supplemented with the justification for Arnold's choices. This would mean that the interpreter's role is no longer merely that of selecting and memorizing the lines, he must also be able to account for the results of the trial. The strangeness of the procedure derives from the fact that, for Arnold, different interpreters are expected to understand similarly the outcome of the proof, as if the poetical verdict was

¹⁹⁵ Matthew Arnold, *Op. cit.*, p. 326.

clear, but somehow required an *a posteriori* explanation. Even for those in possession of literary touchstones, therefore, part of the critical exercise relies on the interpreter's ability to justify the verdict. One may argue that the contrast between passages always allows for truthful verdicts, but that criticism is maintained by each interpreter's ability to disagree with the reasons given to justify the inauthenticity of a certain text. Arnold does not seem to contemplate the possibility of error in his justifications. One may, though, agree with his conclusion about an author, saying that Burns fails indeed to be a master, but disagree with the reasons given (claiming, in Arnold's terms, that a Burns has poetic virtue, but not truth of manner, for example).

A difference is established between discovering the authenticity of a certain text (which may be portrayed as a relatively fast judgment), and being able to give reasons for it (an activity that requires time). One might say that literary criticism is characterized by being a protracted type of judgment, for its slowness and rationality, for the constitution of arguments in an explainable and shared progression. When Arnold argues in favor of the use of touchstones in interpretation, he is sustaining the notion that these passages allow the interpreter to obtain fast results. Instead of receiving detailed, long and often contradictory explanations about a certain state of affairs, the use of a touchstone seems to simplify situations that would take a long time to be solved. The Gryphon, in *Alice in Wonderland* enunciated a similar principle: "No, No! The adventures first,' said the Gryphon in an impatient tone: 'explanations take such a dreadful time'"¹⁹⁶. The Gryphon is opposing adventures to explanations, considering the former to be captivating in themselves and the latter to be long and devoid of interest. But the Gryphon is also implying that although the enunciation time in adventures and explanations may be the same (both take time to be told), adventures are easier to understand, whereas explanations claim an extra interpretative effort. In what concerns touchstones, adventures would equal the verdict in the *basanite*. Although Arnold's criticism belongs to the category of explanations taking time to be told

¹⁹⁶ Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, 1865. London: Penguin Classics, 1998, p. 91.

(even due to the fact that the critic's mind requires an extensive learning period until being able to choose the so-called golden passages), the presumption that the conclusions about the poem are easily perceived by all those observing the outcome of the test makes it seem that the adventure\verdict has priority over explanations.

However, the second part of the procedure requires justification, as if the procedure showed us a certain substance is authentic, but failed to explain us why. This represents an important difference between quartz and the two illustrations previously discussed. While someone wishing to test the authenticity of gold would know how to find quartz and gold, both Hamlet and Arnold need to discover the alloys. In Hamlet's case it would be necessary to understand whether he took time to discover both men's figures (if the paintings were on the wall such possibility does not make sense), or if any representation of King Hamlet (the authentic substance) and Claudius would have the same effect. In the case of Arnold, the critic's long learning process, along with his intuition, makes him able to select the alloys. Both the way Hamlet shows his father's locket and Matthew Arnold's golden sentences illustrate, as was seen, the search for an irrefutable form of judgment.

A third, and final, illustration of the use of an entity as touchstone is characterized by the thought that, sometimes, adventures really are better than explanations or, at least, allow us to overcome problems that had previously appeared unsolvable. Therapy, for example, is usually an activity that requires time in order to heal the patient. Imagine, however, an expeditious type of treatment based on the medieval judicial ordeal technique, in which the doctor would impose upon the subject a task more severe than the problem the patient needed to solve. He would, perhaps, prefer to abandon the symptom than to maintain it, and be continually forced to perform a punitive task. Picture, for example, a woman troubled with severe anxiety causing acute physiological signs such as terribly sweaty hands, who had spent years in therapy only to see her symptoms worsen. In such case, each time the woman felt anxious during the day, the doctor would make her wake in the middle of the night, go downstairs, get the cleaning materials, mop and wax the kitchen floor, only to remove the wax the next night (an activity she found abominable). When the task was finished she had

permission to return to bed, but next day the procedure would be repeated if she experienced the symptoms. Cleaning the floor only to scrub it again night after night would certainly be particularly painful. This type of therapy, actually performed by Jay Haley, had the purpose to make resistant patients realize that a symptom could be extinguished if they were forced to perform a severe ordeal. In the book's introduction, Haley problematizes his difficulties in finding a justification for swift therapy:

At that time there was also no explanation of a rapid therapeutic change because there was no theory of brief therapy. It was assumed that if one did brief therapy, one merely did less than was done in long-term therapy. Therefore, my directive had no rationale¹⁹⁷.

Haley debates the problem of having found a very effective, but theoretically unsound way of solving difficult cases. Intuitively, he discovered that patients which had been in therapy for years were being healed by this method, which contradicted the thought that the treatment required time (Haley later discovered Dr. Milton H. Erickson's procedure also included the use of special ordeals). Unlike other techniques, Haley considers that the body may decide to let go of a symptom if that seems less painful than continuing to maintain it. While other forms of therapy attempt to rationalize subconscious thoughts and repressed emotions ("Her other therapy had been talk, talk, talk and hadn't changed anything"¹⁹⁸), Haley seems to have found a non-intellectual way of dealing with patient's problems. I would argue that he seems to consider that his method is an irrational way of fighting persistent bodily symptoms, which may help to understand the reason why this is described as a brief type of therapy. While explanations require time, as the patient must make sense of his symptoms, the body's physiological response to a threat is usually fast. The type of reaction Haley looks forward to seems to be similar to the way the parasympathetic system reacts when in peril, an alertness which makes it detect the cause of the threat and then attempts to avoid it (the body being, again, depicted as an organ of its own mind).

¹⁹⁷ Jay Haley, *Ordeal Therapy – Unusual Ways to Change Behavior*, 1984. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985, p. 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

The notion that someone threatened by an ordeal would prefer to abandon his or her symptoms reminds us of some of the judicial procedures previously mentioned and the way the test is presented could have the effect of making someone confess: “Sometimes the person must go through it repeatedly to recover from the symptom. At other times the mere threat of an ordeal brings recovery”.¹⁹⁹ The punitive function of Haley’s therapy’s has the purpose of making patients realize the pains they will have to go through if their symptoms persist.

With the ordeal technique, the therapist’s task is easily defined: It is to impose an ordeal appropriate to the problem of the person who wants to change, an ordeal more severe than the problem. The main requirement of an ordeal is that it cause distress equal to or greater than that caused by the symptom, just as the punishment should fit the crime²⁰⁰.

In the judicial ordeal, the method had the purpose of identifying guilty subjects, and even though the procedure was painful, it was not perceived as a form of punishment. Haley’s therapy, however, is a way of maltreating the body, making the subject accomplish tasks his body will dislike (Haley’s first chapter is entitled “The Touch of Penance”). It was seen before how *basanos* named the ordeal. In such a case, the touchstone was the mode of proof itself, the test being used to determine someone’s authenticity. Those applying the ordeal would, therefore, equal the examiner in the test of gold, while the subject would accumulate the role of both alloys (guilt and innocence being evaluated by the kind of marks on the body). Haley’s therapy reproduces this notion, as it seems to give the therapist the role of examiner, whereas the patient, i. e., quartz, will be subjected to the test. While, in the ordeal, the result of the test is to be evaluated by the degree of physical signs appearing on the body, this procedure looks forward to the absence of marks (something which could be explained by the fact that, in judicial ordeals, subjects do not possess prior signs on the body, which made their later appearance relevant). The positive outcome of the therapy, therefore, is considered to be the abandonment of the patient’s symptoms, i.e. the women who stops having sweaty hands is

¹⁹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

healed, a sign that the method worked. Conditions for the ordeal must be previously established:

The selection of an ordeal is done by the therapist, preferably with the client's collaboration. The ordeal must be severe enough to overcome the symptom, it must be good for the person so that he benefits by doing it, it must be something he can do and will accept in terms of its propriety, and the action must be clear and not ambiguous. It should have a beginning and an end clearly established²⁰¹.

The agreement between parties as to the nature of the procedure helps to warrant that it will be accurately performed, that it is not a form of self-punishment, that somehow the person will benefit from it (being forced to do exercise; to clean the house; to read Dickens through the night, just to mention some of the possible chores). This is another interesting point in Haley's therapy: while the assignments are punitive to the body, it is considered that the subject ultimately profits from their execution. There is a partitioning between what is good for one's body and mind. Even exercise, which is supposed to be good for the body, must be performed until the muscles get sore, in a way that will provoke pain. This means that, in the long run, the subject will benefit from the exercise, but that his body will dislike the experience.

It should be questioned, when thinking about some of the other procedures previously mentioned, whether the outcome of the therapy is previously determined. Haley holds the view that it is necessary to persuade his patients of the certainty of the result: "When someone believes that nothing can be done to help her and all experts are stumped, it's sometimes a good idea to offer a guaranteed cure"²⁰². This guaranty is not described as the promise of a cure, which would be unethical, but something "used to persuade the client to follow the directive that sets up the ordeal"²⁰³. Interestingly, although in this case the conclusion of the procedure may not possibly be determined *a priori*, one of the parties, the patient, considers it so, while the other, the therapist, is not certain it will work, but has high

²⁰¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁰² *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

²⁰³ *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

expectations about it. The asymmetrical relationship established between patient and therapist, a condition for the method to work, is thus irrevocably linked to the belief of one of the parties regarding the certainty of the procedure. When the method works patients realize that, if the symptoms ever return, they will merely have to repeat the ordeal (the patient forced to read during the whole night to fight insomnia, for example, prepared himself by buying Dickens' collected works). When the procedure worked the first time, it confirmed the patient's beliefs about the validity of the method, and he will deem the results to be always determined beforehand.

Apart from the performance of tasks considered to be an ordeal, the therapist itself may be the test:

Any act that is defined in one way by the client can be redefined in a less acceptable way by the therapist so that it is something the person doesn't like. For example, something the client describes as vengeful can be redefined as protective and encouraged by the therapist. Or an act that the client defines as independent of the therapist can be redefined as done for the therapist, thereby reframing it in such a way that the person would rather not continue to do it. Another class of ordeals is the confronting techniques used by some therapists. When a therapist forces the client to face what the client would rather not face, and the client has sought out this painful experience, it can be classed as an ordeal procedure. Similarly, insight interpretations that the client doesn't like are an ordeal to experience. In such cases the therapist itself, rather than a specific act by the therapist, becomes an ordeal for a person, and the ordeal must continue as long as the person has the problem²⁰⁴.

"Ordeal" is a metaphor for a group of procedures the therapist may attempt, all having in common the fact that the patient will dislike them. Redefining each subject's perspective, as well as providing insightful interpretations that the person will loathe, are forms of ordeal. The therapist, in this case, is transformed into the task the patient would prefer not to perform: he is the test, as the patient will prefer to renounce the symptoms in order to avoid hearing the doctor. In this case, the ordeal is not harmful to the body and the distinction between mind and body does not seem to work, as it appears both the patient's body and mind react subconsciously. If, in the first examples, the ordeal was a mode of performing actions, when the therapist is the ordeal the method is based on justification and on the patient's reaction to the explanations given. The role of justification is not, however,

²⁰⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

explanatory (the therapist does not aim at the person's comprehension of his symptoms, as in other forms of treatment), but confrontational.

Both Matthew Arnold and Hamlet make a move from ostensive pointing to supplementing that act with a description. From this point of view, ostensive quoting and justification seem to be procedures which work similarly. If quoting is considered the ability to point to an object and name it properly, to provide a justification, in this context, means to be able to explain clearly the conclusions derived from a certain test to others. While quartz allows for a verdict about the authenticity of a substance, the merit of Arnold's procedure, despite his best intentions, is that of allowing the dialogue to be maintained. This is another distinction between quartz and both illustrations, as the use of the stone dismisses all other types of explanation. In Haley's therapy, however, justification itself acquires the role of ordeal, as it is something the patient would prefer not to hear and which possesses a punitive character.

It was seen how Hamlet and Matthew Arnold assume that some entities may be used as touchstones. But the accuracy of their test depends upon the intimate association between object, the entity being applied as the golden alloy, and the interpreter, here seen as the touchstone. In Haley's therapy, in spite of the fact that the entity which is deemed to be the touchstone is the patient, the ordeal requires skill and depends on the therapist's ability to understand him, to find the proper type of method and to maintain it during the required amount of time: "Like any powerful means of changing people, the ordeal is a procedure that can cause harm in the hands of the ignorant and irresponsible who rush off to make people suffer"²⁰⁵. It could be argued that the therapist's skill relies on his ability to use the patient as quartz during a certain amount of time, a use that will stop being necessary the moment the person is cured. Consequently, the patient is not, contrarily to what happened in the two previous illustrations, a touchstone.

The next chapter deals with interpreters considered to be a criterion in themselves. In this case, the mode of proof seems to take place in their bodies, which makes them be

²⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

singularly perceptive. But they also suffer physically the consequences of such procedures. According to these modes of proof previously described, intentional objects may be understood or unmasked through the act of pointing. However, they assume that pointing provides a standard of truthfulness and that to show a certain feature is to have found an object's true meaning. To assume that these entities are intentional is to consider that they may be explained through the use of facts that seem to do without interpretation. Therefore, such a model of understanding seems to be motivated by a need for certainty that aims at contradicting the concept of interpretive openness. Perhaps Frances Glessner Lee characterized this best by repeating the police apothegm, "Convict the guilty, expose the innocent, and find the truth in a nutshell".

Chapter III

Being a Touchstone

Desdemona: – O, fear interprets.
Shakespeare, *Othello*

William Moulton Marston is the inventor of the systolic blood pressure test, an important procedural component of what would later be the polygraph. He also created “Wonder Woman,” the bouncy heroine whose weapon of choice, the Golden or Magic Lasso, had the purpose of forcing those captured into obeying and telling the truth. There are interpreters who resemble this super heroine, in their ability to adopt or devise modes of test useful to help them distinguish types of entities. In their rare and seemingly effortless capacity to read individuals, of being a touchstone for particulars, let us call them “Arnoldian”. The following pages represent such figures or modes of interpretative insight, illustrated in particular techniques of literary criticism; in the figure of Madame Merle and, later in the novel, Isabel Archer in Henry James’ *The Portrait of a Lady*; in modes of proof such as the polygraph; and in some forms of torture.

In previous discussions, the concept of “interpretation” has been applied in its broadest sense, that of a universal practice, while methods of resolution of problems such as the ordeal have been treated as homologous to literary criticism. The strategies used by these modes of proof to determine truthful answers, and to restrain interpretation, have been surveyed. But the fact that multiple forms of analysis have been placed along a continuum, as

well as the general sense given to the word interpretation, appear to imply that the technical use of the term has somehow been lost. In this tale, one recognizes the story of how the concept, in its origin a technique that had the purpose of clarifying the veiled truth of Scripture, was progressively transformed into a worldview, and is now, demotically, on the loose. “Interpretation,” once a word particular to Biblical exegesis and literary studies, is nowadays applied as that which allows us to understand a variety of cultural practices and fields of knowledge. In fact, the conversion of a technical skill into a way of reading the world made all forms of ascribing sense “an interpretation.”

From this perspective, interpretation came to name something everybody does in their daily rounds and which may not necessarily require a particular talent or special aptitudes. Understanding the reason why one’s neighbor appears to be suddenly upset, the working of the subway in a different country, explaining a given text, or realizing whether a suspect seems guilty, are generally seen as ways of making sense which vary in their degree of specialization. This text is an attempt to reflect on such impulse to interpret and the need some interpreters feel to restrain it. In fact, one way to describe these modes of proof, as well as certain literary criticism, is to consider that they differ from other ways of reading the world in their claim to limit interpretation, as if they wished to return to a time and a place in which the concept was not generalized.

1. The Taming of Interpretation

Critics such as T. S. Eliot have pointedly characterized their discomfort with uses of “interpretation” as a term of art. In his preface to G. Wilson Knight’s *The Wheel of Fire*, Eliot explains how “it has taken me a long time to recognize the justification for what Mr. Wilson Knight calls ‘interpretation’”²⁰⁶. The word, in inverted commas throughout the essay to expose this particular use as a neologism, aims at depicting the way qualified judges, i.e.

²⁰⁶ T. S. Eliot, “Introduction”, G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire – Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy*. 1930. London: Routledge, 2001, p. xv.

scholarly readers, analyze texts. To constrain the use of the concept to its technical sense²⁰⁷, as Eliot does, implies that those wishing to interpret must possess particular skills and master a group of specific procedures. To understand which would, precisely, be such dexterous uses, and what distinguishes them from more general ways of understanding, is the question Eliot's preface aims to answer.

A shift of interest in the analysis of literature is signaled here, as if Eliot had captured in his essay the moment in which a pregnant term of art was being created. In fact, the concept is nowadays so widespread that it is difficult to conceive of a time in which interpretation was not pervasive. Eliot's preface oscillates between the disinclination with this notion and the acceptance of Wilson Knight's analysis, in which he "has insisted upon the right way to interpret poetic drama"²⁰⁸. Knight is said to describe each Shakespeare's play according to its internal pattern and visual imagery, formal criteria and aesthetic principles, instead of comparing it with similar works, author's intentions, or attempting to comprehend its value as standard. The book, whose publication Eliot had arranged with Oxford University Press, presents a distinction between "criticism," a judgment of value, an analysis of plot or character, and "interpretation," the "comprehension of a set of correspondences" according to each play's theme and imagery.

The demarcation Eliot alludes to indicates a particularity, according to which "interpretation" would be the activity of pointing to and describing patterns intrinsic to the text, and criticism the discovery of elements extrinsic to it, such as placing a given poem among other works belonging to the standard. The dichotomy, previously described, between inside and outside finds here a different expression. In order to describe the pattern one must see it or understand it, which suggests that, in Eliot's version of Wilson Knight, an insightful

²⁰⁷ The preface (1930) presents a somewhat different perspective on interpretation from that sustained in Eliot's earlier writings. For example, the influence of Bradley's rejection of facts, which may be perceived in Eliot's doctoral thesis, is contradicted in Eliot's earlier criticism, where he insists upon the importance of hard facts and the subsequent rejection of interpretation ("Tradition and Individual Talent," 1917, and "The Function of Criticism," 1930). Such "early objectivism" is abandoned in texts such as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1959), which favor personal interpretation. For a detailed survey of the matter, read: Richard Shusterman, "Eliot as Philosopher," in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. David Moody, 1994. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 31-47.

²⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. xx.

critic is capable of perceiving the interior of the text (he appreciates a certain poem's imagery, i.e. a skeleton made noticeable in the critic's writings, an exoskeleton, then). The fact that various interpreters may, and in fact do, determine numerous patterns in the same text would perhaps help to understand that the description of the poem's imagery is, in itself, a matter of interpretative choice – something Wilson Knight would not deny. One would thus be tempted to say that to determine a pattern is the activity of characterizing different configurations in a text through time – an endeavor that would vary according to its interpreters' beliefs and interests. However, as Eliot makes clear, the idea that a text possesses an inside is always accompanied by the hope that the interpreter is able to expose it.

It is also the prejudice or preference of any one who practices, though humbly, the art of verse, to be skeptical to all 'interpretations' of poetry, even his own interpretations; and to rely upon his sense of power and accomplishment in language to guide him. And certainly people ordinarily incline to suppose that in order to enjoy a poem it is necessary to discover its meaning, a meaning which they can expound to anyone who will listen, in order to prove that they enjoy it. But for one thing the possibilities in meaning of 'meaning' in poetry are so extensive, that one is quite aware that one's knowledge of the meaning even to what oneself has written is extremely limited, and that its meaning to others, at least so far as there is some consensus of interpretation among persons apparently qualified to interpret, is quite as much as part of it as what it means to oneself²⁰⁹.

Eliot's account, a valuable lesson for readers such as the narrator in Henry James' short-story "The Figure in the Carpet," underlines a peculiar error in interpretation, i. e. the presumption that enjoying a poem is determining its single meaning. Interpretation seems to be accompanied by the idea that a text possesses a mystery in need to be solved, the content of which is difficult to understand. The presumption of inner secrecy, so often mentioned in previous chapters, is visible when Eliot, despite himself, confesses he was "tempted to use the word 'secret' as an alternative to 'pattern', but that I remembered the unlucky example of Matthew Arnold"²¹⁰. If, on the one hand, "interpreting" a text would mean clarifying these difficulties and making it accessible to others, on the other hand it seems erroneous to assume that a single interpretation would comprise the whole meaning of a poem. Proficient

²⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. xviii.

²¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

interpreters, according to Eliot, must separate the “class of poets, not unknown to any age, which has all of the superficial qualities, and none of the internal organs, of poetry”²¹¹. In such case, error of judgment is a result of mistakenly considering the exterior is in fact the interior, i.e. deeming the superficial qualities to be the internal organs.

To pin down a sole sense is to ignore the fact that texts contemplate the possibility of various, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations. Although sensibly refusing the existence of univocal interpretations, Eliot describes the advantages of reducing the number of possible understandings of a text. The passage also rejects the notion that each reading may instigate a multiplicity of meanings, sustained by opposite views of the world. The liminal, definitional legitimacy of multiple interpretations will, of course, ignore the possibility of error. Notice how the identification of an interpretive fault presupposes the existence of a text that the mistake violates or transforms, as well as of someone able to detect it. Interestingly, showing an error does not always entail opposing it to a correct interpretation, although that may sometimes occur, but to contrast it with the text itself, which is an admission that it exists as an entity. It is unclear, in descriptions favorable to a differentiation between interior and exterior, whether pointing to an error would be obtaining access to the inside or the outside of the text (assuming they may be distinguished). On the one hand, showing a word or expression implies it will do as public, visible proof, and therefore belongs to what would be considered the exterior of the text. From such perspective, unlike discovering a pattern, rectifying an interpretation would not entail accessing this hidden secret. On the other hand, it could be presumed that evidence of a fault is to be mainly found within what would be considered the poem’s inner structure (something that would be a part of the text, and would therefore be depicted as its interior). Revising a faulty interpretation, thus, presupposes previously mentioned skills such as the capacity to observe and to point to a word or expression, considered evidence, in order to clarify its meaning.

²¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

In fact, one way to justify the existence of specialized interpreters is the necessity to uncover interpretative faults. Spotting a mistake presupposes the existence of interpretation as a tool, and opposes it to more general ways of viewing the world, while it reinforces the idea that certain persons are more capable than others at these tasks. The thought that mistakes must be corrected also validates the idea that one must be properly taught in order to interpret correctly. If one accepts the description of interpretation as an activity of experts, then understanding a poem shares procedures with other types of specialized modes of proof, and may be differentiated from non-technical forms of understanding the world. A particularity in examinations with the purpose to detect deception helps to enlighten this point. Although the instrument we call polygraph is the center of this technique for evaluating persons, the test depends, as shown earlier, on other critical elements of the process, such as the pre-test interview, the reply to a previously established group of questions and, lastly, the chart's interpretation²¹². This usually involves the appraisal of the physiological reaction to relevant and comparison questions. The examiner, who analyses the charts, is responsible for it. Is this a technical interpretation of affairs?

Analysis and interpretation often appear as interchangeable concepts in James Allan Matte's book about Psychophysiological Detection or Deception, the accepted scientific term to designate polygraph evaluations. A scientific chart contains four different physiological records. Paraphrasing the author's words, respiration patterns are recorded through two different pens at the top of the chart – one characterizes thoracic and the other abdominal breathing –; galvanic skin conductance is documented in the middle of the chart; and, lastly, cardio activity is registered at the bottom of the page, revealing transformations in blood pressure, pulse rate and pulse amplitude²¹³. Those looking closely will, however, find a difference between the task of reading each separate chart, identified as “analysis,” and what is considered to be the general “interpretation” of results.

²¹² For a detailed account, read: Committee to Review the Scientific Evidence on the Polygraph. National Research Council, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection*. Washington, DC: The National Academic Press, 2003.

²¹³ James Allan Matte, *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection*. Lancashire: J. A. M. Publication, 1996, p. 371.

In the chapter “Analysis, Interpretation and Quantification of Physiological data,” each section concerning a specific chart is referred to as “Breathing Analysis;” “Galvanic Skin response \ Conductance Analysis” or “Cardio Analysis”. On occasion, the author uses the term “interpret” to refer to the way a polygraph examiner reads the trace on a chart (using phrases such as “In order to properly interpret the GSR\GSG tracing”²¹⁴). But for the most part, “interpretation” is the expression used when physiological data as a whole is considered, i. e. when several charts are taken into account together. While analysis is deemed a partial account, interpretation allows the polygraph examiner to have a full comprehension of the test; it is considered the specialized capacity to analyze, compare, and evaluate the group of charts, thus permitting a conclusion to be reached about the suspect.

Interpretation is perceived as a tool allowing for a comprehensive view of the examination. Such broad understanding of the term may not, nonetheless, be associated with the perspective of those who think about the concept in its more general sense. In this mode of proof, interpretation is what allows for conclusive results to appear, putting a stop to a multiplicity of hypothesis; it is being used as a valuable instrument, restricting a world of possibilities, controlling results and allowing us to acquire certainty regarding the outcome of the test. Thus, the demand for skilled examiners:

In addition to those who graduated from unaccredited polygraph schools whose curriculum may lack adequate physiology training, many earlier graduates of accredited polygraph schools have failed to supplement their initial limited knowledge of physiology in spite of continued advances in forensic psychophysiology. Thus many “polygraphists” are “technicians” who interpret chart tracings by memorizing known tracing patterns without knowing the physiological cause for the particular pattern analyzed. This can lead to errors in interpretation that otherwise could have been avoided²¹⁵.

The charts consist in the visible exteriorization of the subject’s physiological reactions to the questions posed. To an amateur user of the polygraph, or in non-specialized arguments about the mode of proof, evidence is assumed to be self-explainable. Visible results of deceit are supposedly so clear that everyone will reach equal conclusions when looking at them

²¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 380.

²¹⁵ *Op. Cit.*, p. 371.

(analysis would be so obvious a task as determining whether a certain arm has been burned in the ordeal, a known ancestor of the test). To a professional, however, the capacity to make sense of what was brought to light depends on a technical understanding of the investigation, which is a result of study and education. The degree of knowledge about physiology distinguishes real polygraphists from mere technicians, those who have memorized the most common patterns appearing in the charts, but who are unable to understand the physiological causes of a certain tracing. In this passage, as well as in others in the book, interpretation is a tool handled by those well acquainted with human physiology, the polygraph as an instrument, and the group of questions posed. An expert polygraphist is able to understand what caused a pattern, to describe it accurately and to provide a verdict.

In polygraph examinations, interpretative error may derive from insufficient knowledge, the incapacity to properly understand the causes giving origin to a pattern or to read accurately the charts. A difference between Eliot's characterization of Wilson Knight's ability to determine the Shakespearean pattern and the interpretation of the charts derives from the fact that, in polygraph tests, the chart is seemingly visible for all to see. The register is, itself, a pattern, which, unlike its hardly fathomable existence in a literary text, has been brought to light during the evaluation. But not only the requisite to clarify the pattern is part of the procedure, but also understanding the pattern, itself, is as complex as the analysis of a Shakespearean sonnet. Let me quote, as an example, a passage aiming to explain what one sees in a chart:

A PVC results in a sudden drop in blood pressure and blood volume. In the top tracing the PVC occurs at almost regular intervals without specific stimulus thus is regarded as *uniform distortion*, whereas in the bottom tracing the PVC occurs only on a specific stimulus thus is regarded as a *reaction*²¹⁶.

Knowing that PVC stands for "premature ventricular contraction" does not help much to understand the differentiation between a "uniform distortion" and a "reaction," the reasons that make one or the other appear, and their importance to the general

²¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 389.

comprehension of the chart. It could be argued that this is due to the fact that these terms require explanation. “Uniform distortion” is portrayed as a “series of equal but nonconforming breathing cycles interspersed within an average tracing segment”²¹⁷, which means that the subject may be attempting to control his breathing cycle, giving origin to a seemingly normal chart. Usually, as Matte explains, breathing rates below ten cycles a minute indicate that the suspect is controlling respiratory patterns (“normal breathing rates ranges ten to twenty-four cycles per minute”²¹⁸). It may now be perceived that mastering the term does not simplify the interpretative task. Learning the terminology is, nonetheless, the easy part, and it does not make us skilled interpreters. Notice figure XII-38 in the book and its explanation, quoted bellow:

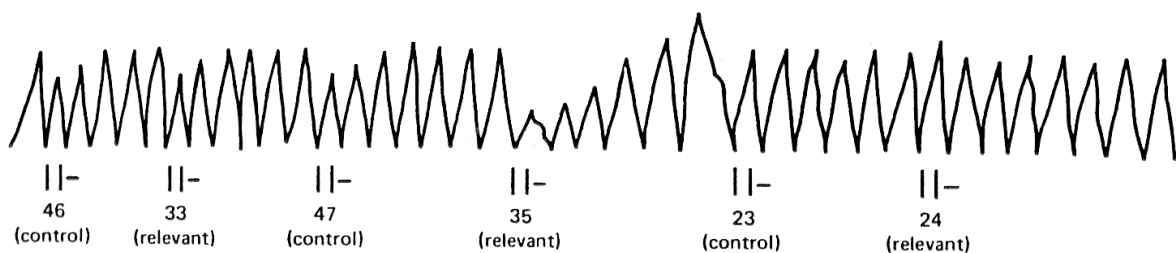


Figure 1: Analysis of a breathing pattern.

Question #35 above reflects significant suppression followed by hyperventilation signifying that both the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems activated on this relevant question. The neighboring control question #47 reflects mild suppression with no evidence of a relief pattern. Therefore, a score of -2 (D) or deception is given to this Spot in the breathing tracing²¹⁹.

Those knowing that subjects experiencing fear of detection tend to suppress breathing cycles during inhalation (“this results in either sustained, ascending, descending or suppressed breathing cycles of less than average amplitude on a stable baseline”²²⁰) may understand why deception (score – 2) was given to this Spot in reply to question 35. Fear

²¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 379.

²¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 379.

²¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 411.

²²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 373.

activates the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems in relevant questions (those where pertinent information is asked), as opposed to what happens in control questions (those not significant to the test, and used to compare results). When the polygraphist equates this result with those presented in the other charts, in which similar patterns of duplicity were found, he obtains a verdict of deception. The chapter dedicated to the analysis of the charts, which a lay user may read carefully and repeatedly in order to try to make sense of each graphic and its description, substantiates Matte's account concerning the necessity to have specialists analyzing the results. Proof, in polygraph examinations, is self-evident, but only to those capable of seeing it. One relying merely on observation and assuming it will be sufficient to learn the procedures will be unable to comprehend the charts.

Interestingly, a persistent self-taught interpreter of the registers will, at some point, understand what is being shown, but such feat is to be accompanied by the absolute persuasiveness of every description. Without formal education, every analysis appears to make perfect sense and one is not able to detect faults, misinterpretations or to deconstruct the author's argument. The relationship between the facts appearing on the charts and each commentary about them is, to an untrained reader, indistinguishable. The thought that one is able to concur with what is being presented, but not to diverge, is representative of the limits of our interpretative skills. Such particularity does not depend, as some persons would argue, on lack of knowledge of the specific vocabulary, but on the inability to provide reasons to what one is observing. As the author suggests, learning physiology, taking certified polygraph courses and reading the manuals could solve the problem, an indication that correct interpretations are obtained when one becomes an expert.

In this case, and to a non-skilled interpreter, it is quite easy to appreciate how showing something only works with those capable of understanding what is being highlighted. Returning to Eliot, to differentiate "reading" a text and "interpreting" it, as the author does, implies the existence of a category of specialized interpreters, skilled in the art of understanding literature. This is the reason why numerous meanings, in order not to be erroneous, may only exist within a limit judged accurate by those "qualified to interpret," i. e.,

in possession of particular skills of analysis. Such activity presupposes a technical sense given to the term “interpretation,” characterized in the preface as the pursuit of those wishing to comprehend both the poem’s surface and its core, and not bind the comprehension of a text to the discovery of its meaning: “But our first duty as either critics or ‘interpreters’, surely, must be to try to grasp the whole design, and read *character* and *plot* in the understanding of this subterrene or submarine music”²²¹. Interestingly, Eliot characterizes the common field between critics and interpreters to be that of grasping the whole design (the exterior frame?), through the comprehension of this subterrene music (a poem’s interiority?).

“Reading” a poem without interpreting it would be knowing what the poem is about, being able to describe it, and to understand its own language, as “I can tell nothing from the fact that you enjoy Shakespeare, unless I know exactly *how* you enjoy him”²²².

Thus, the importance of describing evidence and proof to support a line of reasoning, of using a poem’s vocabulary to define it, and of being able to portray that set of relations within its structure, of comprehending “recurrences of mood and theme”²²³. This is the reason Eliot claims to have benefited from Wilson Knight’s book, as “his essays enlarged my understanding of the Shakespeare pattern;” “which, after all, is quite the main thing”²²⁴. Resisting interpretation would thus imply “to limit his criticism of poetry to the appreciation of vocabulary and syntax, the analysis of line, metric and cadence; to stick as closely to the more trustworthy senses as possible”²²⁵. In Eliot’s essays, his own mode of reading is made clear and one notices how the argument is organized through an ostensive display of passages considered representative. Take, for example, “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca,” where the author presents what he considers to be the resemblances between several critics’

²²¹ T. S. Eliot, *Op. cit.*, p. xxi.

²²² *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

²²³ *Op. cit.*, p. xx.

²²⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. xx. Notice Eliot’s comment, in his essay about Dante, written a few years before the preface: “We do not understand Shakespeare from a single reading, and certainly not from a single play. There is a relation between the various plays of Shakespeare, taken in order; and it is a work of years to venture even one individual interpretation of the pattern in Shakespeare’s carpet”. T. S. Eliot, “Dante,” 1929, *Selected Essays*, 1932. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1980, p. 245.

²²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. xix.

interpretations of Shakespeare and their personal views, to then propose a Shakespeare "under the influence of the Stoicism of Seneca"²²⁶. Before quoting Othello's ultimate speech, Eliot comments how he "always felt that I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness – of universal human weakness – than the last great speech of Othello"²²⁷. The monologue is then cited and followed by the commentary:

What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is *cheering himself up*. He is endeavoring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself²²⁸.

There is no appreciation of vocabulary or syntax, no commentary on metric or cadence. And, still, Eliot seems to have been able to stick closely to those trustworthy senses, in his exemplification of what may be considered insightful criticism. In Othello's monologue, commonly understood as the expression of the utmost despair, Eliot finds unredeemed egotism. Some pages later, part of Hamlet's final speech is quoted, after which Eliot comments: "Antony says: 'I am Antony still,' and the Duchess, 'I am Duchess of Malfi still'; would either of them have said that unless Medea had said *Medea superest?*"²²⁹. Again, metric and cadence, vocabulary and syntax are ignored, as the commentary concerning the quotation serves not only the purpose of grouping Hamlet's last words, and, thus, Othello's, with those of Antony and the Duchess of Malfi, but also of showing their common model, Seneca's *Medea*. In this form of reading, as opposed to interpreting, one discovers Eliot as an Arnoldian, for whom part of the critic's skill consists in his ability to choose passages in a text. In *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism*, the author argues:

But Arnold had real taste. His preoccupations, as I have said, make him too exclusively concerned *with the great* poetry, and with the greatness of it. His view of Milton is for this reason unsatisfying. But you cannot read his essay on *The Study of Poetry* without being

²²⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," 1927, *Selected Essays*, 1932. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1980, p. 128-129.

²²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

²²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 130.

²²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

convinced by the felicity of his quotations: to be able to quote as Arnold could is the best evidence of taste²³⁰.

Although Matthew Arnold's view of Milton remains unsatisfying (i.e., his general understanding of the author seems to be at fault), his capacity to quote indicates not only his taste, but also his talent as a critic. Reading a text well, from this perspective, would imply not only the capacity to point to errors or mistakes in other's criticism, but also to quote passages from the text itself, thus showing it to others. In Eliot's sentence one understands how presenting a passage implies not only the act of selecting it well, but also the existence of a category of interpreters capable to comprehend the reasons why it has been elected. Showing only works if others understand what is considered evidence and why (from this perspective, understanding criticism, using Eliot's language, would be being able to comprehend the reasons why something is being highlighted). Eliot's words are a demonstration of his recognition of Arnold's ability, as well as of his own skill. Notice briefly how, in Eliot's essay on Dante, another instance of an ostensive organization of an argument, and before quoting the *Divine Comedy*, the author observes:

There is a well-known comparison or simile in the great XVth canto of the *Inferno*, which Matthew Arnold singled out, rightly, for high praise; which is characteristic of the way in which Dante employs these figures²³¹.

The passage in question is one of Arnold's touchstones, which Eliot quotes to reveal the quality of Dante's imagery, the simile being applied "to make us *see more definitely* the scene which Dante has put before us in the preceding lines"²³². Singling out the passage, in this case, has the purpose of making us see what Dante desired, which involves understanding the technical use of the simile, but also of comprehending the reason why both Arnold and Eliot have highlighted it. A difference between both critics would theoretically reside in the fact that Eliot does not feel the need to theorize or to contrast

²³⁰ T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry & the Use of Criticism – Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England*, MCMXXXIII. London: Faber and Faber, MCMXLVIII, p. 118.

²³¹ T. S. Eliot, "Dante," 1929, *Selected Essays*, 1932. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1980, p. 243.

²³² T. S. Eliot, "Dante," p. 244.

golden passages and oppose them to the poetry being evaluated. And, still, on occasion, and returning to Eliot's essay on Othello, one discovers his own appreciation for golden alloys:

When Dante says

La sua voluntade e nostra pace

it is great poetry, and there is great philosophy behind it. When Shakespeare says

*As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport*

It is equally great poetry, though the philosophy behind it is not great²³³.

Here one finds Eliot as a practical Arnoldian, contrasting touchstones. Quotation is a form of evidence, as if the citations are self-explainable, thus allowing for general claims to be made about them. But only certain readers may perceive the lines' quality, or authenticity (in Eliot, acknowledgment is restricted to those able to understand other's quotations and to choose their own alloys²³⁴). The selection of quotations in Eliot shares the double nature of proof in polygraph examinations. On the one hand, both the quotations and the answers to relevant questions are described as evident. Something in their nature distinguishes these alloys from more mundane passages or replies, as if they clamor for attention. On the other hand, only experts may choose the citations or understand the relevant replies. This ability to elect quotations shares characteristics with the capacity to detect interpretative faults: both are described as possessing an obvious character, but only experts may spot them.

For Eliot, Wilson Knight's book, unlike other attempts in the art of interpretation, has the merit of not deriving from the erroneous presumption that each text possesses a secret, inner meaning:

²³³ T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and The Stoicism of Seneca," p. 136.

²³⁴ Eliot's perspective about poets as artists may not be developed here, but his use of Arnold's expressions to characterize them must be made clear: "There is for each time, for each artist, a kind of alloy required to make the metal workable into art; and each generation prefers its own alloy to any other". See T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism*, p. 109.

I do not think that Mr. Wilson Knight himself (...) has fallen into the error of presenting the work of Shakespeare as a series of mystical treatises in cryptogram, to be filed away once the cipher is read; poetry is poetry and the surface is as marvellous as the core²³⁵.

This passage, one of the most important in the essay, identifies interpretation as a term synonymous to words such as “to clarify” or “to enlighten,” something to be applied to cases in which meaning is somehow lacking and must be illuminated: “To interpret, then, or to seek to pounce upon the secret, to elucidate the pattern and pluck out the mystery, of a poet’s work, is ‘no less an instinct’”²³⁶. The expression “plucking out the mystery,” which, as was seen in the first chapter, quotes Hamlet’s rejection of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s attempts to sound him²³⁷, characterizes the need to decipher other entities. Still, as was seen, Hamlet was reacting against his friends’ lack of skill and comradeship and not arguing, as his test to Claudius proved, against the existence of mysteries in need to be solved. Polygraph charts would thus be grouped with modes of interpreting Shakespeare as a treatise in cryptogram, methods of analysis sharing the assumption that unique solutions may be found in order to solve the problem at hand.

In Eliot’s objection to interpretation as a mode of solving mysteries, something favorably perceived by the aforementioned modes of proof, lies an important difference between literary criticism, and, for example, the analysis of a polygraph chart. Criticism generally aims at describing correctly a certain poem or narrative, to find a suitable interpretation of a text, even if language is no longer believed to be the carrier of truth. On the contrary, the aforementioned methods of testing are expected to provide a true verdict; they require a definite solution. In fact, unless there are technical deficiencies with the apparatus, the data resulting from the polygraph test are portrayed as truthful. The title of Matte’s book, the polygraph’s Bible, reads as follows: *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection*. Words such as forensic and

²³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. xxii.

²³⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. xix.

²³⁷ The passage reads as follows: “Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you \ make of me! You would play upon me, you would \ seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the \ heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my \ lowest note to the top of my compass – and there is \ much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet \ cannot you make it speak” (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 354-363).

psychophysiology lead us to a world of rational and accurate results. But it is the term “scientific truth verification” that characterizes the idea that the results obtained by the test correspond to the truth itself, verified and validated by scientific procedures.

The need for a knowledgeable examiner derives from the fact that mistakes might be made in the reading of the charts. This is the reason why those arguing in favor of the polygraph tend to sustain that personal interpretation, which could cause errors in the analysis of the data, is being controlled by a rigorous set of factors. The relationship between facts and their interpretations is rationalized, in an attempt to make them indistinguishable. One is not implying, of course, that these examiners ignore the differentiation between facts and the judgment one makes about them, but characterizing the pretension for uniformity between the data and its interpretation. Polygraphists appear to share Eliot’s concerns about the impulse to interpret and the need to put a stop to it, thus theorizing, in a scientific language, the importance of “empirical data,” “conversion tables” and “validation studies”. Notice how, in polygraph examinations, clarification of a fault is possible when we point to the graphics, oppose them to the polygraph examiner’s conclusions, and redescribe them.

In chart interpretation, the forensic psychophysicologist (FP) must not allow a significant reaction in one tracing to influence his\her evaluation of that same relevant question in the other tracings²³⁸.

Being unable to see the charts as a whole pattern, allowing for a single tracing to influence the outcome of the test, must be avoided. This is the reason why a numerical scoring was designed with the purpose to “attain an objective measure” in chart interpretation. Quantification results from the evaluation of “the relevant question versus the neighboring control question”²³⁹, which produces a set of values going from the maximum truthful score to the maximum deception score. The analysis of each chart is the first step in the evaluation, followed by the tallying of scores, allowing interpretation to be objective: “when all scores are tallied, a conclusion regarding truth or deception must be made from

²³⁸ James Allan Matte, *Op. Cit.*, p. 378.

²³⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 398.

this tally by means of a conversion (conclusion) table based upon empirical data supported and refined through validation studies”²⁴⁰. While analyzing a poem was previously described as the capacity to explain it to others, reaching a conclusion in a polygraph test may be exposed as the aptitude to reach a truthful or untruthful verdict and being capable to justify it. Numerical quantification, therefore, is represented as the tool allowing interpretation to be systematic, conclusive and, most of all, restricted.

Some forms of literary criticism, though, do present similarities with polygraph charts; in the way they quantify data in order to obtain maps of connections between characters. Consider the work of Stanford’s Literary Lab and Franco Moretti’s explanatory essay “Network Theory, Plot Analysis”. The author uses quantified data to bring to light a series of maps with the purpose to clarify connections, or networks of relations, between characters of plays such as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. According to Moretti, this allows critics to discover information which otherwise could go unnoticed, such as the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern never speak with each other or the centrality of Horatio in the play. Moretti’s maps seem to have the advantage of being a new way to present data and generate fresh interpretations about the studied works:

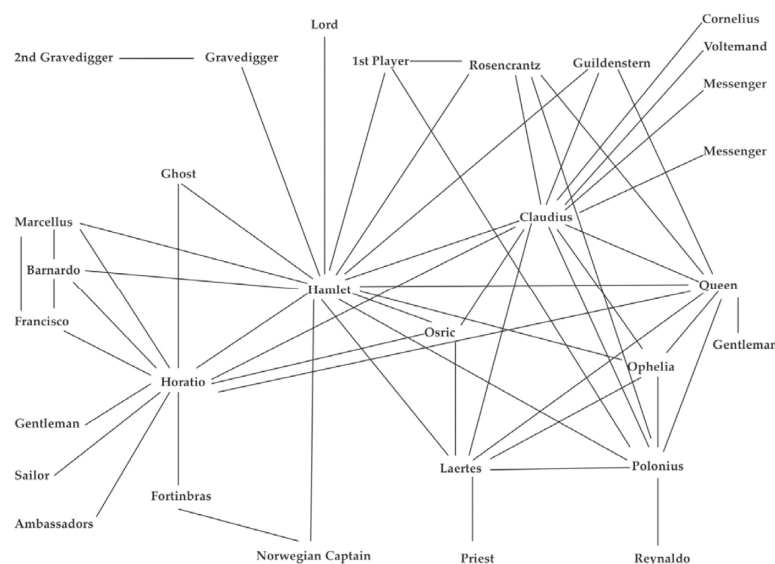


Figure 2

²⁴⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 398.

One might be confronted with Moretti's maps before or after reading the essay which accompanies them. Either way, knowledge is required for one to make sense of what is being observed (as happens in the case of the polygraph). Knowing the plays, as well as their plot and characters, for example, would obviously be the first requirement for one to read the map. But this knowledge alone does not help us to see what Moretti is trying to show. In fact, the traces seem bewildering, and without understanding what are we supposed to be looking for, it is difficult to read the map. From this perspective, although one might later look into the maps and find other type of evidence in them, they may not be considered entirely independent of Moretti's explanations. An example would be the realization that, unlike other studies in the same field, these maps register explicit connections between characters, i.e. the way two characters speak with each other and not only their presence in the same scene. Without the essay to clarify the enigma it would be difficult, though not impossible, for the reader to reach such conclusion.

(...) once you make a network of a play, you stop working on the play proper, and work on a model instead: you reduce the text to characters and interactions, abstract them from everything else, and this process of reduction and abstraction makes the model obviously much less than the original object – just think of this: I am discussing Hamlet, and saying nothing about Shakespeare's words – but also, in another sense, much more than it, because a model allows you to see the underlying structures of a complex object. It's like an X-ray²⁴¹.

Moretti's models relate to this thesis in more than one way. The author is implying that there is more to a play than its language, which is why ignoring, even if for a while, matters such as tone or style, allow us to focus on the text's "underlying structures". In this search for an X-ray, the author takes further the implications of T. S. Eliot's theory about Wilson Knight, as he seems to be able to detect a pattern in *Hamlet* (even though Eliot would probably object to the idea that Shakespeare's words could be ignored). It is assumed that without the excesses (i.e. language) the plot of the play and the relations between characters appear and may be described in a new light, which is why reducing the play to a model has the purpose of making matters simple, less enigmatic. The benefits of working on a model

²⁴¹ Franco Moretti, "Network Theory, Plot Analysis", in *Literary Lab*, Pamphlet 2, May 1, 2011, accessed September 2011: <http://litlab.stanford.edu/LiteraryLabPamphlet2.pdf>, p. 4.

instead of in an actual play also brings to mind Glessner Lee's dioramas, as there is a distortion in the relation between the original object and the model that, as seen, also took place in Lee's nutshells. At the same time, in this aim for objectivity, the maps' use of data may equally be contrasted to the physiological records described in polygraph charts. In this case, an important difference between polygraph registers and the maps resides in the fact that while the charts have the purpose of obtaining the truth, i.e. to put an end to interpretation, these maps help us see the plays in a new light, they aim to generate new interpretations²⁴². Another difference between polygraph charts and Moretti's essay has to do with the fact the polygraph registers are deemed a form of exteriorization of what lies inside the person. In the network theory, though, the idea of interior is rejected:

Or take the protagonist. When discussing this figure, literary theory usually turns to concepts of "consciousness" and "interiority" – even Woloch's structural study takes this path. When a group of researchers applied network theory to the Marvel series, however, their view of the protagonist made no reference to interiority; the protagonist was simply "the character that minimized the sum of the distances to all other vertices"; in other words, the center of the network. (...) So, speaking of Shakespeare's characters "in general" is wrong, at least in the tragedies, because these characters-in-general don't exist: all there is, is this curve leading from one extreme to the other without any clear solution of continuity²⁴³.

It appears that an important consequence of ignoring language in favor of structure is the possibility of overlooking characters as we usually describe them. Reading a set of maps will show us nothing about Hamlet's interiority (i.e. his character), but much about the importance of his relations of power within a network. As Moretti will also explain, the protagonist is important: "Not for what is "in" it; not for its essence, but for its function in the

²⁴² Regarding Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, it should perhaps be mentioned that someone observing the play on stage would obviously notice that they do not speak with each other (whether they would give it relevance or not would be a different question). When one considers, as the author does, that each speech represents an action (and seeing two of the studied works are theatre plays) then the similarity between these maps and actors' movements on stage acquires relevance. Moretti does mention it, when he claims that "when we watch a play, we are always in the present: what is on stage, is; and then it disappears. Here, nothing ever disappears. What is done cannot be undone". The difference between a stage play and the maps would consist on the fact that they allow us to look into the structure once and again, they remain as an interpretative tool to be used when necessary. Perhaps the same happens in the case of the records in a stage manager's prompt book (in the case of stage directors who are keen on having the actors movements well determined in space), where researchers also benefit from what the author calls "the advantage of thinking in terms of space rather than time". In fact, part of the stage director's work involves this ability to understand how do characters approach one another (moving closer or apart) during the play, who speaks to whom, etc.

²⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

stability of the network. And stability has clearly much to do with centrality, but is not identical to it”²⁴⁴. This perspective is made clear when one observes figure number 3.

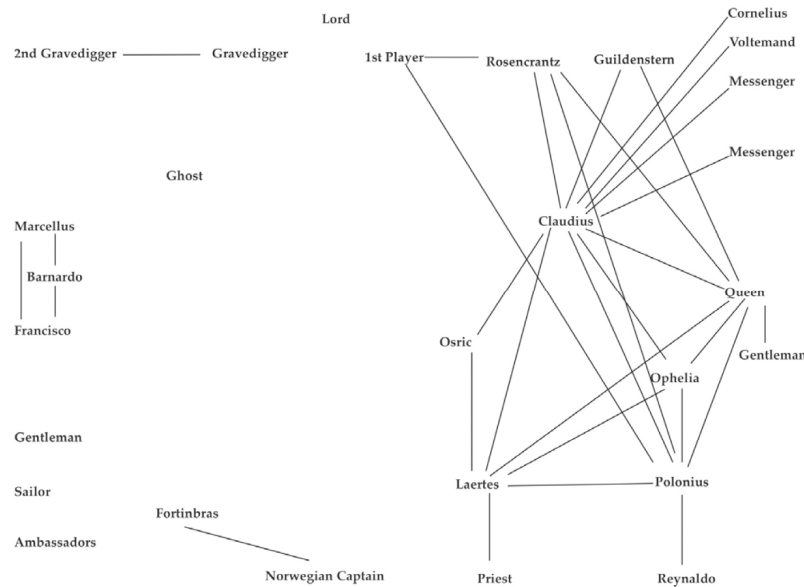


Figure 3

This figure appears in the context of a series (Figures 19 to 21), in which important characters are gradually removed. The maps are drawn to make us notice there are three central figures in *Hamlet*, as characters concentrate near Claudius, Hamlet and Horatio. This is surprising to the author, in the sense that Horatio “has a function in the play, but not a motivation. No aim, no emotions – no language, really, worthy of Hamlet. I can think of no other character that is so central to a Shakespeare play, and so flat in its style”²⁴⁵. When Hamlet or Claudius are removed, according to Moretti,

(...) peripheral characters are affected, but the network as a whole not much (...) But if we remove, first Hamlet, and then Horatio (Figures 19-21), then the fragmentation is so radical that the Ghost and Fortinbras – which is to say, the beginning and the ending of the play – are completely severed from each other and from the rest of the plot. Hamlet no longer exists. And yet, Horatio is slightly less central than Claudius in quantitative terms (1.69 versus 1.62). Why is he so much more important in structural terms?²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

The explanation for Horatio's importance, and even his flatness, is related with Shakespeare's half-intuition about his importance in the play. Horatio represents the flatness of the State's discourse and his space is that of "ambassadors, messengers, sentinels, talk of foreign wars, and of course the transfer of sovereignty at the end – all this announces what will be soon called, not Court, but State"²⁴⁷. Horatio therefore represents the new state, this being the reason for his importance. From this point of view, when they ignored Horatio's language and focused on his relation with others, the maps were able to discover new things in the play. But, as often seen by critics, and mentioned in the first chapter, Horatio is a central character, in the sense that it is up to him to properly narrate the story that took place. He is the main testimony for the narrative, so it makes sense to realize that without him there may not exist continuity between the beginning and ending of the play (without Horatio, there would be no play). The maps do allow us to visualize Horatio's relations with others, but, obviously, a reader of the play could discover the same information. When replying to other critics' objections about the necessity of a network theory, Moretti explains that "I did not need network theory; but probably needed networks. I had been thinking about Horatio for some time – but I had never 'seen' his position within Hamlet's field of forces until I looked at the network of the play. 'Seen' is the keyword here"²⁴⁸. The map is useful as it allows Moretti to make sense of ideas (intuitions) he had been thinking about, without being able to fully give them meaning. One wonders, though, if this means they show Moretti what he was looking for (they clarify his previous thoughts on the subject). If so, are these maps a useful tool for critics in general, or for those devising them? Will other critics find Moretti's maps enlightening and will they be able to find other sets of relations in them?

In the polygraph, understanding the charts would, as seen, make us able to determine the truth. Matters are not, however, that simple. Part of the polygraph examiner's task

²⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁸ *Op. Cit.*, p. 11. Moretti seems to be incurring in what Claude Lévi-Strauss, in "Structuralisme et Critique Littéraire" considered to be the vice of analysis of literature based on structuralism: "Le vice fondamental de la critique littéraire à prétentions structuralistes tient au fait qu'elle se ramène trop souvent à un jeu de miroirs, où il devient impossible de distinguer l'objet de son retentissement symbolique dans la conscience du sujet. L'oeuvre étudiée et la pensée de l'analyste se reflètent l'une l'autre, et nous enlève tout moyen de discerner ce qui est simplement reçu de l'une et ce que l'autre y met". Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie Structurale*. Paris: Librairie Plon, 1973, p. 323-324.

involves the ability to understand if the guilty person is attempting to deceive the test purposefully, which, one would say, is an interpretation of the subject's intentions. In this case, the assessor aims to limit his personal views through the understanding of the subject's possible techniques of countermeasure and the respective development of a group of countercountermeasures (a term of art). Common physical mechanisms of deception are the contraction of the anal sphincter muscle, which may increase respiratory amplitude, "curling toes, right\left thigh contraction, right\left forearm push, right\left heel press, right \left palm press, right\left elbow pushed down"²⁴⁹, biting of the tongue, tensing of the jaw, among others. This set of techniques aims to cause "distortion of the physiological tracing, or pain, which can cause a physiological reaction and\ or distortion"²⁵⁰. These countermeasures may invalidate accurate results or produce an inconclusive polygraph examination. The interest of the countermeasures employed by the guilty suspect resides in the fact that deception is focused on the effort to disrupt the correspondence between facts and their interpretations. While the labor of the polygraph examiner resides mainly in the attempt to obtain interpretations close to the data, the deceitful suspect wishes to increase the gap between the information in the charts and the possibility to interpret them well. A subject deliberately attempting to distort results is said to "prevent the forensic psychophysicologist from obtaining interpretable charts"²⁵¹ and inconclusive data are taken as denying the possibility of interpretation, i. e. the ability to reach an accurate verdict. The subject appears to be refusing the polygraphist's access to his interior, using exterior factors such as muscle contraction in order to do so. In this case, the charts exemplify the subject's exterior action and not his inner reactions.

To prevent the mentioned physical attempts to deceive the test, a motion chair has been developed, which traces the subject's every move, recording it, so that the examiner may later associate the person's movements with the relevant questions, to see if there was an

²⁴⁹ James Matte, *Op. Cit.*, p. 538.

²⁵⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 537. Other practices to deceive the test involve self-hypnosis, dissociation, use of drugs or alcohol. For each of these measures there are countercountermeasures, such as drugs tests.

²⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 379.

effort to deceive. Being able to interpret accurately the movements on the chair, in this case, is the aptitude to attribute a correct intention of duplicity to the subject. The suspect's words do not have interpretative value, and saying truthful or untruthful things only matters in the sense that the answers allow for the appearance of physiological data. The chair longs to catch the exterior efforts to deceive. Interestingly, every aspect of the suspect's behavior, except his words, is a subject of analysis, as the polygraphist attempts to measure involuntary reactions that are difficult to feign. But, as critics of the polygraph have accurately noticed, fear of the examination may give origin to the same movements as those appearing in countermeasure techniques. In this sense, interpretation is a matter of making a (subjective) choice, a deliberation concerning the intentions of the suspect and of avoiding the possibility of error.

To conclude this point, both literature and the polygraph require skilled aptitudes, such as knowing how to observe, point, and to detect interpretative faults. Noticing a mistake in polygraph examinations entails the capacity to read a chart and to follow an explanation; while Eliot portrays the skill of identifying a quotation, learning how to quote, and comprehending the reasons that lead others to choose their own golden alloys. In both cases, acquiring technical language, which may require some work, may be considered the artless part of the procedure. Mastering a technique, however, implies the difficult ability to disagree with an explanation and to provide reasons for it. The capacity not to be persuaded by other persons' justifications and to discover interpretative faults reveals that one has finally acquired comprehension and individual skill.

Although both polygraph charts and quotations of poems seem self-evident, they ought to be distinguished. In order to understand a chart one must know, for example, that cardio thoracic pressure increases when one experiences fear of detection, contrary to what happens with respiratory patterns, which decrease. Polygraph registers, as seen, are only self-evident to those capable of understanding them. Quotations of poems, however, do not appear to require such expertise, in the sense that everyone may read them and understand their words (one does not necessarily have to know what metaphors or alliterations are to

comprehend a certain poem – figures of style used in daily language). And, still, the capacity to interpret accurately a poem does result from technical knowledge, from having read many poems and their interpretations before, a point to which I will return.

Matters differ, of course, in the polygraphist's necessity to determine a verdict. In order to do so, the examiner must eliminate a number of hypotheses and choose a single one. The determination of a verdict makes his interpretation of affairs accessible to everyone, but the reasons why such ruling was chosen are often unclear to those unable to follow the charts. In a context of pandemic interpretation, both polygraph interpreters and literary critics are here portrayed as specialized exegetists, whose procedures require the use of technical protocols (more or less rationalized). The insistence on having qualified judges and on the development of their skills is a way of saying that not everybody is an adequate authority, and that these ways of producing evidence differ from more general practices of assigning sense. "Arnoldians," from this point of view, would be specialized interpreters, those applying a set of specific techniques with the purpose to understand, describe and, in some modes of proof, solve, particular problems.

2. Intuition without conviction

Arguing in favor of the technical sense of interpretation in cases in which a rigorous set of protocols has been established seems simpler than when discussing authors for whom procedures have a certain degree of vagueness. Recognizing a problem, knowing what to ask, how, as well as when, to do it, applying or creating a specific vocabulary, could, in fact, be described as either specialized or general interpretative skills. Everybody may accept the need to conduct an inquiry in order to clarify something, and to keep repeating and reformulating questions until the needed information has been found. Still, it will be seen how particular interpreters distinguish themselves in the ability to confront the studied entities and pose them accurate questions. In order to do so, they must possess a particular

insight regarding the object of knowledge, which one does not generally find in non-specialized exegetists. This capacity to ask is accompanied by the development and systematization of a particular vocabulary, which will be learnt by other interpreters aiming to reach a similar outcome.

The importance of asking fitting questions will surely be seen in Psychophysiological Detection. Understanding the reasons leading to the formulation of interrogations in these examinations would be a thesis on its own, but it is relevant to refer how part of the polygraphist's skill consists in his ability to, departing from the pre-test interview and from the case facts, devise the test. While the interrogation and its analysis aim at being objective, it has been difficult to find a foolproof assembly of questions. In fact, the lie detector's evolution was accompanied by the development and systematization of a group of queries with the purpose of diminishing the margins of error of the test and avoid complex interrogations that could give origin to ambiguous results²⁵². The difficulty in asking

²⁵² Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) was the author of the first experiences with the technique of word association, in 1879, in which a sequence of questions was presented to a patient, who had to associate a thought to each word. The premises of the test would be later used in methods such as the Control Question Test. Nowadays, polygraphists may choose among numerous techniques of suspects' interrogation. The most common are the Relevant-Irrelevant Test, The Comparison Question Test or Control Question Test, and the Guilty Knowledge Test. William Moulton Marston first devised the Relevant-Irrelevant Test, later used by John Larson and Leonarde Keeler in crime investigation. This method, often used, is no longer applied. The RIT uses a series of 10 to 15 questions, alternating relevant and irrelevant questions. The series of questions is twice presented in a different order, with a small pause between each group. The test was later considered unsound, due to the fact that innocent subjects fearing an erroneous accusation could react similarly to the relevant questions.

The Comparison Question Test is often used in crime investigation, civil litigation, and in national security. There are several variations to this model, such as the Control Question Technique, devised by John Reid in the forties; the Backster Zone Comparison Test, authored by Backster, who remodeled the Reid test in 1962; the Utah Probable-Lie Test and the Utah Directed-Lie Test. The CQT test is used to evaluate the suspect's reactions to relevant questions about the crime, as opposed to neutral questions. This is the reason the test may not be applied to persons with lack of knowledge of the crime (due to the fact that they were inebriated or experienced loss of consciousness, among other reasons). Questions are directly posed and require an affirmative or negative answer. The test includes typically two to four relevant questions in a sequence of ten to twelve questions including other themes. Variations upon the sequence of questions depend on the model of test being used.

The Concealed Information Test \ Guilty Knowledge Test differs substantially from other techniques. It is not an attempt to realize if the suspect is telling the truth, but to understand if he has a reaction to the mentioning of facts about the crime only a suspect could know. This test has two components. In the Peak of Tension Test, developed by Leonarde Keeler in the thirties, the examiner asks a key question. The Guilty Knowledge Test uses a series of questions of multiple choice, and for each relevant question there are several neutral control questions. The main presupposition is that the subject will react physiologically to the relevant questions, which are not of public knowledge. To effectively conduct the crime, a series of data only known to the suspect must have been collected.

For a detailed account see James Allan Matte, *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection*. Lancashire: J. A. M. Publication, 1996. Ken Alder, *The Lie Detectors: The History of*

appropriate questions results from the need to obtain what examiners call “the intended interpretation,” i.e. assurance that the suspect understands correctly what is being asked, and that the corresponding physiological reaction will take place. In this case, the examiner must be objective regarding the procedure, ignore his personal interpretation or intuitions about the case, in order to be able to be close to the facts. In the Arther Technique, or Specific Accusation test, the suspect’s behavior is analyzed during the examination and then contrasted with the reply to the relevant questions (in a procedure of analysis of results which follows the Reid technique). A specific trait of this method lies in its systematization of Four Golden Rules and Ten Commandments, which are worth analyzing.

The Four Golden Rules

“I must always ask myself two questions regarding each and every crime question”.

1. Should This Issue Even be Asked?

Presuming the answer is “Yes” to the above question, then the Second Golden Rule takes effect.

2. Is The Proposed Crime Question Properly Worded?

(In addition to the above two Golden rules of Crime-Question Wording, there are two others:)

3. Every Crime Question Must be Emotionally Charged.

An emotionally charged crime question is obtained in two ways:

First: Using an explosive “Verb”.

Second: Keeping the question short.

The main way to keep a question short is to eliminate prepositional phrases. Each prepositional phrase makes a question longer, can confuse the listener, and introduces a new case fact.

If a prepositional phrase is truly needed, if possible limit it to just one and if possible have it at the beginning of the question.

4. Never Count Upon My Fantastic Pretest Interview to Make Up for a Poorly Worded Crime Question²⁵³.

Clarifying the interrogation is one of the purposes of the golden rules. Non-experts in polygraph examinations, either favorable or unfavorable to the test, have sometimes the idea that, if the polygraph as an instrument is accurate, other factors are not important. Still, if one does not know what to ask – for example, if the case facts are erroneous –, the examination will be unable to provide accurate test results. The golden rules epitomize two of the polygraphist’s main concerns: identifying the relevance of what is being asked, and

an American Obsession. Mankato: Free Press, 2007. Murray Kleiner, ed, *Handbook of Polygraph Testing*. London: Academic Press, 2002.

²⁵³ James Allan Matte, *Op. Cit.*, p. 456.

wording the questions properly, in order to make sure that the adequate physical reaction surfaces in the charts. Form and content are differentiated, as they entail two distinct apprehensions. What is being asked must be close to the facts, preferably in a way that eliminates eventual differentiations between the crime and the question, as if they were one and the same. How to ask or properly word the query must be clear and straightforward so that the subject understands it without doubt (so that a correlation exists between question and answer). The creation of short, direct, questions shares the same objective. In this search for absolute correspondence, it is however unclear if explosive verbs are being used due to the fact that they represent explosive crimes (thus the correspondence between facts and words, i.e. questions) or to the need to obtain equally explosive reactions. One is tempted to maintain that if all goes well and according to the rules, the explosive crime will be represented in the question, thus giving origin to the expected explosive reaction. The purpose is, of course, the establishment of a line of continuity between crime, question, reply and physical manifestation. This sequence is characterized by the progression from a complex or obscure situation that makes the polygraph evaluation necessary to its illumination through clear questions and charts. Although an explosive verb may accurately represent the crime, if the suspect is innocent the expected physical reaction will not be found, and this line of continuity will not take place.

The Ten Commandments

1. Each crime question must deal with only one issue. Never use the words **and** or **or**.
2. Regardless of how the person answers, never ask a question that implies guilt. That is, never use as a crime question a "Are you still beating your wife?" type of question.
3. Never unintentionally ask a crime question that gives away the key to a good Know-Solution Peak-of-Tension test.
4. Remember that very likely at least some of the case facts may be wrong.
5. Is it possible that the liar can answer this crime question truthfully?
6. Is it possible that a truthful person will lie to one of the proposed crime questions? If, so, NEVER ask it! The reason is that some truthful... have tried to "beat the lie detector" when such a question is asked, thus misleading the expert into thinking the person was lying.
7. Ask only four crime questions during any one session.
8. Word the questions so that they flow smoothly.
9. Make sure that even if the person had a minor part in the crime, he will be lying to at least one of the crime questions.

10. Each word used in every question must be completely understood by the person. The best way to assure that he understands is to use the very terms and verbs he used²⁵⁴.

Probably the most interesting aspect of these commandments, apart from the Biblical heading indicating a claim to truthfulness, is how, in the author's wish to advise fully, a portrait of everything that can go wrong with the examination is depicted. The previous distinction between what and how is again represented, but in this case content and form are interchangeable. In order to obtain a singular reaction, prepositional phrases, "and" and "or," are, of course, to be eliminated. This is due to the fact that, if more than one aspect of the crime is portrayed, how does one know what the subject is reacting to?

To these commandments, one would add the concern over the reasons that lead a subject to answer. The polygraphist should, therefore, also beware of "why" a suspect is answering in a certain way, as truthful subjects attempt to lie and guilty subjects may reply truthfully to some particularity of the crime (either because they didn't participate in that aspect of it, or because the question was not worded properly). The polygraphist must therefore be prepared to understand and attribute intentions of deceit or innocence to the subject, which do not solely depend on the replies given or the ability to read the charts. To these worries, one may add the concern over the sequence and number of questions posed, previously systematized in the test, and to which the polygraphist must obey. Wording the questions smoothly, something which one could consider a somewhat subjective task, is portrayed as a straightforward assignment. This effort to structure how and what to ask, as well as in what sequence, appears to be an attempt to rationalize the appearance of surprise, either in the form of the suspects' replies, or of his behavior.

Questioning has been described as the specialized capacity to know what and how to ask someone in order to later obtain surprise and, then, a verdict. But another interesting particularity in these investigations was left unmentioned, namely the fact that the subject's own vocabulary must be used in order to assure the highest degree of comprehension during the inquiry. On the one hand, those concerned with polygraph evaluations develop a complex

²⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 457.

terminology, which, one presumes, is the best suited to name the various aspects of the procedure. This is the reason why one encounters symptomatic questions, super dampening effects, tri-zone indication remedy tables which “detect and remedy any zone comparison technique defect”²⁵⁵. On the other, for the sake of clarity, questions must follow the subject’s vocabulary, which means that, in order to devise the test, the examiner must have learned a complex terminology, but also be able to reproduce the suspect’s terms and to apply them to specific questions. Interrogation is thus a form of comprehension of the facts of the case, the polygraph as instrument and the subject’s testimony in the pre-test interview.

Creating a specific vocabulary, being able to transform existing terms into a precise terminology, and knowing how to describe other persons’ concepts using their own words, are indicative of an expert’s interpretative capacity. Designing a vocabulary implies understanding the meaning of certain words or expressions, being able to use them in the proper context and to then reshape them into other terms. It seems to require, shall we say, conviction.

Authors such as Stanley Cavell rework several such notions into their own philosophical language. Take, for example, the notion of “conviction,” which, like any other of Cavell’s stipulated terms, is rephrased in different books through time, an instance of the transformation of what Emerson calls “intuitions” into “tuitions”²⁵⁶. In the introduction of *Disowning Knowledge*, a collection of essays about Shakespeare, Cavell explains how it was not until the end of *The Claim Of Reason*, a book whose finale consists in a description of *Othello*, that he was able to “claim that tragedy is the working out of a response to skepticism”²⁵⁷. The author further explains that in *The Claim of Reason* he touches “a certain vision of film comedy”²⁵⁸, a vision that will be later converted in books on film comedies and melodramas. This is the reason why, gradually, in his books and in the work of a lifetime, his

²⁵⁵ James Allan Matte, *Op. Cit.*, p.702.

²⁵⁶ See Lawrence F. Rhu, *Stanley Cavell’s American Dream – Shakespeare, Philosophy and Hollywood Movies*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006, p. 140.

²⁵⁷ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 1979. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.5.

²⁵⁸ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, 1983. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 6.

intuitions on skepticism, films, plays and philosophy are progressively transformed in intuitions in each new book. And, more importantly, why Cavell ends up creating his own technical terms, thus redefining, in the context of his books, words such as “acknowledge,” “skepticism” and, of course, “conviction”.

Incidentally, pointing, in the modes of proof previously described, was deemed a way of showing evidence that restricts personal interpretation and allows interpreters to share accurately their judgments with other persons. On the contrary, an example given by Cavell helps to argue that pointing as a mode of proof has limitations even when perceptive critics are present, while allowing to better understand the notion of “conviction”. In “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy,” Stanley Cavell discusses an excerpt of *Don Quixote*, quoted by Hume in his essay “Of the Standard of Taste”. In the episode, Sancho tells the story of two kinsmen with great knowledge of wine, who were called upon to give their judgment about a good vintage. They both taste it, and reflect on the experience. One says the wine is good, even if he recognizes faintly the savor of leather; the other, while also enjoying it, declares that the wine tasted of iron. They are both ridiculed on account of their opinions, but in the end an old key with a leathern thong is found at the bottom of the barrel. Cavell uses this story to explain the relationship between evidence discovered in a given text and criticism. For the author, either kinsman’s point could have been verified even if the key had not been found at the bottom of the barrel, for it was up to each to prove they were right. The critic must make us see, hear or taste the proof he is describing, he who has to produce evidence about a given text, as well as show:

his [the critic’s] ability to produce for himself the thong and key of his response, and his vindication comes not from his pointing out that it is, or was, in the barrel, but in getting us to taste it there²⁵⁹.

The philosopher appealing to everyday language turns to the reader not to convince him without proof but to get him to prove something, test something, against himself. He is saying: Look and find out whether you can see what I see, wish to say what I wish to say (...) ²⁶⁰.

²⁵⁹ Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, 1976. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 87.

²⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 95-96.

This account, unlike others described, does not represent the critic's task as that of exteriorizing the work of art's concealed nature, and does not oppose or differentiate the interior from the exterior. He is not revealing an inner frame, or pointing to objective characteristics of the object, but describing what grounds his conviction. It does not even matter if the thong and key were actually in the barrel, as long as the critic is able to make us experience them. The author deems both kinsmen's interpretations correct, instead of portraying, for example, the case of a third individual who, after experiencing the wine, finds in it a flavor of both leather and iron. Such analysis, which to a polygraph examiner would be the truthful interpretation, is not considered. To Cavell, the purpose of the critic is to make the reader experience the test himself and for evidence to appear the critic must have "conviction" regarding a given work of art, a concept of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell explains how it is not a mode of proof, *but my sense that I make sense*²⁶¹ or *a way of discovery about certain things that we cannot fail to know in a given period*²⁶². Literary appreciation need not be factual, and aesthetic disputations may not be solved only by means of argumentation, they can also be determined by the critic's convictions, intuitions and beliefs. It represents a type of knowledge that underlines the importance of a comprehension based on experience.

The more one learns, so to speak, the hang of oneself, and mounts one's problems, the less one is able to say what one has learned; not because you have forgotten what it was, but because nothing you said would seem like an answer or a solution: there is no longer a question or a problem which your words would match. You have reached conviction, but not about a proposition; and consistency, but not in a theory. You are different, what you recognize as problems are different, your world is different²⁶³.

This passage appears in the essay after a discussion about Wittgenstein and his comparison between methods and therapies which, according to Cavell, made him ponder about "the progress of psychoanalytic therapy". The relevance of the quotation relates with its description about how knowledge is not revealed in the ability to justify what one has learned

²⁶¹ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 20.

²⁶² *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

²⁶³ Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, p. 86.

– the facility to provide answers or solutions –, nor in the relation between a certain problem and one’s capacity to represent it in words. Comprehension is perceived when one has reached conviction, an understanding of the term that differs from our own individual beliefs about something. The concept also diverges from what would be considered the polygraph examiner’s personal intuition that a suspect is guilty. Such perception would be described as a case of intuition about a proposition, which is grounded on a method and on the adoption of objective criteria. For example, the polygraphist’s insight regarding the suspect is revealed in the determination of a verdict, which is the same as providing an answer or a solution. Cavell’s “conviction” is not exposed as the faculty to establish a theory, but in the recognition that one is somehow different, and, as quoted, so are the problems one is now capable of identifying.

Such capacity is that of knowing what to ask a certain entity in order to understand the type of theoretical problems it raises. This concern is central in Cavell’s philosophy and accompanies the development of his own particular terminology. Asking questions does not, evidently, appear in the form of the systematization seen in polygraph evaluations. There is not a sequence of questions to be followed, nor a strict distinction between what to ask and how to do it. Sometimes, as mentioned in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, the question is not even clear at first, and the philosopher must ask himself repeatedly what is he looking for²⁶⁴. This Socratic thought that certain entities, our bodies, hold a forgotten knowledge that may be brought to light if the proper questions are inquired is portrayed as the illustration of philosophy itself.

At the end of *The Claim of Reason*, this mode of asking is made clear, first, in the enunciation of a series of questions about *Othello*, which the essay does not look forward to solving: “Is Montaigne’s attitude fully earned, itself without a tint of the wish for exemption

²⁶⁴ Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, pp.20-21: “It sometimes happens that we know everything there is to know about a situation – what all the words in question mean, what all the relevant facts are; and everything is in front of our eyes. And yet we feel we don’t know something, don’t understand something. In this situation, the question “What is X?” is very puzzling, in exactly the way philosophy is very puzzling. We feel we want to ask the question, and yet we feel we already have the answer. (One might say we have all the elements of an answer.) Socrates says that in such a situation we need to remind ourselves of something. (...) And the point of the question is this: answering it is sometimes the only way to tell – tell others and tell for ourselves – what the situation is”.

from the human? Or is it Shakespeare's topic of the sheets and the handkerchief understandable as a rebuke to Montaigne, for refusing a further nook of honesty?"²⁶⁵ Such articulation of questions is followed by what the author refers to as the expression of his conjecture, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, about how under the incidents in *Othello* are particular events in witch trials. These conjectures are the result of "two thoughts, or perspectives, with which to survey one's space of conviction in the reading I have started with *Othello* and from which perhaps to guide it further"²⁶⁶. Conviction is what makes the discussion start. It may be seen as the exemplification of questions about a certain play, as well as the raising of conjectures about it, with the purpose of leading others to experience the possibility that the events in the play are as described. This is seen as the beginning of the discussion, and not its ending. From this perspective, getting to know something and recognizing it as a problem implies understanding what may be solicited of it, which specific difficulties it raises and finding a way to describe it better, but not to solve it entirely. And it is not a coincidence, as Richard Elridge notices, that *The Claim of Reason* ends with the formulation of a question about the nature of philosophy itself, as well as of its relation with literature, "But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?"²⁶⁷, a debate which calls for discussion but is finally left unsolved.

Another of Shakespeare's figures, Touchstone, the court's fool in *As You Like It*, seems to beckon here. The thought that expert modes of proof require adequate judges is problematized by Touchstone, a figure who, albeit being irrational, is able to "speak'st wiser than thou art aware of" (II, iv, 53)²⁶⁸. The fact that Touchstone, a character that has no counterpart in Shakespeare's main sources, is a fool would explain his lack of reasoning, but

²⁶⁵ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 494.

²⁶⁶ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 494.

²⁶⁷ *Op. Cit.*, p. 496. See Richard Elridge, *Stanley Cavell*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 109.

²⁶⁸ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre. London: Arden Shakespeare, Thomson Learning: 2007. Quotations follow this edition.

his name²⁶⁹ denotes the object capable of bringing forth the authenticity of pure metals. The jester's thoughtlessness is highlighted in occasions in the play where he is given an unrestrained opportunity to explain his view of the world, such as in his conversation with Corin, the shepherd. Touchstone's lesson about good morals in the court and in the country is indicative of his inaptitude in dealing with a specific vocabulary, while showing the limits of his skills as an expert.

Corin: Besides, our hands are hard.

Touchstone: Your lips will feel them the sooner – shallow again. A more sounder instance, come.

Corin: And they are often tarred over with the surgery of our sheep, and would you have us kiss tar? The courtier's hands are perfumed with civet.

Touchstone: Most shallow man! Thou worm's meat in respect of a good piece of flesh indeed! Learn of the wise and perpend. Civet is of a baser birth than tar, the very unclean flux of a cat. Mend the instance, shepherd.

Corin: You have a too courtly wit for me, I'll rest.

(*As You Like It*, III, ii, 57-58)

When Corin makes an effort to show Touchstone's judgment might be erroneous (shepherds have dirty, greasy hands, so it is unclean to kiss them), the fool replies that courtiers's also sweat. Corin tries to contrast both types of hands, but Touchstone is always able to find, in what appears to be a triumph of logical reasoning, the courtly equivalence to the shepherd's objections. Opposing civet to tar does not appear to be an example of a discussion that promotes a multiplicity of meanings, and Corin's protests seem reasonable to all except Touchstone. Pointing to faulty conclusions, in this case, does not help the shepherd, who is not an experienced critic, and is merely able to notice the inconsistencies in Touchstone's reasoning. Had he been a literary expert, in Eliot's sense, he might have been able to notice, for example, Touchstone's use of legal terms in lines such as "Shallow, shallow. A better instance, I say. Come" (III, ii, 54-55). The repeated allusion to the word "shallow" has the purpose of showing Corin's superficial character, as well as his lack of depth in

²⁶⁹ Most critical editions argue that Robert Armin, and not William Kemp, played Touchstone in the play. This would help to justify the differentiation between this articulate fool and previous clowns, a creation that would find its peak in *King Lear*. Nick De Somogyi, in his introduction to the play, notices that Robert Armin was both a trained goldsmith and a comic dramatist, who had written for himself the part of Tutch, the clown in *Two Maids of More-Clark*. This would explain the choice of name for the character. See Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, introd. Nick De Somogyi. London: Nick Hern Books, 2003, p. xxx.

reasoning. But, as noticed in the Arden edition, “shallow” is also “a lawyer’s term for unsound proof”²⁷⁰. The same happens with the term “instance” used to portray Corin’s inability to find what Touchstone considers serious, and persuasive proof²⁷¹. It appears that Corin is receiving not only a lesson on good morals, but also on how to argue well, as may be perceived in the use of expressions such as “Mend the instance, shepherd” (III, ii, 65). And still, the conversation presents the contrast between someone who is able to apply legal terms, but reasons in an illogical form, and someone who presents his ideas in a simple, but sensible, way. In this case, and despite of Touchstone’s patronizing tone towards Corin, error does not seem to be a product of a misunderstanding of words or expressions, but of the fool’s inability to accept that the shepherd’s arguments may be valid. At the same time, Corin’s inability to recognize Touchstone’s terms and mode of reasoning makes him unable to ask questions and impugn the fool’s reasoning. After this discussion, one could hardly argue in favor of either Touchstone or Corin as being specialized interpreters. Asking something to others appears to require a sort of understanding that neither of them possess.

Such a grand debate seems to show that, contrary to what Touchstone sometimes assumes, he is not a wise man, but merely someone who spent enough time in the company of knowledgeable persons to parrot a certain way of saying things. Acquiring a specialized vocabulary without understanding how to use it is not, though, representative of an interpretative skill²⁷². One is tempted to argue that the fool is only repeating ideas he had heard before when listening to Celia’s and Rosalind’s discussions (Touchstone’s presence during the young ladies’ debate about the relation between Fortune and Nature, in the second scene of the first act, would be an example). If most of Touchstone’s philosophical notions reproduce previous conversations, without advancing them in any significant fashion, that is

²⁷⁰ Juliet Dusinberre in William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre. London: Arden Shakespeare, Thomson Learning: 2007, p.239, n.54.

²⁷¹ Michael Hattaway, in William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Michael Hattaway. Cambridge: New Cambridge Edition, 2000, p. 130, n. 34.

²⁷² The Arden editors contend that this discussion, as well as others in the play, suggests that the comedy was to be represented for an audience familiar with legal terms, such as the students of law at the Inns of Court. For a detailed account of Shakespeare’s use of legal terms see: B. J. Sokol, Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare’s legal language: a dictionary*. NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005.

the reason why they always appear to be foolish, even if partially correct. At this point, although the jester is named touchstone, he does not appear to be a specialized interpreter, but merely someone who is making general, and for the most part erroneous, interpretations about the world.

In fact, if one's conviction is the source of the valued capacity to judge other entities, what to say of the supposed quality of Touchstone's judgments? Critics have neglected or diminished the importance of Touchstone's capacity to accurately value other entities. For example, Harold Bloom, who considers Touchstone to be a minor figure, and "the least likeable of Shakespeare's clowns"²⁷³, notices the disparity between the fool's wit and that of Rosalind:

That harmony extends even to her presence in *As You Like It*, since she is too strong for the play. Touchstone and Jaques are poor wits compared to her, and Touchstone truly is more rancid even than Jaques. Neither is capable of this wise splendor, typical of Rosalind's glory²⁷⁴.

I suspect that the dramatic point of both Jaques and Touchstone is how unoriginal they are in contrast to Rosalind's verve and splendor, or simply her extraordinary originality²⁷⁵.

To Bloom, Rosalind, a figure only comparable to Hamlet, exceeds all others in the play. This judgment is a good starting point, as it allows us to consider Touchstone's importance as the instrument used to acknowledge Rosalind's originality. It is a fact that, when in her presence, Touchstone's aptitude to make truthful commentaries about those surrounding him is recognized. For example, at the beginning of the play, Rosalind threatens him: "Speak no more of him; you'll be whipped for taxation one of these days" (I, ii, 67). She is referring to Touchstone's remark about a knight who swears by his honor without having it, a depiction of Celia's father and the way he unlawfully banished Rosalind's progenitor²⁷⁶. The accuracy of the characterization, which annoys Rosalind and leads her to defend her cousin, makes

²⁷³ Harold Bloom, "Introduction," *William Shakespeare's As You Like It*, ed. Harold Bloom. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004, p. 3.

²⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

²⁷⁶ "No more was this knight swearing by his\ honour, for he never had any; or if he had, he had sworn it away before ever he saw those pancakes or that mustard" [I, ii, 75-78].

Touchstone reply: “The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly” (I, ii 85-86). In this commentary, he seems to be showing he has some idea that he was right, and has been unfairly cautioned.

One could assume Touchstone to be more insightful than he shows, but his ability to notice the truth in others seems to be accompanied by the erroneous idea that this is an intellectual, and not an intuitive, capacity. Although Touchstone would like to be a wise man, he appears to be merely in possession of the capacity of an irrational piece of quartz. Rosalind’s reply reads as follows: “By my troth, thou sayst true. For since the little \ wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show” (I, ii, 87-89). It does not make much sense, as the Arden edition recognizes, to consider that Rosalind is now defending Touchstone, although she seems to pity the fact that fools have been silenced. The point of interest here, however, lies in her own characterization of the little wit of fools, which contradicts Touchstone’s self-portrait as an unacknowledged wise man. Although unable, in a lengthy discussion, to be sensible, Touchstone is considered accomplished at identifying bad poems. Consider the episode in which Rosalind appears reading Orlando’s lines. Touchstone mocks her, making up certain rhymes of his own, and then commenting:

This is the very false gallop of verses: why do you
infect yourself with them?
(*As You Like It*, III, ii, 110-111)

Rosalind accurately perceives the genuineness in Touchstone’s judgment of Orlando’s unsophisticated rhymes, which leads us to believe that he is not only an able authority of the character of others, but also very capable at estimating poetry. This is a skill Rosalind recognizes, thus apologizing: “Peace, you dull fool, I found them on a tree” (III, ii, 112). The fact that Touchstone judges the lines immediately after hearing them, and that Rosalind was enthusiastically quoting them, contrasts with his reproduction of contents in previous discussions. Although an inaccurate theorist, he appears to be a good evaluator, efficient at identifying that “Truly, the tree yields bad fruit” (III, ii, 113). At this point, Touchstone’s

judgments, when in the presence of Rosalind, have twice proved accurate. The Duke senior was indeed dishonest and Orlando's poems are not what Arnold would consider to be Shakespearean golden passages. To Rosalind's reply, Touchstone comments: "You have said, but whether wisely or no, let the forest judge" (III, ii, 118-119). The sentence consists, as the editors make clear, on the jester's observation to the audience, capable of judging who is the funnier, whether him or Rosalind. But it also represents Touchstone's knowledge that Rosalind's wit may be compared to his, and that although he is a fool, he is not a judge. Let me parenthetically acknowledge Dover Wilson's perspective. In his introduction to the Cambridge edition, the author comments Touchstone's function in the play:

And in *As You Like It* as in *Lear* this part of the Fool is to help insanity or sentimentality back to sense: to be the 'touch-stone,' the test of normal, all the more effective for being presented in jest, under motley. 'Lord! what fools these mortals be!' Our Touchstone, transformed from a 'roynish clown' into a mundane philosopher from the moment he reaches the forest, knows what he knows and why he must mate with Audrey. He gives us his reasons none too delicately: but we have proved his character, his tenacity in faith, and his grossest reasons (they are not so gross, after all) help marvellously to unsentimentalise a play which might easily have lost itself in sentiment, to recall its waywardness, to give it to us for the thing it is, so bewitching and yet so forthright, so honest, so salutary²⁷⁷.

"Touchstone" is here used in the sense of a "test of normal" and the author argues that the fool's purpose in the comedy is that of putting sentimentality into place. Touchstone's bawdy descriptions about the nature of love do, indeed, contribute to unsentimentalise the narrative, and he may be portrayed as a test to other's normality – as Corin and Audrey – in the sense that his unreasonable words bring to light the authenticity of their characters. Still, touchstones were seldom used to test normality and often applied to assess the genuineness of some entities, and there is no valid reason to suppose that Shakespeare was not applying the term in this restricted sense. Returning to the beginning of this text, Bloom is correct to assume that the jester's purpose is that of acting as Rosalind's foil, but fails to understand that a stone without someone to conduct and interpret the examination is unable to provide accurate judgments.

²⁷⁷ John Dover Wilson, ed., "Introduction," in Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 1926. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. xv.

A distinction must be made between certain interpreters, whose uncommon abilities make them particularly insightful, such as Rosalind or Hamlet, and an irrational object like a touchstone, which requires someone to administer the test and observe the results of the process. One should not be misled into thinking that Touchstone knows what he is doing, as if, in this play, he is the polygraph, and Rosalind the examiner. This is the reason why Touchstone, when accompanied by Corin, is deemed to say nothing more than nonsense, and why Jaques is merely able to see in him a material fool. But when near a shrewd interpreter, such as Rosalind, Touchstone is capable of providing valuable opinions about others. Observe how the young lady, in the aforementioned passage, may not like Touchstone's appreciation of her uncle's character, but recognizes his judgment to be accurate. Even the amount of talk varies in both situations, the episodes with Corin and Audrey being characterized by long pieces of speech, while the conversations in which Rosalind is present consist mostly in short exchanges of words²⁷⁸. The content of Touchstone's sentences when near Rosalind is esteemed because she is able to understand and value his words, distinguishing the sense in his nonsense.

Being intuitive, or just a lucky, interpreter (saying things others find truthful without knowing or understanding it), does not include someone into the category of articulate exegetists. Touchstone appears to possess intuition, but not what Stanley Cavell or Michael Fried would call "conviction," this ability to judge that is a result of knowledge and education.

My conviction, or evidence, is in something of the reverse state. Given my intuition of the occurrence of skepticism in Shakespeare, it is from him that I would have to learn, were I an historian, what to look for to give his history. In calling my guiding theme an intuition I am distinguishing it from a hypothesis. Both intuitions and hypothesis require what may be called confirmation or continuation, but differently. A hypothesis requires evidence and it must say that it constitutes its evidence (...). An intuition, say that God is expressed in the world, does not require, or tolerate, evidence, but rather, let us say, understanding of a particular sort²⁷⁹.

²⁷⁸ When Celia, Rosalind and the jester enter the forest, for example, Touchstone's words are sensible, and short, remarks: "I care not for my spirits if my legs were not weary"; "For my part, I had rather bear with you than bear you. Yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you, for I think you have no money in your purse"; "Ay, now I am in Arden, the more fool I!, When I was at home I was in a better place, but travellers must be content" (II, iv, 2-16).

²⁷⁹ Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, p. 4.

Notice how conviction and evidence are firstly interchangeably used, a mode of thinking which would lead to despair a polygraph examiner longing for scientific procedures. When conviction appears, it allows us to know what to look for (i.e. the sources of it) and to understand when it has been found. To an examiner, on the contrary, hypotheses require and constitute evidence itself. Conviction is thus a form of proof, which results from intuition, and which is expressed in the comprehension about a given work. But it does not excuse the critic from having to explain what he sees; on the contrary, it allows him to perceive what others do not: “The best critic will know the best points. Because if you do not see something, without explanation, then there is nothing further to discuss”²⁸⁰. It is interesting to note that, unlike what happens in the other cases, explanation must appear *post festum*, after one has had conviction regarding a certain work of art; although to ostensibly point to something is not deemed a way of knowing. Someone making an aesthetic judgment has to be prepared to “say in its support: don’t you see, don’t you hear, don’t you dig?”²⁸¹. This nudge is, one would argue, a form of ostension, but one in which it is not important to have a specific referent. Showing is a way of making us see, hear and appreciate the sources for one’s conviction. This presupposes a privileged relationship between the critic and the object of art to which I will return.

A point of contact between Touchstone’s appreciation of Orlando’s lines and both Cavell’s and Fried’s essays resides in the fact that they are all required to make a decision about recent works of art (in the mentioned essay, as well as in “Music Discomposed,” Cavell attempts to comprehend atonal music, while Fried’s book aims to judge contemporary paintings). The fact that one is assessing modern poems, music or paintings implies that there is not a differential of correction, a valuable criteria with which to judge. The way Michael Fried, avowedly drawing on Cavell, defines the way certain works’ “compel conviction,” is of interest here. A footnote in the essay “Art and Objecthood” clarifies his view on the subject:

²⁸⁰ Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, p. 93.

²⁸¹ Stanley Cavell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 93.

Moreover, seeing something as painting in the sense that one sees the tacked-up canvas as a painting, and being convinced that a particular work can stand comparison with the painting of the past whose quality is not in doubt, are altogether different experiences: it is, I want to say, as though unless something compels conviction as to its quality it is no more than trivially or nominally a painting. That suggests that flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as “the irreducible essence of pictorial art”, (...) but rather as what, at a given moment, is capable of compelling conviction, of succeeding as painting²⁸².

A mutual relation of understanding is represented in the evaluation of the work of authors such as Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski and Frank Stella. The author argues against the idea that characteristics such as flatness and its delimitation should matter when deciding whether to include a work in the category of paintings, while also criticizing those for whom a painting should be compared with other works in the past belonging to the canon, so as to make a choice concerning their quality. Paintings, true works and not those who are only trivially so, are characterized by their capacity to compel conviction, and this is the feature that settles upon their nature. This is a result of the observation of a given painting, as well as of those preceding it. The painting’s nature of having the capability to compel conviction is not portrayed as an immutable essence, but as an essence “that therefore changes continually in response to the vital work of the recent past²⁸³. Most of the entities defined, if not all of them, have, until this moment, been portrayed as wishing to disguise themselves. This is the reason why interpreters must uncover and systematize ways of bringing their true natures to light. But the paintings Fried is describing “confront the beholder,” and this is a condition to enable a conviction about them. Such capacity presupposes the object of art’s wish to make itself known (his presence), as well as the critic’s longing to discover it. A polygraphist, or any other examiner in the studied methods of proof, would probably long for such entities’ demand to be acknowledged, and argue that interpretation must be less complex when both interpreter and interpreted long to relate to each other. And, still, something in the nature of these evaluations makes it a complex type of judgment.

²⁸² Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 169.

²⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 169.

Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously – and when the fulfillment of that demand consists simply in being aware of the work and, so to speak, in acting accordingly²⁸⁴.

Notice how, in Fried and Cavell, conviction precedes the capacity to explain, but follows the observation of the work of art (and derives from the understanding of a long line of works). Thus, when we are before a certain painting, we must decide if it has quality, but without following a model or having systematic criteria. From this perspective, it could equally be considered a form of conversation, of exchange of thoughts between both critics. There is a subjective aspect in these appreciations, which examiners in other modes of proof would deem inappropriate, that both Cavell and Fried embrace. When both authors argue in favor of the capacity of both the work of art and its critic to experience presence, they are distinguishing themselves from other techniques aiming to reveal the nature of a certain entity. This is a relationship of empathy and common longing to know and be known. But among the skills one may hope to master it is difficult to understand how to acquire or cultivate conviction. Returning to Cavell, only some persons possess conviction, and it is defined as a result of education, knowledge, and a particular sensibility that could perhaps be defined as the capacity to establish a relation of presence between the subject and the work of art, and which is defined as being a touchstone:

But one could say that feeling functions as a touchstone: the mark left on the stone is out of the sight of others, but the result is one of knowledge – it is directed to an object, the object has been tested, the result is one of conviction²⁸⁵.

Feeling is the touchstone in the procedure. Interestingly, the mark left on the stone is out of sight, as would happen if the key and thong in the barrel could not have been found, but still had been experienced by the critic. The fact that the author considers a test has taken place is equally important, the verification of authenticity takes place in the relationship between object and critic, the test is one of conviction, and the result is knowledge. In this

²⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

²⁸⁵ Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, p. 192.

touchstone, so different from others described, criticism has to create its own mode of persuasion, which has a temporal dimension, as is extended through time, and varies according to the modern art being created. Both Cavell's and Fried's notion of a fidelity test presuppose a series of previous arguments in which the test works, but also a prospective use for it. What is asked is that those wishing to acknowledge a work of art be able to, bearing in mind the difficult nature of their object of investigation, adapt their skills and use their past experience to detect what was hidden. "Touchstone" has not acquired importance as a term of art in Cavell's books, and it may not be considered an expression with a similar value to that of "conviction". The word is referred to in many of the author's books in its common sense, as an exemplification of value. Nevertheless, in *Philosophy – The Day After Tomorrow*, the word is again paired with the term experience (Fred Astaire's sequence in Minelli's *The Bandwagon* is depicted as "a checkpoint, or touchstone, of experience"²⁸⁶). And although there is no further reflection on the subject, one is left with the wistful hope that this intuition about the term might have been developed further, so as to make sense, for example, of what would the difference be between a "touchstone of feeling" and one of "experience", as well as if there was an evolution from one term to another.

To conclude, both the polygraph test and the concept of conviction stem from the idea that something is concealed in the studied entity, which may be revealed in the test. In the case of the polygraph examiner, there is an attempt to systematize interpretation, and examiners platonically assume that if a truth is concealed in the subject's body, and the correct answers are asked, then the truth must surface. In order to do so, interpretation, as will be seen, must be asymmetrical. On the contrary, to both Cavell and Fried, conviction is the result of a joint effort to know the entity, which also wishes to reveal its identity as a work of art. The relationship between entities must be at the same level, which requires an effort from the interpreter, who must study and acquire indispensable knowledge allowing him to reach the entity. Conviction is possible when one recognizes certain things as problems, when the critic reaches the capacity to understand the type of questions a certain entity poses. This

²⁸⁶ Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 22.

ability to interrogate the work of art is, thus, both a result and an effect of conviction, which will be made clear in the critic's writings and in the elaboration of a particular vocabulary with which to describe the acknowledged entity. The studied Arnoldians have been defined as possessing a group of capacities, among which one finds the ability to observe, to point and to identify mistakes. It may now be perceived how one may add the capacity to ask questions and an intuition that is, in fact, a conviction about the object, the result of education and an extensive process of learning.

3. The Touchstone of Touchstones

Let me recall the following usage of "touchstone" in Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*. Isabel Archer, "a young person with many theories," describes Madame Merle as a "rare, superior and pre-eminent" woman. Isabel, dazzled by her friend and considering her a model, has somehow the (correct) intuition that others might not succumb to Madame Merle's charms. For example, her friend Henrietta would certainly not "subscribe" to her, for reasons Isabel cannot accurately explain. And yet, according to Isabel, the opposite reaction would be found on Madame Merle's part, which would certainly do justice to Henrietta in a unique tactful way:

She appeared to have in her experience a touchstone for everything, and somewhere in the capacious pocket of her genial memory she would find the key to Henrietta's value²⁸⁷.

Isabel is not only invidious of Madame Merle's talents and singular experience of life, but also of what seems to be her uncanny ability to evaluate others, a skill partly due to the fact that she possesses the required qualities – such as intelligence and intuition –, which allow one to be judicious. The assumption that some of us may be understood if the proper key is found, which Isabel shares, for example, with Hamlet, is always accompanied by the thought that chosen persons are in possession of the said key. Madame Merle has a particular

²⁸⁷ Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 211.

quality that distinguishes her from most human beings and makes her the more capable to assess them. Her experience is a touchstone.

The presupposition guiding Isabel is that different witnesses to Madame Merle's talent would reach equal conclusions, and validate her rulings, as she is doing. In this touchstone method there is no space for personal interpretation, as Isabel's companion is stating and analyzing facts truthfully. Such autonomy means that Madame Merle relies mainly on herself and on the information she is able to gather, testing the evidence, and finding modes of proof that work. This sovereignty in interpretation is accompanied by the fact that others, as Isabel, testify as to her aptitudes. Madame Merle does not name herself a touchstone; others do it for her. Moreover, simple ocular inspection will not help those who are attempting to understand the whole scope of Madame Merle's verdicts. This is described as an interior process, made public only when, and if, she decides it to.

If Madame Merle's experience is the touchstone, then it is the surface she allows others to scratch in an attempt to determine their value. Persons leave a visible mark on Madame Merle, which she will use to compare with other individuals in order to ascertain each person's authenticity. These impressions are stored in this interpreter's memory and her experience is improved with each encounter, meaning that her natural abilities are enhanced in time. Equally relevant is the faculty of being in a good position to recognize the value of others:

'That's the great thing,' Isabel solemnly pondered, 'that's the supreme good fortune: to be in a better station for appreciating people than they are for appreciating you'²⁸⁸.

Madame Merle placed herself in a position where she enjoys a good perspective of the human condition. This, which Isabel relates to an aristocratic essence, makes for an asymmetrical relationship between Madame Merle and other humans. She will evaluate others better than they will evaluate her. In this sense, Madame Merle's method may be compared with the unequal nature of interpretation in polygraph examinations, since, as

²⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

seen, the lie detector examiner must be in a privileged position towards the examinee, and generally possess some knowledge of the suspect, which will be confirmed, or not, by the test. This perspective helps to bring to light some particularities in polygraph examination, which may perhaps be considered an attempt to systematize the polygraphist's intuition. But in this case, in order to do so, interpretation must be asymmetrical. The disparity between examiner and suspect is favorable to the assessor, which controls the test, the type of questions asked, and the final outcome. David Lykken notes how, in evaluations that follow Reid's method, it is considered that the examiner is the true lie detector, since he is in fact interpreting the charts²⁸⁹. According to Reid's school, the examiner's training, associated with his experience and the ability to observe and judge, makes him the real polygraph. Lykken analyses Reid's studies on the determination of the validity of the polygraph test and the Control Question test. In these studies, identical polygraph charts were given to different examiners, which served to prove that distinct persons interpret the results in a similar way. However, as Lykken states, the results are only conclusive in the sense that they show that examiners trained by the Reid school read the charts identically. Lykken notes that even the defenders of the Backster method, who attempt to avoid the subjective conclusions of clinical evaluation through a numerical account of the results, compromise the apparent objectivity of the method when they support those who argue that the examiner is the lie detector. As the author contends, the apparent objectivity of the instrument and questions is invalidated the moment the examiner is placed at the center of the decision.

David Lykken's analyses have been considered partial, since the author is publicly opposed to the polygraph. A perhaps less tendentious perspective is sustained by John F. Sullivan²⁹⁰, an enthusiastic defender of the polygraph for more than 30 years. Sullivan characterizes the importance of the polygraph examiner's education and his previous preparation, as well as the necessity of being experienced in the execution and interpretation of the test, and, no less than the aforementioned, his intuition. The author argues that the

²⁸⁹ David Lykken, *A Tremor in the Blood*, 1981. New York: Basic Books, 1998. The aforementioned Archer Technique is a derivation from the Reid test.

²⁹⁰ John F. Sullivan, *Gatekeeper: Memoirs of a CIA Polygraph Examiner*. Dulles: Potomac Books Inc., 2007.

discovery of the guilty ones through the use of the polygraph has more art than science (according to his perspective, 92% of art and 8% of science). From this characterization it may be understood how the examiner must possess qualities that, if properly developed, make him a better lie detector.

Although those who argue for the polygraph emphasize its objectivity, if we consider that the center of the analysis does not lie in the polygraph charts *per se*, but on the examiner's ability to decode them, we may understand how interpretation has a relevant role in the process. Polygraph examinations depend, as most evaluations, on subjective factors, such as the examiner's experience, his ability to judge others, his mood on the day of the test, and so on. It is also necessary to consider that as humans, polygraph examiners are constrained by preferences and prejudices that make them occasionally partial. Not all examiners are alike and the intuitive ones, which were properly trained and have experience, make better judgments. Similarly to what happens with a literary critic, the continuous exercise of the polygraph examiner's abilities makes him improve. This does not mean, of course, as some of those who argue for the polygraph sustain, that the test is almost infallible. As noted, in the polygraph the interpretative act lies in the clarification of the charts.

Moreover, this asymmetry is what allows the test to work. If examiner and suspect were on the same interpretative level, the results would not be the same. In fact, this is a point of view the examined could explore in order to attempt to balance the outcome. As the KGB knew, examiners could determine the test's result. Thus, the KGB advised their spies working for the CIA to "to get a good night's rest, and go into the test rested and relaxed. Be nice to the polygraph examiner, develop a rapport, be cooperative, and try to maintain your calm and be as relaxed as you can"²⁹¹. Being relaxed allowed them to attempt to control the physiological results of the test but, more importantly, it enabled them to develop an affectionate bond with the examiner, making him ignore dubious data, or decide to repeat the test if it gave a positive result. If examiner and examinee liked each other there was a chance

²⁹¹ Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, US House of Representatives, *Report of Investigation: The Aldrich Ames Espionage Case*. Darby: Diane Publishing, 1994, p. 19.

the relationship between them interfered in the test's results, and the double spy would be able to go unnoticed.

Being an Arnoldian, in this particular case, means to be the right adjudicator of other entities' qualities and flaws, to possess particular talents, to improve with experience and to be in a good position to judge. Part of Madame Merle's skill at testing others derives, as stated, from the fact that she maintains an asymmetrical rapport with them. This unequal relationship requires, conversely, that those being tested occasionally feel they are Madame Merle's equals, that she condescends in elevating them to her level, or in lowering herself to theirs, so that a proper conversation is maintained. Isabel, for example, feared that, if Lord Warburton had been present, he would be unable to keep a secret of the fact that he had proposed, and had not been accepted, by her:

He had excellent ways, but she [Isabel] felt sure that if he had come to Gardencourt he would have seen Madame Merle, and that if he had seen her he would have liked her and betrayed to her that he was in love with her young friend²⁹².

The point here is that these characters are more likely to disclose their secrets to those who appear to appreciate and are interested in them. Perhaps it could be argued, as happens in some of the modes of proof described in previous chapters, that the tested subject is required to admire or fear those judging him, to recognize some sort of superiority, but also to have the illusion that, on occasion, a communion is possible that will make them relate to each other, and willingly reveal information about themselves. A relevant difference between the polygraph examiner and Madame Merle lies in the fact that evidence seems to be outside the examiner and although his decision determines the outcome of the test, it may be considered that this is different from cases in which the interpreter is described as being physically connected with the judgments being made. The examiner considers that it is the presence of the polygraph as an instrument that helps him reach a truthful outcome. Madame Merle is, of course, an obvious example. She is evidence for the authenticity of

²⁹² Henry James, *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

others and the evaluation process is characterized as if taking place in her body, scratched by others in order to obtain accurate judgments.

It was mentioned that Madame Merle, single-handedly or through the help of her chosen Lasso, has the capacity to lead persons to say things they would have preferred to keep to themselves. The technique to make Isabel loquacious, for example, may be perceived both in Madame Merle's meticulous and progressive handling of Isabel and on this heroine failed attempt to resist it:

She preferred for the present to talk to Isabel of Isabel, and exhibit great interest in our heroine's history, sentiments, opinions, prospects. She made her chatter and listened to her chatter with infinite good nature²⁹³.

Compelling Isabel to be chatty implies a parsimonious choice and use of words on Madame Merle's part, who gladly relies on what the young lady is willing to tell her. The inclination for making Isabel a topic, which she appreciates, is Madame Merle's way of getting to know Isabel better than she does herself, of realizing her past, present and future hopes, of training herself in the understanding of her character. Instead of being talkative, Isabel's companion assumes that it is always best to know more about others than letting them glean information about us. This is an example of how skill is required, and used, to make others fluent without having to say much oneself. That Isabel has the feeling she is being sounded may be perceived through her averseness to share relevant information, such as her relationship with Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton. That Madame Merle is accomplished at the task of making James' heroine conversational despite her best judgment is understood when "we have seen that the girl had compunctions at having said so much"²⁹⁴ or:

The gates to the girl's confidence were opened wider than they had ever been; she said things to this amiable auditress that she had not yet said to any one. Sometimes, she took alarm at her candour: it was as if she had given to a comparative stranger the key to her cabinet of

²⁹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

²⁹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 224.

jewels. These spiritual gems were the only ones of any magnitude that Isabel possessed, but there was all the greater reason for being carefully guarded²⁹⁵.

Madame Merle is indeed very able at obtaining the key to the character of other persons. The relationship between Isabel and her companion is, however, complex: the young lady attempts to resist it; feels flattered that such a distinguished friend chose her as a theme; but never discloses her full story²⁹⁶. Isabel has a certain intuition that she is under scrutiny, but she does not realize entirely either the purpose or the consequences of such a test. This is a case where Isabel, witness of the proof without realizing it, is also the tested subject. Simultaneously, she does not understand, it would be impossible for her to know, that what she leaves unsaid Madame Merle is able to fully know, either because others told her so, because of her perceptiveness, or owing to the fact she devised the plan herself.

It takes a long time for the heroine to comprehend that Madame Merle's show of sensibility is a way of taking advantage of other persons, which means that understanding Isabel is knowing how to manipulate her, just like determining Henrietta's value was to discover her usefulness. Notice how, regarding Henrietta, Isabel avows: "Madame Merle was too humorous, too observant, not to do justice to Henrietta, and on becoming acquainted with her would probably give the measure of a tact which Miss Stackpole couldn't hope to emulate"²⁹⁷. The keyword here is, of course, "tact," which Isabel is applying in the sense of a faculty of perception, the diplomacy of knowing what to say and who to say it to, but to those acquainted with Madame Merle it indicates the way she handles others, as if an individual tactic was devised for each person.

²⁹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 207.

²⁹⁶ The following quotations show Isabel's attempts at being careful: "I am bound to confess, though it may cast some discredit on the sketch I have given of the youthful loyalty practiced by our heroine toward this accomplished woman, that Isabel had said nothing whatever to her about Lord Warburton and had been equally reticent on the subject of Caspar Goodwood" (*Op. cit.*, p. 223). Notice, also, the following passage: "She mentioned to this fortunate woman that Mr Osmond had asked her to take a look at his daughter, but didn't mention that he had also made her a declaration of love". (*Op. cit.*, p. 339). At this point, Isabel does not realize that Madame Merle knows everything about Osmond's proposal. At the end, Isabel has at least the satisfaction of not having all revealed: 'I certainly never told you anything of the sort.' \ 'You might have done so – so far as the opportunity went – when we were by way of being confidential with each other. But you really told me very little; I've often thought so since'. Isabel had thought so too, and sometimes with a certain satisfaction. But she didn't admit it now." (*Op. cit.*, p. 443).

²⁹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

In Madame Merle's technique, being insightful is not solely a matter of obtaining information about others, but also a form of making them instruments to one's pleasure or necessity. In a conversation with Gilbert Osmond, she contends: "I don't pretend to know what people are meant for', (...) 'I only know what I can do with them'"²⁹⁸. Contrary to what Isabel assumes, principled concerns are not to be found among the traits that characterize Madame Merle's clear discernment. Madame Merle's use for Isabel, as the Countess of Gemini conveys, may be explained in her wish to give Pansy both a mother and a dowry. Pleasing Osmond could equally be part of the plan, finding someone he could develop into another art form, in addition to his many objects. This is not, however, the full extent of Madame Merle's intentions. One could wonder whether Isabel, who has proved to be insightful, but immature, is being groomed so as to later become a standard; whether, when Madame Merle decides Isabel is to suffer at the hands of Osmond, she has the purpose of giving her the experience in life that is, so far, lacking, namely, the ability to discover things about persons and objects that those who have not grieved are unable to understand.

In this portrait of the intricate relationship between Madame Merle and Isabel, a mentor longs for a pupil. The rapport between them is, however, reciprocal, as Isabel often conveys the wish to become an interpreter modeled after Madame Merle. The story of Isabel's growth into adulthood depicts her drive to become a standard, the discovery of the implications of being so, and the suffering that accompanies it.

She found herself desiring to emulate them, and in twenty such ways this lady presented herself as a model. 'I should like awfully to be so!' Isabel secretly exclaimed, more than once, as one after another of her friend's fine aspects caught the light, and before long she knew she had learned a lesson from a high authority²⁹⁹.

Isabel grants that not all aspects of her companion's talents may be simultaneously perceived, but she does not find this uncanny. In the mind of James's heroine, or at least in her description of Madame Merle's observant being, the capacity to examine others is an aesthetic quality, associated with her general sensibility to all matters, such as the gift to play

²⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

²⁹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 211.

the piano or the knowledge of every important book. Those “superior spirits”³⁰⁰, as Isabel will later define Serena Merle and Gilbert Osmond, distinguish themselves from common persons in this sensitivity that Isabel craves to acquire³⁰¹. Notice how Isabel promptly acknowledges Gilbert Osmond, thus displaying her own intuition in the recognition of his value:

She had never met a person so fine a grain. (...) such shyness as his – the shyness of ticklish nerves and fine perceptions – was perfectly consistent with the best breeding. Indeed it was almost a proof of standards and touchstones other than the vulgar: he must be so sure the vulgar would be first on the ground³⁰².

To Isabel, standards and touchstones possess a fine perception, which is the reason why Osmond’s nervousness seems to be a characteristic of his good intuition and best breeding. Isabel seems to share this insight into the value of objects and persons, the proof of great culture and knowledge. The expertise is seen as the capacity to not be easily surprised, to have the sensibility to find quality in the objects others ignored, and to severely judge entities lacking the appropriate standards. Although Isabel is observant when she notices Osmond’s distaste of vulgarity, only later will she be able to realize the disgust that accompanies it, how it is supplemented by the desire “to extract from it some sort of recognition of one’s own superiority”. And even then Isabel will dwell upon how, “On the one hand, it was despicable, but on the other it afforded a standard”³⁰³. Acknowledging talent does not, by itself, brand Isabel as a good interpreter. We are often able to appreciate qualities in others without possessing them ourselves, and valuing a skill does not imply the same degree of competence as executing it. For Isabel to be the touchstone of touchstones another set of conditions, which will be described, is required. For now, what distinguishes the young lady is the wish to become like her guardian, her training of particular skills, and, of course, the fact that she possesses an intuition waiting to be developed.

³⁰⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 269.

³⁰¹ That Isabel is acquainted with the notion of giving a use to others is made clear even before her marriage, in Rome, when Gilbert Osmond asks her how well does she know Lord Warburton, to which Isabel replies: “Well enough for all the use I have for him”. [Gilbert Osmond] ‘And how much of a use is that?’ [Isabel] ‘Well, I like to like him’. (*Op. cit.*, p. 325).

³⁰² *Op. cit.*, p. 286.

³⁰³ *Op. cit.*, p. 461.

It is in this ambition for criteria and in the ignorance of the perils of leading an aesthetic life that, for Dorothea Krook, in *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*, lays the problem of Isabel's choices and the way she is corrupted by them. Although Krook's title mentions the mode of proof discussed in previous chapters, it seems only meant to illustrate, in a commonsensical fashion, that of a painful experience, the growth of consciousness in Henry James's characters. I would argue, however, that it is erroneous to deflect the possibility that an ordeal is indeed taking place in *The Portrait of a Lady*, one where pain and suffering are part of a test with the purpose of distinguishing the authenticity of Isabel as a standard. Consider Dorothea Krook's characterization of the term "touchstone":

Isabel herself never becomes fully conscious of this taint in herself; she does not to the end see it face to face, she knows it only by its effects. But the reader is expected to see it, and to give it the weight that is due to it. The sense of beauty is one thing, aestheticism, the 'touchstone of taste' (as James is to call it in a later work), is quite another thing. For aestheticism seeks always to substitute the appearance for the reality, the surface for the substance, the touchstone of taste for the touchstone of truth, that truth which in the life of man (Henry James comes more and more to insist) is in the first instance moral and only secondarily and derivatively aesthetic³⁰⁴.

The opposition between morals and taste, which is not our main concern here, is indeed exposed in the novel. Isabel is influenced by her appreciation of the beautiful and every so often she chooses it over what is good. Still, the author is using the idea of a "touchstone of taste" as mentioned in *The Golden Bowl*. One of the reasons Krook fails to understand the description of touchstone in *The Portrait of a Lady* derives from the fact that she does not analyze the passages in which the concept appears, focusing on the relation

³⁰⁴ Dorothea Krook-Gilead, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 59.

between Isabel and those who court her, and ignoring her rapport with Madame Merle³⁰⁵. In *The Portrait*, the differentiation between a touchstone of taste and a touchstone of truth, perhaps exposed in the character of Madame Merle, cannot be found in Isabel. Even if the novel argues in favor of a moral, as opposed to an aesthetic life, the touchstone the young lady seeks to reach is univocal; it is an appreciation of quality and of truth, both of which will be found at the end of her quest. The difference between Isabel and Madame Merle lies precisely in the fact that the young lady realizes, with Osmond and, later, with the revelations about her companion, that the criterion of taste is not enough for life.

When considering Madame Merle, moreover, a distinction must be made between the life she chooses to lead, in which she seeks for the beautiful, but ignores or despises ethical standards in her relationship with other persons, and her own value as a touchstone. Madame Merle's appreciation of those surrounding her encompasses their entire beings,

³⁰⁵ Dorothea Krook's essay focus on the relationship between Isabel and those who court her, describing in detail the reasons that lead her to ignore Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood, and to later choose Gilbert Osmond. On the one hand, such resolution is motivated by Isabel's wish to develop her mind and knowledge, while desiring that her money could favor someone as Osmond. On the other, her appreciation for the beautiful leads her to long for an exquisite husband. In this weakness for an aesthetic perfectionism lies the reason why Isabel will disappoint herself, as well as Osmond, and in it one may find her own responsibility for the course of events. For the author, neither character is entirely beast or angel, nor should one overlook the fact that both loved each other dearly before their married life began. In the failure to correspond to these great expectations lies their mutual disappointment. Isabel chose Osmond, ignoring that his aestheticism was a substitute for vanity. She also concealed the full extent of her own convictions, and the way she was not willing to abdicate them in his favor. In Krook's words, while Lord Warburton appreciated Isabel's remarkable mind, Osmond despises the moral and provincial upbringing of her ideas. So, although Osmond loved Isabel, he believed he would be able to suppress her own thoughts. It is the inability to do so that will make him despise his wife, as the mere fact that Isabel disagrees with Osmond is an offense upon his person. Osmond was indeed looking for, in Isabel, a reflection of his own intellect, a supplement to his art of conversation and general knowledge, instead of someone with a mind of her own. For Osmond, Isabel's fine qualities would serve his purposes; she was meant to be the privileged interlocutor to his thoughts, encouraging them with keen remarks, mirroring his good taste in all matters. The point is not, I would sustain, so much the fact that Isabel goes against Osmond's standards, but the notion that she is not willing to abdicate the search for her own criteria. Although Isabel finds, in Osmond, qualities that would serve her own education, she soon discovers he is not the model to follow. She understands, at some point, that Osmond's egotism inhibits true understanding, that he is partial and invidious, which makes her ignore his advice, returning to Madame Merle as standard.

which is why she is such a consummate interpreter³⁰⁶. Although Madame Merle does not lead an Arnoldian life, she is an Arnoldian, which is why it does not make sense to consider, after Krook, that her interpretations substitute appearance for reality, or the surface for the substance. On the contrary, her accurate evaluations show the capacity to say things about others that they recognize as truthful.

Among the qualities Isabel appreciates in Madame Merle are, in fact, her general sensibility and appreciation of the character of others. But, as she ages, Isabel's reasons for being taught by Madame Merle differ and even if she will later impose a limit upon what Osmond is allowed to teach her, the aspiration to equal Madame Merle is maintained after the young lady marries:

There were hours when Isabel would have given anything for lessons in this art; if her brilliant friend had been near she would have made an appeal to her. She had become aware more than before of the advantage of being like that – of having made one's self a firm surface, a sort of corselet of silver³⁰⁷.

Isabel's many theories, her enthusiasm for life, the willingness to fulfill all things, no longer inspires her. Troubles, the young lady decides, must be kept to herself, so as to avoid the pain of confession. She now longs for what is Madame Merle's mode of living through knowledge and wisdom: "The best way to profit by her friend – this indeed Isabel had always thought – was to imitate her, to be as firm and bright as she"³⁰⁸. At this point, she already knows better than to search for instruction in her friend, and doubts as to whether she would be of use in "periods of refined embarrassment". The desire to follow a model has been

³⁰⁶ To differentiate taste and truth in an interpreter is to ignore the influence of Arnold's concept of touchstone in James's novels and criticism. Observe how, when *The Portrait of a Lady* was published in 1880-81, James had already written an essay praising Arnold's literary criticism, published in the *North American Review* in 1865. Years later, in 1884, a second essay follows, in which Arnold is given the title of "*general critic*". The influence of Arnold's concepts in Henry James's body of work has often been described. For example, the notion of touchstone is portrayed in James's essay, "The Science of Criticism". In Arnold, as was seen in the previous chapter, truth and beauty may not be individuated. True poetry, which belongs to the class of the excellent, has the capacity to do us good and the true critic possesses the ability to detect both qualities in a poem. For a detailed account see Henry James, Susan M. Griffin, *The Art of Criticism: Henry James on the Theory and the Practice of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Henry James, "English Writers, Matthew Arnold," *Literary Criticism*, vol. 1. New York: The Library of America, 1984, pp. 711-731.

³⁰⁷ Henry James, *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

³⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 432.

replaced by the determination to do so. In addition, for someone now acquainted with disgusts and revulsions, the idea of possessing a corselet of silver is appealing. The garment, with the genuineness of silver, its brightness and firmness, exemplifies how Madame Merle was able to give herself an air of authenticity that has the further purpose of protecting her. In this Pygmalion narrative, therefore, Isabel gives the role of educator to Madame Merle who, carefully and progressively, takes the young lady under her wing and settles upon her destiny.

In order to be a reliable barometer to others, Isabel would have to own a set of features that could be properly schooled. In fact, one way to characterize Madame Merle is to say that her perceptiveness is not an act of will, as the requisites to be an insightful interpreter depend upon a combination of factors, such as intuition, memory, education, the capacity to learn from experience, and to have suffered. The ability to recognize skill in others, as Isabel did in Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, is a first indication of her perceptiveness. Another group of conditions, such as having that talent validated, as when Ralph sees her admiring the paintings at Gardencourt's gallery – "She was evidently a judge; she had a natural taste; he was struck with that"³⁰⁹ –, would be the second requirement. Still, a specific experience of life is required:

‘I judge more than I used to’, she said to Isabel, ‘but it seems to me one has earned the right. One can’t judge till one’s forty; before that we’re too eager, too hard, too ignorant. I’m sorry for you; it will be a long time before you’re forty. (...) I want to see what life makes of you. It may pull you about horribly, but I defy it to break you up’³¹⁰.

The advice, which may at first seem banal, holds simultaneously a theory of life and a veiled threat. Supposedly, the right to evaluate others comes late in life, after one is softened by experience. The contradiction in Madame Merle's words resides in the fact that, both in Isabel's case and in her companion's, life will moderate eagerness and ignorance, but will also toughen them terribly. In fact, the authority to assess is accompanied by the fact that in order to be a standard one must have grieved.

³⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

³¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 209.

Observe how, at times, the affinity between the interpreter and the person being tested also leads the judged one to understand facts that the other would wish to conceal. Isabel, for example, is able to comprehend things about Madame Merle that she would have liked to suppress. In this case, Madame Merle's experience at changing subjects and Isabel's unworldliness will make her incapable to realize the full extent of her intuitions. One of them, however, reveals a characteristic that she will share with Madame Merle:

'I'm afraid you've suffered much', she once found occasion to say to her friend in response to some allusion that had appeared so far.
 'What makes you think that?' Madame Merle asked with the amused smile of a person seated at a game of guesses. 'I hope I haven't too much the droop of misunderstood.'
 'No, but you sometimes say things that I think people who have always been happy wouldn't have found out.
 'I haven't always been happy', said Madame Merle, smiling still, but with a mock of gravity, as if she were telling a child a secret. (...)
 I flatter myself that I'm rather stout, but if I must tell you the truth I've been shockingly chipped and cracked. (...) ³¹¹.

Madame Merle had to suffer in order to notice life's complexities. Unlike some cases, portrayed later in the chapter, in which sorrow derives from the activity of interpreting other persons, Madame Merle's grievance precedes the moment in which she became an insightful interpreter and it is described as a condition for her intuition to develop. If suffering is mandatory, then it is natural for Madame Merle to wish it for her pupil, hoping the vessel will hold, and not break entirely. In fact, there are recurrent allusions in the book to Isabel's happiness and the way "that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge"³¹². She was, as portrayed, "too young, too impatient to live, too unacquainted with pain"³¹³. The importance of suffering is indispensable for one to grow as an interpreter and it is what enables Isabel to possess the discernment of both a judge of persons and objects and to become the evaluator she wished to be in the first place. Observe how the

³¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

³¹² See also: "It appeared to Isabel that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge, for she had gathered from her acquaintance with literature that it was often a source of interest and even of instruction". *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

³¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 71.

ability to read others was a form of art not entirely mastered by the young lady until the very ending of her education:

(...) she had not read him right. A certain combination of features had touched her, and in them she had seen the most striking of figures³¹⁴.

Isabel read all this as she would have read the hour on the clock-face; she was perfectly aware that the sight of interest in her cousin stirred her husband's rage as if Osmond had locked her into her room – which she was sure he wanted to do³¹⁵.

The reason why Isabel's insight failed when evaluating Gilbert Osmond for the first time may only be understood in her lack of experience as an interpreter, in the fact that she had the facility to assess taste, but not the capacity to understand an evil she had not yet experienced. She is able to identify and to acknowledge Osmond's delicate mind, his refinement, but not his loathing of others. Marriage provides that understanding, and she is now able to apprehend Osmond as if he were a clock, to comprehend the set of emotions he reveals, as well as those he attempts to conceal, to make sense of their relationship, and to fear him for it. She recognizes not only his visible emotions, but also the intentions he conceals, as what he would do to her if he could. And, perhaps unwillingly, the young lady becomes very much like her tutor.

She [Isabel] liked her [Madame Merle] as much as ever, but there was a corner of the curtain that never was lifted; it was as if she remained after all something of a public performer, condemned to emerge only in character and in costume³¹⁶.

And thus it seemed to her [Isabel] an act of devotion. She concealed it elaborately; she was perpetually, in their talk, hanging out curtains and arranging screens³¹⁷.

Although Isabel is perceptive in realizing she is observing a show whose curtain is never fully drawn, she does not, at first, understand the need or purpose of the representation. The way Madame Merle has perfected herself up to a point in which she

³¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 458.

³¹⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 465.

³¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 350. See also: "With all her love for knowledge she had a natural shrinking from raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge in her mind coexisted with the finest capacity for ignorance". *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

³¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 466.

appears to be faultless is admired. Later, when Isabel's friends come to visit and she must veil the truth about her married life, hanging curtains and arranging screens proves to be an elaborate and exhausting task. Caspar Goodwood sadly notices that she is now "imperturbable, inscrutable, impenetrable"³¹⁸. His characterization reveals Isabel's accomplishment at building her own silver corselet: "you're somehow so still, so smooth, so hard. You're completely changed, you conceal everything"³¹⁹. She has become a touchstone, a being apart from others, which is why she may not be entirely understood or assessed. This is the narrative of how one, possessing fine talents, longed to be instructed and to become a standard. It is equally the story of how, after the education process is completed, Isabel is finally able to give meaning to a group of first impressions she had failed to comprehend fully. The young lady will be able to return to what had seemed to be Madame Merle's ambiguous remarks, "a note that sounded false"³²⁰, the sensation that the ties connecting her friend and her husband were more profound than she had thought, to the way Osmond hates her, to the realization of who her benefactor was (Madame Merle's final lesson). Although she will understand, as the Countess of Gemini suggests, that she is "a woman who has been made used of"³²¹, I would say that Isabel was able to obtain, as she had wished, the ability to accurately comprehend other persons and to be a valuable judge of character. In *Portrait of a Lady*, therefore, embodying a criterion implies the ability to redefine, after an education through suffering has taken place, our thoughts about others. Initial impressions are merely partially accurate, and may not be fully comprehended before the interpreter has time to mature. Explanation is seen as the relinquishment of a personal point of view, which occurs when one is finally at a better station for appreciating others, and has gained a comprehensive perspective.

³¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 541.

³¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 545.

³²⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 340.

³²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 582.

4. Those Exhausted by Success

Every command leaves behind a painful sting in the person who is forced to carry it out.
Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*

When the set of Arnoldians was described in the preceding pages, an important aspect of the relationship between these interpreters and their elected entities was overlooked. This rapport between parties, often prolonged through time and occasionally the result of a subtle negotiation, may affect the interpreter and make him acquire particularities of his objects of study. When such experience occurs, the analyzed entities seem the source of a series of secondary effects, for lack of a better expression, on their assessors. It will be seen how some interpreters intentionally seek for such bodily rapport, in the hope that it will help to enhance comprehension. Other times, the consequences of the test distress interpreters; they are an involuntary side effect, arduous to prevent, even years after the examination is over. Such relationship illustrates a bond between the evaluator and those being analyzed that may help improve or restrain interpretation, but also make it an extraordinarily difficult task to perform. In this point, as in others, Arnoldians differ among themselves. Each skilled activity gives origin to a series of distinct traces in their interpreters, some more pleasant than others, a result of the technical procedures they perform through time.

In preceding pages, interpretation was characterized as a technical tool; a set of procedures, which vary on their degree of rationalization, was contemplated; and the possibility of having conviction regarding a particular object was deemed a way of knowing it. The following relation between entities, though, may be difficult to include in such a technical argument. For instance, in the case of those who appear to acquire features of their studied entities, it is mandatory to understand if this enhances their interpretive skills, if there is a required degree of engagement, and, finally, how does the process work. It is also necessary to comprehend whether this negotiation between entities has a public or a private dimension. If private, one must realize if the previously described mechanisms for interpretation, as pointing, are able to characterize it. To introduce the topic, a recent review in *The New*

Yorker helps to clarify the perhaps debatable, but quite simple thought, that technical interpreters may absorb features of their objects of knowledge:

When he is not taking on trends on modern thought, Professor X is shrewd about the reasons it's hard to teach underprepared students how to write. 'I have come to think,' he says, 'that the two most crucial ingredients in the mysterious mix that makes a good writer may be (1) having read enough throughout a lifetime to have internalized the rhythms of the written word, and (2) refining the ability to mimic those rhythms.' This makes sense. If you read a lot of sentences, then you start to think in sentences, and if you think in sentences, then you can write sentences, because you know what a sentence sounds like³²².

Internalize is, of course, an important word, but one which will not be literally understood. The important presumption is the description of how one who reads a lot of phrases ends up thinking in sentences, being eventually able to write them. In literary criticism, this type of gradual acquisition, perhaps similar to Madame Merle's improving capacity to judge other persons, does not mean that critics embody certain phrases or that these are engraved in their minds. It does mean, however, that those who have had a particular practice of reading will be able to show their writing skills, as opposed to those who had a limited experience and may have difficulties in writing. This is a case in which comprehension requires both experience, through time, of what is being studied, and the capacity to reproduce aspects of it. It could, of course, be sustained that this case exemplifies merely a unidirectional relation between readers and their books, and perhaps it is so. It is unclear, in many of the cases discussed, whether this type of acquisition derives from the entities in evaluation or from the way each interpreter projects their own image in the mirror. Some of these secondary effects appear to be entirely personal and subjective, in which case one should attempt to comprehend if these interpreters are evaluating their own emotions or stipulating a state of affairs.

There are, of course, those who appear to be immune to such a type of relationship. Would T. S. Eliot's explanation about how the poet may be compared to a filament of platinum be representative of a different species of Arnoldian? "Tradition and Individual Talent," which in so many ways precedes Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, focuses

³²² Louis Menand, "Why We Have College", *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2011, p. 79.

on the relation between the work of a certain poet and the art that existed before him. The arrival of the new work of art transforms “the existing monuments” and creates “conformity between the old and the new,” while feelings and emotions influence poets.

He must be aware that the mind of Europe – the mind of his own country – a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind – is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development that abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen³²³.

Magdalenian draughtsmen, a reference to the Paleolithic caves in Dordogne where Eliot had spent a Summer in 1919³²⁴, appears side by side with Shakespeare and Homer, monuments representing the mind of Europe. A point of interest in this description is related with the idea that the mind of the canon maintains its strength through the acquisition of particular works. This collective intellect, modified by each new work of art, supersedes that of the individual artist, changing continually in order to acquire new pieces of knowledge without leaving others behind. In this case, there is no distinction between the supposed interpreter and its entity of choice, as a progressive agglomeration takes place which transforms the pre-existing order of things. Such mind, unlike, as will be seen, the poet's, is not immune to the relation between works of art. It has a public nature, visible in its various instances. At first sight, this denial of an interiorized collective mind finds its equivalent in the refusal of “the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul”³²⁵ of the poet. Poetry is not the result of a specific and interior personality. This would mean that what one may presumably call the mind of the canon, composed of its various works of excellence, finds its parallel in the mind of the poet, made public through his work. But Eliot rejects this notion, favoring the thought that the poet is the medium in which “impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways”³²⁶. This blend is thus an internal process. Notice how in the interiority of impressions of the poet, which contrast with Eliot's

³²³ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode. London: Faber and Faber, 1975, p. 39.

³²⁴ Cf. *Modernism – An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 153.

³²⁵ Eliot, *Op. cit.*, p. 42

³²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 42

portrait of the mind of the canon, lies an unacknowledged difference between individual and collective minds:

“(...) but we are to remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism”³²⁷.

In this description (the citation follows a brief discussion, which introduces the essay on the nature of French criticism) lies an unrecognized relation of continuity between poets and those with the responsibility to understand and place creations amidst the mind of the canon. Criticism is characterized as being something which “passes through our minds” when one reads a book or feels an emotion about it. Both thoughts and emotions possess an interior nature, in a process that appears to be more similar to that of the individual poet than to the public mind of the canon. But one can only suppose that the mind of the critic must progressively acquire, through extensive reading, some of the particulars of the mind of the canon. The critic’s specific activity will later be probed; for now, the well-known argument favoring the depersonalization of the poet, and his relation to the sense of tradition, is portrayed.

The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form a sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly former acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man itself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material³²⁸.

The poet is the touchstone that undergoes the test, but goes unaffected. In this impersonal theory of poetry the focus is on “the relation of the poem with other poems,” the poet being the vessel where the process takes place, but which is left “inert, neutral and unchanged”. Eliot compares the catalyst, a substance that increases or diminishes the rate of a chemical reaction without undergoing a change, to what happens in the mind of the artist.

³²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

³²⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

The poet is the receptacle, or the filament, while his feelings and emotions constitute the gases that will be combined into the “new compound” which composes the work of art. Without the poet the chemical reaction may not take place. A peculiar and somewhat contradictory divorce occurs between the private experiences of the man who suffers and the creating mind. Such separation does not, however, correspond to a strict division between experiences (corresponding to the body) and poems (those belonging to the activity of the mind). On the contrary, the organism of the poet functions as a whole, one in which passions are transmuted and digested in the mind able to separate private experiences from poetical growth. The fact that Eliot uses the catalyst as a metaphor, though, leaves unclear whether the poet is a technical reader of the work of others. Implicit in the description is the idea that not everyone possesses the ideal characteristics to become a catalyst. The fact that only some may be vessels for the creation of poetry appears to signify that they require the type of characteristics portrayed (knowledge of the writings of others, intuition, and, in this particular case, the capacity to be a filament of platinum).

The visible repercussion of the process is the existence of a work of art, representative of the chemical reaction. This procedure could equal Madame Merle’s judgments, but in her case suffering was a requirement for accurate evaluations to appear, and her perfection as a touchstone depended thoroughly on a private experience that left its mark. Likewise, the asymmetry between her and those subject to evaluation, which, as seen, is a condition in some of these modes of proof, does not appear to exist in the case of the catalyst. On the contrary, he must empty himself, and not be affected by previous works of art. An interesting particularity of Eliot’s catalyst resides precisely in this rejection of the centrality of experience of life: “The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in any kind from any experience not of art”³²⁹. At stake are not the poet’s private affairs or his daily life, but his ability to

³²⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 48.

experience previous works in a combination of emotions and feelings, made visible in a particular use of phrases or images, used to compose that final result.

The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which ‘came’, which did not develop simply out of that precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet’s mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to. The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together³³⁰.

Although the poet remains neutral, he does, after all, incorporate characteristics of the diverse particulars at his disposal, and this acquisition is fundamental for the process to be successful. The assimilation of particulars, which lie dormant until the moment of the fusion, is only momentary and outdone once the reaction has taken place. Unlike the mind of the canon or Madame Merle, entities that work through the accumulation of other works or particular judgments, the poet stores impressions until the reaction takes place. When Eliot distinguishes the poet’s personal experiences from this acquisition of particulars, he is making clear that the poet is not projecting his personal views on the phrases or images at his disposal. On the contrary, he must appropriate and rework things exterior to himself. There is a difference between these particulars, which must be momentarily stored, and the test itself, which leaves the interpreter unharmed.

At the same time, the acquired phrases and sentences must not be faithfully reproduced; they have only the function of serving the chemical reaction. Interestingly, an asymmetry now appears to be portrayed, but one which is a result of the importance of the fusion over the poet’s mind, and the reason why this depersonalization is defined, in a sentence that reminds us of Henry James’s characterization of the critic, as “a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality”³³¹. It could, of course, be asked if this sacrifice

³³⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 41.

³³¹ In “The Art of Criticism” Henry James states the following: “When one thinks of the outfit required for free work in this spirit, one is ready to pay almost any homage to the intelligence that has put it on, when one considers the noble figure completely equipped – armed cap-à-pie in curiosity and sympathy – one falls in love with the apparition. It certainly represents the knight who has knelt through his long vigil and who has the piety of his office. For there is something sacrificial in his function, inasmuch as he offers himself as a general touchstone.” Cf. Henry James, *Literary Criticism*, vol. 1. New York: The Library of America, 1984, p. 98.

could be depicted as a negative effect of the fusion, i.e. of the procedure itself, whether the gradual extinction of one's personality is, or not, a positive thing. To some, it could be a necessary side effect, a requirement if one wants to be a creator and, in this case, the ending would justify the means. From this perspective, poets would be those willing to sacrifice their personalities in order to be vessels to their works.

A difference between catalysts and touchstones concerns the fact that those using quartz to evaluate the authenticity of gold are conducting an exterior process, whereas the catalytic chemical reaction is interior, takes place in the poet's mind. But, just as the alloy is made visible on the stone, the results of the test may be perceived by those examining results, i.e. the products of the poet's mind, his writings. At the same time, both touchstones and catalysts require someone to observe and judge the results of the process. This assessment, done by critics or specialized readers, presumes the Arnoldian ability to value the artist: "you must set for him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead"³³². The poet must know he will be judged, although not amputated, by the standards of the past: "It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other"³³³. This comparison, Eliot's test of value, has an obvious relationship with the evaluator's task in a touchstone test. But the critic must also be able to understand:

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness', the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts³³⁴.

Those who appreciate this moment of fusion, recognizing both technical excellence and the emotion in the life of the poem, are the specialized readers. Instead of judging through criteria of sublimity, one should be able to perceive the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure under which the fusion takes place. A good critic is thus able, when he reads a

³³² *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

³³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 39

³³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 41.

particular poem, to perceive that moment of fusion, to recover what has taken place. It is the access to that hidden reaction which is brought to light in the critical activity. He is, therefore, the examiner in the touchstone process who is able to return to the moment of the test, see the alloys and justify the result of the procedure. The line of continuity, previously described, between the poet's mind and the critic's may now be understood, as he must have access to that moment of fusion.

In the case of Eliot's catalyst, although the poet remains unchanged after the reaction takes place, it may now be understood how he had to acquire, even if only momentarily, a group of particulars to be used in the reaction. Without them, a successful fusion would not have been possible. Simultaneously, the critic's skill lies in this capacity to understand the moment in which the fusion took place, and to give it meaning. Now, picture, instead, a therapist who starts experiencing bodily symptoms as a result of his professional activity, the most common reactions being muscle tension, sleepiness, yawning and tearfulness, but also stomach disturbance, loss of voice, nausea and so forth. Would the acquisition of these symptoms be a signal that the therapist had gained insight into his patient? And would this mean that therapy was progressing and that the patient was on his way to being cured? In a situation of bodily-centered counter-transference, the second illustration of this rapport between interpreters, contrary to what happens with the catalyst, the therapist's acquisition of somatic symptoms does not necessarily entail therapeutic success. It may, however, be representative of the particular knowledge of the person in need of interpretation. The following quotation, which summarizes the state of the art of current investigations, introduces this issue.

"Bodily-centred" counter-transference is a little-discussed manifestation of counter-transference where the therapist is spontaneously aroused by the client material through a physical medium (Field, 1989). There is little documentation about these somatic reactions to client material. Therefore, the processes underlying body-centred counter-transference are not fully understood. Stone (2006) and Wosket (1999) described the therapist as having a "tuning fork" vibrating with the client's psychic material through the unconscious to describe the process of somatic reactions. It is suggested that the use of the therapeutic tool, or "self" via postural mirroring, can induce body-centred counter-transference. Postural mirroring of clients is the result of a therapist's unconscious automatic somatic counter-transference (Rothschild & Rand, 2006). Postural mirroring and the resulting body-centred counter-transference can be a very

useful way to gain insight into the client's emotional and physical processes. Mohacsy (1995) explored the idea that non-verbal behaviour could give a greater insight into the internal world of the client³³⁵.

It should perhaps be mentioned that literature on the subject concurs that such manifestations must be further studied, in order to systematize specific problems that derive from this type of counter-transference. Researchers need to realize, for example, whether these symptoms occur more in some therapists than others, due to factors such as age, sex or the counselor's experience. So far, body-centered counter-transference appears to be more severe in therapists treating serious trauma patients, such as victims of abuse. Differences in the personal meaning of body-centered counter-transference must equally be evaluated, as well as the degree of assistance that supervisors may provide. Still, an important premise in this research deals with the idea that verbal communication leaves unsaid much of what is important in a therapeutic process. In the interaction between patient and therapist knowledge is gained, from the perspective of both interlocutors, in the evaluation of bodily reactions. As in other cases discussed in the thesis, the body's responses are deemed more truthful than verbal communication, as they are not subject to the "unpremeditated manipulation of language that we use in everyday negotiation between outside reality and our inner emotional life"³³⁶. The patient pays attention to his therapist's behavior, in order to learn if he is bored, if the session has reached its ending, etc. Likewise, the counselor must acquire information from his patient's behavior in order to attain what Mohacsy calls the "states of the body," which "can go beyond internal 'states of mind'" and provide a better comprehension of the patient's inner feelings.

An unmentioned presumption of this phenomenon as a form of knowledge appears to be the idea that the attempt to get into someone's inside may be more successful if my inside experiences the same. Common sense would say, in fact, that when we experience something we are better able to comprehend it. There is, however, a pretension to truthfulness in some

³³⁵ Ailbhe Booth, Timothy Trimble & Jonathan Egan, "Body-Centred Counter-Transference in a Sample of Irish Clinical Psychologists," *The Irish Psychologist*, volume 36, Issue 12, October 2010, p. 289.

³³⁶ Ildiko Mohacsy, "Nonverbal communication and its place in the therapy session," *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, n.º 22(1), 1995, 31–38.

descriptions of the phenomenon that must be evaluated, as following arguments do not appear to result from common sense, but from the idea that one's interior experiences may be more meaningful than words, as they allow us to restrain personal interpretation. The discourse about intentionality, discussed in previous chapters, is here substituted for the dichotomy between conscious and unconscious. Therefore, whereas one's words are subject to manipulation and deceit – they are conscious –, interior feelings and their respective bodily representation, because unconscious, are potentially truthful.

The body appears to be unintentionally reliable in the case of Lady Macbeth, as represented in her relation with the Doctor. Returning briefly to the beginning of act V, the physician depicts his patient the following way: “A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once / the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching” (V, i, 9-10). A few moments later he will claim: “Her eyes are open,” while the Waiting-Gentlewoman concurs: “Ay, but her senses are shut” (V, i, 23-24). If Lady Macbeth was able at one point to conceal the crime (to shut her moral eyes), while her senses were alert to the various possibilities of the crime's discovery, she is now sick from the effort, with her eyes wide open, but her senses locked, her body making her reenact the crime repeatedly. The visible aspects of the crime are Lady Macbeth's enunciations and, more importantly, what the Freudian Waiting-Gentlewoman portrays as being “an accustom'd action” (V, i, 27), that of washing repeatedly the hands. For the doctor, this corresponds to a perturbation in nature, a sentence that can mean that it is in her constitution, to be sick, or that her character's faults produced an unbalanced nature, which could not cope with the horrors of the done deeds:

Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
(*Macbeth*, V, i, 68-76)

After hearing Lady Macbeth's confessions, the Doctor's mind understands how unnatural deeds, such as murder, cause abnormal problems, like a mind dissociated from the

body³³⁷. The infected mind is unable to confess and has to discharge its secrets to deaf pillows, an object that will not denounce the crime, but will also not allow for cure. Lady Macbeth has an excess of unmediated secrets, emotions that were not properly formulated and the impossibility to bring them forward. She abhors the idea of discussing her story and of submitting it to interpretation; her aim is that of concealing emotions, burying them, and not appealing them over a conversation. Still, the Doctor, through observation, the analysis of her public behavior and the repetition of the night of the murder, has unmediated access to the crime itself. Lady Macbeth's body appears to speak a truth that its owner is determined to conceal. More importantly, the play illustrates, *avant la lettre*, concern over the therapist's own body. Lady Macbeth's illness exemplifies the effects the interpreted entity may provoke on those endeavoring to understand her and the negative consequences a patient may have on the Doctor, an often-neglected victim of the couple's evil doings:

My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight.
I think, but dare not speak.
(*Macbeth*, V, i, 68-76)

This Doctor, whose mind has been mated, sight amazed, and who dares not speak, could perhaps be portrayed as an illustration of bodily counter-transference, an episode in the life of the analyst as "deaf pillow". Lady Macbeth's deeds provoked a transformation in the Physician, which alters his senses. Others could, with good reason, argue that the Doctor's incapacity to speak is due to practical reasons, as he could be put on trial for treason. Still, he is burdened by her secrets and portrays that ailment by describing physical symptoms. Here, a differentiation important to the present thesis is being depicted, which concerns the distinction between understanding something and being able to solve it. In previous cases, to comprehend and to make a verdict, for example, were deemed one and the same thing. Failure to provide a sentence was a sign that something had been left untold and it would not be considered an accurate form of comprehension. Similarly, Eliot's poet was

³³⁷ Several critics have underlined the unnaturalness of the play. See, for example, L. C. Knights, *Some Shakespearean Themes - An Approach to Hamlet*, 1959. London: Penguin Books, 1960.

thought of as being accomplished when the fusion took place. With Macbeth's Doctor, and in bodily counter-transference in general, one may comprehend a patient, i.e. being able to make a diagnosis, but this does not necessarily mean curing him. The Doctor's case is more troublesome, as Lady Macbeth's reenactment of the crime helps him understand the cause of her illness, but the knowledge at his disposal does not allow for the type of diagnosis that would help to choose a course of treatment. In *Macbeth*, the interpreted entity refuses to be understood and the one making the verdict fears what he has found and does not know enough to provide the diagnosis and respective treatment. Secondary effects are unwanted, but nevertheless occur.

If this Doctor were a modern psychoanalyst, he would be able to rely on recent research about the effects therapy may cause on those practicing it. Firstly, it should be noted that, in the case of therapy, physical bodily symptoms are the result of the relationship between patient and therapist, i.e. of an agreement made between interpreters with the purpose to heal one of them. Neither, we may suppose, is being forced into therapy and the counselor has the choice to end the sessions if he finds they are being harmful (this is a relevant difference from other cases which will be portrayed). The fact that the therapist starts suffering from a series of somatic bodily symptoms is the result of his interpretative activity, which may derive from what the patient is consciously or unconsciously projecting, and from what the therapist is also consciously or unconsciously absorbing. An important particularity lies in the fact that researchers portray these symptoms as being of potential benefit for the therapeutic process, as they allow the therapist insight into his patient. The negative aspect of this bodily relation consists, of course, in the fact that, if not properly controlled, it may lead the counselor to suffering and even burnout.

According to these studies, the reason why such effects appear is due to the special relation between the doctor and the patient, which presupposes that there is a connection (psychological or physical, between both entities). Such connection has taken place when, somehow, the therapist realizes he or she is different or reacting singularly to the test itself. It could, of course, be questioned if the therapist previously possessed those symptoms, and the

extent to which they aggravate during the sessions. What matters here, nonetheless, is the fact that therapists consider these physical sensations to be either a reproduction of their patient's bodily symptoms or of therapy itself.

Susie Orbach's books characterize this type of experience, described as an important part of the process of cure, as it may help to enlighten the therapist about his patient. The idea that the subconscious of two persons may communicate through their bodies, and without their full knowledge, is of a certain anthropologic interest. Herta, a German musicologist born in 1942, grew up with a series of eating disorders, which were a constant source of concern for her family. Her mother categorized her as *Jude*, due to the fact that she was very skinny, the implications of the term being only acknowledged by Herta years later. Susie Orbach, whom she looked for in New York after hearing one of her conferences, characterizes her as being "deeply somatic and her career and her mothering was hampered by chronic pains caused by ulcerated colitis"³³⁸. Herta had had an early menopause in her late 30s, which contributed to make her uncomfortable in her body, a source of pain and grief. From time to time, however, she had periods of "well-being in her body but these felt to her to have a quality of unreality about them"³³⁹. In her article, Orbach claims: "The aspect of her therapy I want to highlight centers around the work on her body and my body"³⁴⁰. While rationalizing Herta's case, the author comments:

But while I was thinking this (...), I simultaneously had the experience of becoming deeply and comfortably into awareness into my own body and how very much at ease I feel with it. I was quite struck by this. (...) But beyond this unusual and rather pleasurable with my own body awareness in the session, it was as though Herta – in her desperate need to create a body ego for herself that could take on the functions she needed in order to deconstruct her False body – had created for herself, via me, a stable contented body that was in the room³⁴¹.

³³⁸ Susie Orbach, "Countertransference and the False Body," in *Winnicott Studies: The Journal of Squiggle Foundation*, ed. Laurence Spurling, Spring 1995, p. 8.

³³⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

³⁴⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 8. In this case, Orbach followed Winnicott in considering that "before the True Self can come to analysis, the therapist must talk with the False Self about the True Self". Winnicott's notion of true and false selves considers that, for example, in a somatic patient, the true self may come to light in therapy, recognize the existence of a false body, that with which the patient is uncomfortable, in an attempt to make true self and painless body coexist.

³⁴¹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

Secondary effects are pleasurable, as the therapist suddenly feels quite comfortable in her own body. In another book, where the same case is discussed, Orbach characterizes this feeling as “a deep physical pleasure, as though I were a purring cat”³⁴². This process, which is not considered entirely rational or irrational, is believed to be induced by the patient in need of a secure body. Herta, without her recognition, projects an “unconscious transmission” which is absorbed by the therapist’s body. Orbach’s interior will then find itself in the need to exteriorize, or just communicate, these feelings, so that she is able to intellectualize them, thus applying them in therapy: “her [the therapist’s] body, her emotional state, become a stethoscope-like instrument for hearing what might be askew”³⁴³. During therapy, thus, both women discuss this projection of an exterior body in the therapist, which proved that Herta was capable of construction and not only of destruction, a hope that she would be able in the future to rebuilt her own body.

Interestingly, Orbach does not contemplate the possibility that she, as therapist, could be construing a secure space for her patient. Other reasons leading the author to experience positive feelings about herself are also not taken into consideration; they are deemed the result of a causal relation between patient and therapist with the purpose to help the patient. This would not be a case in which the therapist acquires features of the patient, but one in which he absorbs a feeling of well being that the patient would like to have. One cannot help but questioning if Orbach’s sensations are indeed a result of the therapeutic process or a consequence of her own particular mode of describing affairs. By this I mean that it is not unusual for someone who accompanies a depressive friend for a prolonged period of time to find himself depressed after a while, or why certain persons make us feel secure, joyful or irritated. Ultimately, this is the reason why we choose and are chosen by others as friends and companions. But the attempt to find a causal explanation for our feelings when others are present, and one that depends mainly on unconscious forces, appears peculiar.

³⁴² Susie Orbach, *Bodies: Big Ideas, Small Books*. NY: Picador, 2003, p. 63. [Kindle edition]

³⁴³ *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

Orbach could, of course, claim that the validation of the procedure takes place when the patient gets better. Although the process may be described as interior (inner feelings are transmitted from the patient to the therapist) it is validated when both the interior and exterior signs of disease disappear. At the same time, although the chapter that portrays Herta's case is called "Speaking Bodies," Orbach's description helps to show how this type of talkative entity requires a skilled interpreter in order to be fully understood. In this point resides, perhaps, the strangeness of the description, as Orbach's therapeutic method appears to rely on the idea that one may find in "Orbach 1" a skilled interpreter (able to talk with Herta and to give meaning to her problems) and in "Orbach 2" a body (a skilled, but unconscious interpreter) capable of helping her patient be cured. In this case, only some of the strategies of interpretation previously surveyed may be applied. One of the reasons is due to the fact that these feelings are entirely personal, since although both women discuss them in therapy, only one of them experiences them: "When that occurs, I know there is a fair chance that I am receiving an unconscious transmission of some physical state that cannot be easily felt by the person I am working with"³⁴⁴. If the other person cannot experience Orbach's emotions and, ultimately, if the tool of pointing as a way of showing is not a requirement, then one may doubt if we are in the company of a subconscious transmission, or in the presence of a skilled interpreter, capable of curing his patients, but establishing erroneous causal relations for doing so. In this relationship between entities, thus, interpreters appear to seek a particular moment in which comprehension is made clear. Both conscious beings (or bodies, in Orbach's language) are in a struggle for self-recognition, the therapist attempting to understand her own body, and the patient trying to overcome her diseased self, in a rapport that will transform both. The understanding between parties is described as either provoking pleasure or some degree of pain. This type of conflict between selves, without therapeutic purposes, is materialized in the third illustration of this problem, which represents the bond between the torturer and his victim.

³⁴⁴ *Op. Cit.*, p. 62.

Those who twist others in order to give meanings a proper sense are, of course, torturers. Bodies turn, swirl and contort in order to make the truth appear. The torturer's task, which he often shares with an accomplice physician, is to be able to extend pain for a long period of time, without killing the suspect. As long as the correct amount of pain is exercised, truth will supposedly become visible from inside the body. It was seen before how the Greek word *basanos* (βάσανος) means touchstone, test, ordeal and torture. But the word was equally applied to designate torturers. To assume the torturer is the touchstone means it is also his body, and not only the suspect's, the place where the test occurs. The torturer's body is scratched with the test, and this is how he, and those who observe the process, is supposedly able to distinguish true confessions from false ones. In torture, unlike other modes of proof, there is not a previous agreement between parties regarding the necessity for proof. One of the entities knows he will have to provide a judgment about the other, who fears both the test and its executant. Moreover, this type of negotiation may result from a choice made by the torturer himself, due to his elected line of work, or be the consequence of a selection made by others. When this is the case, both the torturer and the tortured enter in a relationship against their will, having to perform a role they did not particularly wished for, and which has no constructive results.

Torturers may thus be described as those who, like Madame Merle, seem to be in a better position to appreciate others, a feature which, as shall be seen, ultimately contributes to their burnout³⁴⁵. This asymmetry between torturer and victim, a condition for procedures

³⁴⁵ An important particularity in this form of test derives from the idea, important in some modes of indoctrination, and different from the previous description of therapy, that interpretation is improved if my outside experiences the same as the outside of those under torture. A brief excursus on this subject helps to understand how the torturer's education requires a group of conditions in which the infliction of pain plays an important role. The case of torture in Greece has been often studied, since it was one of few in which torturers (both officers and soldiers) were taken to court and testified. In his important book, Mika Haritos-Fatouros' interviews sixteen former military policemen who worked during the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974). The author evaluates the indoctrination of torturers, contending that it was a complex process in which natural cruelty had but a small role, whereas willingness to obey was violently taught. Future officers and soldiers were not chosen arbitrarily, but among those who came from conservative and nationalist families. Their training was designed to inculcate a conservative ideology and the sense that they belonged to a selected elite, the "greater" Greeks by opposition to the "lesser" Greeks. At the same time, they were chosen from poor families, to whom financial benefits and social privileges were encouraging. Then, the training began. The indoctrination had the purpose to modify each recruit's behavior and was painfully taught. Recruits were trained to obey without question to illogical or violent orders ("overlearning"). They would be tortured so that it became an everyday act

to take place, leads to the notion that torturers are autonomous in their interpretations. They consider themselves a necessary instrument to find the truth about a given state of affairs and assume they are self-sufficient interpreters. The ambition of being autonomous in interpretation, of providing verdicts or judgments that do not need further commentary or interpretation, is best described by Bruno (a false name), a civil policeman and former warden in a prison during the latter part of Brazil's military period, who was known to have overseen and participated in torture:

'in operations 'sometimes we'd get intoxicated from our work' and do things that should not be done. Bruno says he 'felt like a demigod', a kind of high that came from 'dictating the rules'. Bruno says that he now realizes that 'all such intoxication is negative' because it causes the policemen to be 'irritable, aggressive, prone to having problems at home and drinking'"³⁴⁶.

"Intoxication" is responsible for Bruno's wrongdoings, like torture and murder, that should not have been done and which Bruno never mentions. He illustrates a "sense of high" and the feeling of being a demigod. Curiously, feelings responsible for torture are also to blame for the policemen's family and drinking problems. Bruno is describing the sensation of autonomy and self-sufficiency that comes with being a touchstone. But this autonomy has implications: the sense of supremacy, of empowerment, frequently brings torturers or members of death squads together, but it also has side effects, namely, isolation from society and from family. Although torturers enjoy a sense of autonomy, they also suffer from it, and

(torture began in the cars which took them to the training camp), and they would watch others torture prisoners, being occasionally asked to take part in the beatings (a process named "desensitization"). Simultaneously, older servicemen flogged and degraded the freshmen in a practice known as "role modeling". Soldiers were subjected to intimidation and punishment ("negative reinforcement"), but also to material and social gain, meant as "positive reinforcement". Indoctrination appears to have the purpose of serving to eliminate or to diminish the degree of engagement between subjects, so that the enjoyment of the master is highlighted, while his understanding of the dependence upon the tortured is diminished. Paradoxically, this attempt to eliminate the degree of engagement between subjects is accompanied by the necessity of a negotiation between parties. Torture, itself, is a relation between two persons, a factor that has always implications for the interpretative activity and which ultimately causes this type of secondary effects. A somewhat philosophical presumption appears to lie behind this indoctrination process, namely, if the torturer learns to understand (through his pains and those of his colleagues) the moment in which he can no longer endure suffering, he will be able to pinpoint that instant in others. The identification of a truthful confession would require the comprehension of the moment of fusion, that in which the suspect could no longer endure pain and would thus tell the truth. Pointing to that moment, in some cases that in which the subject signs a confession, and having something to show for it, would represent the torturer's interpretative success, which would mean that the procedures would have worked. Cf. Mika Haritos-Fatouros, *The Psychological Origins of Institutionalized Torture*. NY: Routledge University Press, 2003.

³⁴⁶ Martha K. Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, Philip G. Zimbardo, *Violence Workers – Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, p. 221.

they have to deal with the difficulty of being alone in interpretation and with a relation of dependence towards the tortured subjects. Therefore, this sense of supremacy has the negative side of bringing with it feelings of loneliness and the wish to be liked. It is not a coincidence that the degree of burnout is diminished in cases where torturers have a consistent network of family and friends. But the fact that their job is more often than not secretive makes them unable to share the burden of their daily tasks.

A famous section in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit* helps to understand such feeling of intoxication, i.e. the effects of a struggle between conscious selves on the examiner. The section "Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness" characterizes the struggle for self-recognition between conscious selves, which were equal prior to the test. Desire for self-assertion, which motivates both consciousness to fight each other, is the "union of the 'I' with itself"³⁴⁷, both I's seeing their reflection on each other, and thus depending on each other for their own recognition. Out of this "trial by death" two entities emerge: "The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter, the Bondsman"³⁴⁸. In this attempt for independence, both conscious selves gain their identity: the master seemingly independent, and existing for himself, while the slave appears to exist for the master and thus depends on him. Death is not the result of this trial by death, due to the fact that the master needs the slave to acknowledge him as winner and as an independent consciousness, while the slave prefers subjugation to death. As Hegel maintains, "a form of recognition has arisen that is one sided and unequal"³⁴⁹. This is a (first) difference between the master/slave dialect and torture procedures, as torture automatically distinguishes those conducting the evaluation from those who will be judged. The asymmetry between subjects does not result from the trial by death, as both individuals were equal as free subjects. Moreover, unlike the master\slave trial by death, the torturer knows before the test takes

³⁴⁷ Leo Raush, David Sherman, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-consciousness: Text and Commentary*. Albany: Suny Press, 1999, p.89.

³⁴⁸ George W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. J. B. Baillie. N. p.:Digireads Publishing, 2009, p. 89.

³⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 89.

place that he will have to avoid the death of the tortured subject. His identity as a conscious self, therefore, is not acquired after the procedure, it has been initiated during the indoctrination process, and will be developed and transformed each time the test takes place. From this perspective, the torturer equals Sisyphus, as each time he overcomes a new self during the struggle, another appears, and he sees himself in the position of having to repeat the procedure all over again. In this particularity, he finds both enjoyment and pain.

Observe how, after the struggle takes place, Hegel's slave is portrayed as "a consciousness whose nature is to be connected to thinghood, to independent objects, the things it will be working on"³⁵⁰; whereas the master, having the slave as intermediary between things and himself, is able to fully enjoy them:

To the master, on the other hand, by means of this mediating process, belongs the immediate relation, in the sense of the pure negation of it, in other words he gets the enjoyment. What mere desire did not attain, he now succeeds in attaining, viz. to have done with the thing, and find satisfaction in enjoyment. Desire alone did not get the length of this, because of the independence of the thing. The master, however, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, thereby relates himself merely to the dependence of the thing, and enjoys it without qualification and without reserve³⁵¹.

This enjoyment of the master differs from that of the torturer, in the sense that the master is able to relish his relation with things and their negation after the struggle has been conducted and he has won it. On the contrary, the torturer's intoxication is a result of the activity of torturing, his pleasure derives from this struggle between consciousness, as he finds enjoyment in the activity of dominating the other. Another possibility is to consider that, as both subjects are unequal prior to the test, through the perpetration of pain the torturer is exercising his power as master, finding enjoyment in his own independence as opposed to the dependence of the tortured.

At the same time, Hegel's idea that the two entities are struggling for their self-assertion could be considered an interesting portrait of torture, and one in which it is not the truthfulness of the confession that matters, but the struggle itself between individuals. In the

³⁵⁰ Leo Raush, *Op. cit.*, 96.

³⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 90.

Brazilian case, in which torture played the role of identifying and annihilating the opposition to the dictatorship, this struggle between both consciousnesses represents opposite sides of the political spectrum. At the same time, the master's enjoyment is the result of the fact that he was able to interpose the slave between things and himself, thus deriving pleasure from things without the negative consequences. The master\slave relation through the mediation of objects, such as the chains used for the enslavement, finds its equivalent in the objects used to torture the victim, which not only interpose a distance between the torturer and the tortured, but also avoid the master's personal aches (without objects, the torturer would have to rely on modes of inflicting pain such as beating, which also hurt him³⁵²). In this enjoyment the master will also find pain:

In all this, the unessential consciousness is, for the master, the object which embodies the truth of his certainty of himself. But it is evident that this object does not correspond to its notion; for, just where the master has effectively achieved lordship, he really finds that something has come about quite different from an independent consciousness. It is not an independent but rather a dependent consciousness that he has achieved. He is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness³⁵³.

When the slave is able to overcome fear (described as inward and mute) he will be able to understand his own essential nature, as well as to know spiritual freedom, as “the truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsmen”³⁵⁴. While the master's consciousness exists always in his mediation with things, the slave is able to relate with the things themselves without intermediaries. In the slave, “through work and

³⁵² Steve McQueen's movie *Hunger* illustrates how torturers also suffer the physical effects of their job's violence. McQueen's movie depicts the story of Bobby Sands, an IRA volunteer who was arrested by the British authorities and led the Irish prisoners hunger strike in 1981. The film begins by portraying one of the prison officers, Lohan, and the way his hands' knuckles are injured. Lohan appears frequently throughout the movie and his hands are shown at different occasions, always bloody and injured, an evidence of the prison's violence towards IRA prisoners, but also to those who apply the punishments and which find themselves with a body unable to heal. Interestingly, Lohan is surrounded by silence throughout the movie (he never speaks): his pain being the invisible side of this procedure. In McQueen's movie the torturer's open wounds contrast the previous examples of clear torture. The prison guard is presented as a person doing a particular difficult job, which requires him, for example, to check out his car for hidden bombs each morning, but also as someone responsible for the violence taking place. Yet, violence also occurs in his own body, leaving scars difficult to heal. Cf. *Hunger*, dir. Steve McQueen. Icon Entertainment, 2008. DVD

³⁵³ Hegel, *Op. Cit.*, p. 90.

³⁵⁴ *Op. Cit.*, p. 90.

labour (...) this consciousness of the bondsmen comes to itself”³⁵⁵. The master’s consciousness, thus, realizes at some point that it exists only in relation to the bondsman, which is the reason why it will never be fully self-sufficient. He understands that the power of controlling this state of existence is something negative, as it implies domineering the other and keeping him as his subordinate. It is this recognition that his existence is linked with the tortured self that leads the torturer to feel the aforementioned secondary effects.

Whereas the master has to keep a slave imprisoned, the torturer, as Sisyphus, lives a constant struggle with a multiplicity of other selves (the various tortured subjects), whom he has to battle in order to maintain his status and remain an independent consciousness. Collateral effects derive not only from the necessity of having to perpetually dominate another consciousness, but from the realization of the dependence between beings. This enslavement is highlighted when the torturer realizes that his body is replicating the subject’s pains, something that may happen both during the procedure and after it. This type of collateral effects that derive from torture may have serious implications to the torturer’s health. In Rithy Pahn’s extraordinary documentary *S21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine*, torturers are interviewed by one of the camp’s survivors, reenacting their experiences as guards, torturers and members of the killing squads. Houy, one of the guards, testifies that he currently feels shame and on two different occasions mentions physical signs. In the beginning of the documentary he claims the following: “I wanted to return to the army. I’d rather have died. Death was certain there. Better to die at the front. But they wouldn’t let me go (...). Stop it I have a headache. I’m sick all day long. I can’t eat a thing”³⁵⁶. Later, he affirms: “I was young at the time. I didn’t think so far ahead. I was hot-blooded. I did what I was told. I was told to compete, so I did, to take someone to be killed, I did. As long as was obeying Angkar. Today when I think about it, it was against the law. I’m ashamed of myself.

³⁵⁵ *Op. Cit.*, p. 90.

³⁵⁶ *S21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine*, dir. Rithy Pahn, First Run Features, 2003. DVD

But I don't think about it. When I think about that, I get a headache. So when someone comes to get me to go out to eat and drink, I get drunk, come home, go to sleep"³⁵⁷.

Although it is unclear, in this case and in so many others, whether the shame felt by the torturer would be the same if the political regime had not changed, the main point appears to be the fact that these symptoms are neither desired nor controllable. Bruno's intoxication is here substituted by the term "hot-blooded," a synonym expression characteristic of the master's enjoyment, accompanied by the previously mentioned pain. In fact, as Edward Peters claims: "So often have the effects of torture on the victims been the focus of discussion that its effects on the torturers have been neglected"³⁵⁸. Job burnout, the emotional response to chronic stress at work, may be analyzed according to the following characteristics: emotional exhaustion; depersonalization, considered a "negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people and the job," a "sense of ineffectiveness and failure". Although Houy's interpretative activity is no longer maintained, collateral effects still appear and the only recognized way to make them momentarily disappear is through alcohol, which numbs the conscience, or depersonalization (as if the master was wishing to annihilate itself). It could now be understood how the torturer's consciousness, unable to sustain the pain resulting from torture, anesthetizes itself so as to avoid the confrontation with the other consciousness (during torture) and the regrets imposed by it (after torture has taken place). This process that affects the torturer's body and makes him suffer the negative and degrading consequences of being a touchstone for others is a relevant argument against official applications of torture by the State and a powerful objection to those who argue in favor of the legal uses of torture.

The fact that the victims were submitted to pain and that this type of suffering was mandatory during the procedure is represented in the torturer's acquisition of elements of the test itself. In this case, he does not absorb characteristics of the subject in evaluation, but gains pain, which could be portrayed as the main feature of the test itself. From this

³⁵⁷ *Op. cit.* DVD

³⁵⁸ Edward Peters, *Torture*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, p. 179.

perspective, torturers share, with the Doctor in *Macbeth*, the negative effects of their interpretative activity. They are, as Freud would say regarding Lady Macbeth, wrecked by success. The moment in which they fulfill the desire of annihilating the subject brings them both a short-term pleasure and an enduring pain, with which it is difficult to cope.

To conclude, it should be noted that in the aforementioned cases, the identification of what Eliot names the moment of fusion, which I would consider to be another important particularity for interpretative success, is always a justification, *a posteriori*, of something that happened before. From this perspective, although interpreters believe this discovery is of importance, the moment itself may never be fully understood, given that they end up determining the reasons that justify their particular interpretations of affairs. This does not mean, though, that these descriptions are necessarily erroneous. On the contrary. There seems to take place, in all of these modes of proof, a moment of intuition or insight that plays an important role in the determination of the proof's outcome and which, ultimately, helps to explain why some examiners are so much better than others. This insight, or conviction, is accompanied by education, which may appear in the form of experience, as happens with Madame Merle, or with specific training. Such preparation may teach interpreters to apply certain techniques, as happens with the polygraph or with torture, or may have the purpose of making them acquainted with methods used for the interpretation of literary texts. Techniques are thus used with the purpose of describing, translating or justifying each interpreter's insight. Consequently, there is a relationship between each interpreter's conviction, his education, the technology at his disposal, and experience.

This idea that a moment of fusion has been identified and the belief in the procedure as a way of obtaining the truth is, however, accompanied by the thought that interpretative success is always to be accomplished. Skilled interpreters may not see themselves as an exception to the rule, and assume that everyone following these technical procedures will be able to reach a similar outcome. Failure to distinguish skilled interpreters from those who follow a method but lack conviction sets the difference between accurate interpretations and determinations of affairs. These methods do indeed promote results, in the sense that

polygraph evaluations, torture procedures and the medieval ordeal require a sentence, whereas literary critics see themselves in the position of having to justify their beliefs about a certain book. Interpretation, for one explanation has been chosen among many, has been tamed, and the possibility of having indefinite multiple hypothesis is denied. In this validation of results, interpreters are thus able to put an end to intricate problems, therefore concluding their quest for certainty. Their personal cost for doing so, not to mention ethical problems deriving from the use of some of these methods, as seen, varies.

Final Remarks

Why do we put things together as we do? Why do we put ourselves together with just these things to make a world? What choices have we said farewell to? To put things differently, so that they quicken the heart, would demand their recollecting.

Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy The Day After Tomorrow*

In previous pages, the dichotomy between interior and exterior, inside *versus* outside, was often portrayed, and each interpreter's technique for understanding other entities has been depicted as a form of exteriorizing what these bodies appear to conceal. Such capacity, which for the purpose of this discussion may be designated as "mousetrapping," names Hamlet's ability to devise the pantomime, allowing him to sound Claudius's conscience, Glessner Lee's police investigators' method to observe and to point to what others failed to perceive, Cavell's philosophical questioning regarding the sources of his conviction, the use of the polygraph, the application of torture, among others. According to this perspective, to exteriorize is to bring something to light, a portrait Freud would find accurate. This exteriorization, however, has a public nature; Gilbert Ryle would deny the existence of such hidden interiority, maintaining that these interpreters are, in fact, studying visible bodily signs and determining a causal relation between those signs and a certain interpretation of affairs. Ryle would claim that these interpreters' main talent lies in their capacity to observe

others' public behavior, saying, and rightly so, that Hamlet's exercise consisted on the evaluation of Claudius's enraged face, that Lee's investigators scrutinize visible clues, and so on.

At this point, "mousetrapping" appears to designate two contradictory perspectives, which this text will attempt to reconcile, in its discussion of Freud's "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading," and Ryle's last letter to Daniel Dennett, whose PhD thesis he had supervised years before.

When asked to name ten good books, Freud states the following:

You ask me to name 'ten good books' for you, and refrain from adding to this any words of explanation. Thus you leave to me not only the choice of the books but also the interpretation of your request. Accustomed to paying attention to small signs, I must then trust the wording in which you couch your enigmatical demand³⁵⁹.

To the author, as the request is not accompanied by a detailed explanation, then its wording must be put on the couch so that the enigma may be solved (reading these words, one imagines Freud's interlocutor sharing T. S. Eliot's concern over the need to tame interpretation). Underneath this description lies the idea that requests, words, and body expressions are riddles waiting to be deciphered and that a causal explanation may be found for every symptom of one's concealed desires or fears. Small signs, those Freud regularly interprets in his patients, are the expression for what we are unable to acknowledge about ourselves, the body being sometimes a subject of its own mind. Trusting the wording of the request is considered a similar procedure to that of the interpretation of the body of a patient, a particularity that brings Dora's case to mind, as described in "Fragment of An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria". It is impossible to thoroughly explain Freud's famous characterization of the failure to treat Ida Bauer, the eighteen-year-old girl who ended her treatment eleven weeks after it had started. But one does not resist, due to its close relation with some of the aforementioned procedures, quoting his description of the analysis of the body's behavior,

³⁵⁹ Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading" (1907), in *Jensen's Gradiva and Other Works*, transl. James Strachey, vol. IX, Standard edition. London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973, p. 245-246.

especially as it illustrates Freud's causal understanding of symptomatic acts:

When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish³⁶⁰.

The author is exemplifying what has been portrayed as the somewhat difficult task of exteriorizing something out of someone's body. Freud is attempting to deal with the technical difficulties originated by patients' inaccurate descriptions of themselves and the problems tormenting them (thus, a fragment of analysis). Their conscious and unconscious repressions, the loss of memory or its falsification, makes the task of the physician rather difficult, which is why procedures to make thoughts emerge must be found (an ambition shared by the practices problematized in the thesis). In this case, observation is deemed the faculty that allows the understanding of each person's hidden secrets. To Freud, unlike some of the situations portrayed, such as Claudius's, these are cases in which the patient is not necessarily lying or concealing something, as body signs may unveil what the subject does not know or want to acknowledge about himself. This is the reason why the signs of nervousness that betray the silent patient may be analyzed:

I give the name of symptomatic acts to those acts which people perform, as we say, automatically, unconsciously, without attending to them, or as if in a moment of distraction. They are actions to which people would like to deny any significance, and which, if questioned about them, they would explain as being indifferent and accidental. Closer observation, however, will show that these actions, about which consciousness knows nothing or wishes to know nothing, in fact give expression to unconscious thoughts and impulses, and are therefore most valuable and instructive as being manifestations of the unconscious which have been able to come to the surface³⁶¹.

Things we do without knowing it, automatically, unconsciously or when distracted, those we tend to explain as being accidental or indifferent, are the expression of the

³⁶⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1905), in *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*, transl. James Strachey, vol. VII, Standard edition. London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973, p. 77-78.

³⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

unconscious, of its thoughts and impulses. As in the procedures discussed, the fact that the subject does not recognize them makes them valuable clues to understand one's behavior. To Freud, however, unintentional bodily signs and unintentional verbal enunciations (such as the slips of the tongue discussed in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*) have the same importance. Let me parenthetically mention that, from this perspective, one could consider the confession of the Greek slave under torture to be a slip of the tongue, which would be the reason why it was deemed more valuable than other testimonies. At the same time, Paul Ekman's theory about micro expressions, discussed in the first chapter, could at first sight be considered the modern account for these things we do without noticing, but to which a reason may be found. Despite eventual similarities between authors, two main differences should be mentioned: on the one hand, Ekman's method presupposes that with proper training one may look at another person's face and expeditiously determine a given expression. To Freud, however, the understanding of the behavior of the body takes place in therapy and must be interpreted in time:

For on that day she wore at her waist – a thing she never did on any other occasion before or after – a small reticule of a shape which had just come into fashion; and, as she lay on the sofa and talked, she kept playing with it – opening it, putting a finger into it, shutting it again, and so on. I looked on for some time, and then explained to her the nature of a 'symptomatic act'³⁶².

They [symptomatic acts] are sometimes very easy to interpret. Dora's reticule, which came apart at the top in the usual way, was nothing but a representation of the genitals, and her playing with it, her opening it and putting her finger in it, was an entirely and unembarrassed yet unmistakable pantomimic announcement of what she would like to do with it – namely, masturbate³⁶³.

The fact that Dora had never worn a necklace is seen as unusual behavior, to which a singular explanation may be found. This understanding that her conduct is unusual is merely possible due to the fact that previous sessions had taken place. On the other hand, to Freud, more importantly than saying that Dora is playing with her necklace is the attribution of a meaning to the action, a sense that the patient generally does not recognize and which may be found during therapy. Freud's interpretation of Dora's behavior has been exhaustively

³⁶² *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

³⁶³ *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

criticized, even though he considered it “very easy to interpret” (this is a case in which the pantomime being represented does not have an unmistakable value). Still, this example helps to illustrate how, for Freud and unlike Ekman, the symptomatic action is a symbol for something else. This is the reason why, in Freud’s case, although all may be analyzed and have a meaning, Rieff highlights how in his method: “it is not the thing itself, but a representation of it, that is being interpreted”³⁶⁴. For example, events, jokes and dreams are not to be considered in their original forms, but as daily events described by each of us or by patients in their sessions:

In this light, the endless stream of talk on which psychoanalytic treatment is carried becomes the opposite of a liability, as some have urged; the value of therapy is just its prolonged opportunity for the patient to formulate his emotion. Mediated as talk, emotion may be brought before the tribunal of interpretation and appeased³⁶⁵.

In therapy, every bodily sign, every intentional word and slip of the tongue may identify one’s visible or hidden intentions, emotions, concerns, etc., but without treatment, their meaning may be difficult to understand. Rieff is pointing to a discrepancy between the emotions we feel and our ability to formulate them. As said, time and a “stream of talk” are necessary for sentiments to appear before the patient and the doctor. If emotions are appropriately caught during therapy, then they appear before the tribunal of interpretation and may be pacified (a lesson Lady Macbeth would have benefited from). Another important distinction between Freud and Ekman (as well as procedures such as torture or the medieval ordeal), thus, lies in the fact that for Freud symptomatic acts acquire importance within a description, whereas for Ekman someone who flinches does it for an unequivocal reason, which the interpreter may immediately determine. It may now be understood how in psychoanalysis it is not the bodily sign itself, but its representation during therapy that gains significance.

A problem with this description lies in the fact that the causality of these symptomatic

³⁶⁴ Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist*, 1959. London: Methuen, 1965, p. 105.

³⁶⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

actions is prized as an expression of someone's subconscious, which at times ignores the possibility that some bodily signs may indeed happen without a reason. The idea that they may have a motive, although sometimes a concealed one, is predominant, even when Freud considers the possibility that "the existence of such an origin and the meaning attributed to the act cannot be exclusively established"³⁶⁶. The thought that the subject himself may not know the necessary causes for his troubles makes matters more troublesome to those attempting to refute such explanation of the appearance of bodily symptoms (something accentuated by the notion that a patient who does not accept his therapist' explanation may be resisting to treatment). This type of causal explanations may be extraordinarily persuasive and very difficult to object to, due to the fact that the analysis of every visible sign is understood as a representation of something that is well hidden in the recesses of the mind.

Freud's technique, his tribunal of interpretation, as Rieff names it, shares with other methods the fact that an important part of its procedures consists in the attempt to make proof appear. These cases differ from ordinary courts, in the sense that the tribunal is not devised to provide a verdict after the defense and the accusation present their cases, since the investigation and the sentence are frequently interchangeable. Often, those wishing to determine a state of affairs are those gathering the evidence, so repeatedly considered an attempt to tame interpretation. But, as seen, the understanding of proof depends on observation, the capacity to describe it, and the comprehension of a certain context. Freud's search for a meaning in each of his interlocutors' words exemplifies his interpretative method. Returning, once again, to the letter:

You did not say 'the ten most magnificent works (of world literature)', in which case I should have been obliged to reply, with so many others: Homer, the tragedies of Sophocles, Goethe's *Faust*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, etc. Nor did you say 'the ten most significant books', among which scientific achievements like those of Copernicus, of the old physician Johann Weier on the belief in witches, Darwin's *Descent of Man*, and others, would then have found a place. You did not even ask for 'favourite books', among which I should not have forgotten Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Heine's *Lazarus*³⁶⁷.

³⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of Analysis of a Case of Hysteria", p. 77.

³⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading", p. 245-246.

Interestingly, the author is interpreting his interlocutor's request as a literary critic would, analyzing several possibilities concerning the meaning of "good books" in order to determine a single one. Magnificent works are thus distinguished from the most significant, which, of course, include scientific achievements, and differ from one's favorites books. This categorization consists in the attempt to thoroughly define a term to then circumscribe its use, thus validating a given interpretation. More importantly, the questionnaire exemplifies what Philip Rieff characterized as Freud's capacity to make interpretation independent from a therapeutic use. Everything is put to its disposition – dreams, memories, day-to-day events, relationships, etc. –, as "the psychologically trained man (in or out of the therapeutic regimen) lives alert to the interpretative opportunity"³⁶⁸. Thus, Freud's reply to the questionnaire does not merely exemplify the task of a psychologist occupied with the attribution of intentions to signs, words or expressions, but, as said, a form of interpretation that has spread, and according to which all may be subject to analysis. For those accepting this description, we are constantly putting everything and everybody on the couch, searching for concealed causes in their visible actions (psychologists would be the specialists in the subject). This idea that all is subject to interpretation makes, as seen in previous pages, some interpreters look for entities or methods of analysis that allow them to reach accurate conclusions about something and to find entities which they consider to be touchstones to the comprehension of others.

Although Freud is not engaging in self-analysis, he does appear to be over-interpreting what could be considered a simple request, as well as his own reply to it:

I think, therefore, that a particular stress falls on the 'good' in your phrase, and that with this predicate you intend to designate books to which one stands in rather the same relationship as to 'good' friends, to whom one owes a part of one's knowledge of life and view of the world – books which one has enjoyed oneself and gladly commends to others, but in connection with which the element of timid reverence, the feeling of one's smallness in the face of their greatness, is not particularly prominent³⁶⁹.

In his decision to consider that the word "good" must be highlighted, Freud finds the

³⁶⁸ Philip Rieff, *Op. cit.*, p. 105.

³⁶⁹ Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading", pp. 245-246.

explanation for the riddling request. Notice how the procedure presents similarities with other methods portrayed in the thesis, in which quoting a passage was a form of giving it importance in a description. Choosing a term to define the request is a way of justifying Freud's uncanny choices. It would be interesting to question whether "good" has the value of the symptomatic actions previously portrayed, a word being unintentionally used and thus more valuable to the understanding of the request. Good books are thus depicted as being similar to a kind of friend, even though, when one ponders about it, this definition of a friend could appear peculiar and somewhat egotistical (those in which "the element of timid reverence, the feeling of one's smallness in the face of their greatness, is not particularly prominent").

Once the meaning of "good books" is determined, Freud claims to proceed to their enunciation: "I will therefore name such 'good' books for you which have come to my mind without a great deal of reflection"³⁷⁰. Two different explanations could justify this decision. On the one hand, listing the books without overthinking could better express his inner appreciation for them (as if it were a type of automatic writing). Therefore, choosing some books over others reveals things about Freud that he could wish to conceal, allowing his (hidden) mind to be made clear and interpreted by others. But such choice is equally representative of what he aims to show, which is ultimately the reason why he decides to enumerate some books and not others. At the same time, the assumption that his interlocutor is using the adjective "good" without a specific intention, that good could merely characterize relevant works, those one particularly likes or considers fundamental, is not contemplated. For Freud, although one may not have pondered about the term, it may nevertheless be representative (a presumption a polygraph examiner would find accurate, when concerning the register of emotions appearing in the charts).

Ten works are listed: Multatuli, *Letters and Works*; Kipling, *Jungle Book*; Anatole France, *Sur la pierre blanche*; Zola, *Fécondité*; Merezhkovski, *Leonardo da Vinci*; G. Keller, *Leute von Seldwyla*; C. F. Meyer, *Huttens letzte Tage*; Macaulay, *Essays*; Gomperz,

³⁷⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.

Griechische Denker; Mark Twain, *Sketches*. The first thing that comes to mind is the atypical nature of the list. After having been undecided between Homer, Shakespeare and the Greek tragedies, Freud appears to have chosen an eerie group of authors. Even in the case of Mark Twain, Freud opts for the *Sketches* instead of other most relevant books. Those knowing that the author used some of these works to write well-known essays, such as that on Leonardo da Vinci, could perhaps presume that good books for Freud are those useful as food for thought. The letter reaches its end with the conclusion that:

You have touched on something, with your request to name for you ‘ten good books’, on which an immeasurable amount could be said. And so I will conclude, in order not to become even more informative³⁷¹.

Freud recognizes that his interlocutor made him ponder about each choice, that he led him to discover things about his relation with the abovementioned books, and that this Questionnaire tells us things about him. Touching something, in this case, is not exactly portrayed as the result of a skilled activity (Freud’s description represents the request as a hunch, which, when properly interpreted, allows his interlocutor to obtain some knowledge about him). In the aforementioned methods or interpreters, however, to touch is often used to reveal the skilled activities of observing something, accurately pointing to it, and being able to insightfully describe it. In this case, “to touch”, or “to mousetrap”, would thus name the skilled interpretative activity conducted by Freud’s interlocutor, who, drawing on an insightful request, and equipped with the proper methods for comprehension, would retrieve the concealed meaning out of Freud’s list.

The discussion of different examinations in previous chapters could point to this use of the term, in which case the objection that these methods are indeed observing and commenting observable bodily proof is plausible. For example, if, for Freud, the interpretation of the list could help us discover concealed things about one’s self, Gilbert Ryle would say that the items do not allow us access into some internal part of our beings. The choices we make represent things we like for specific reasons, which is why pondering about

³⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 247.

them requires understanding and the act of describing the motives which lead us to them (that immeasurable amount of talk). “Internal” and “inner” are terms the author particularly dislikes, as may be perceived in his writings:

When Mozart was audibly and tentatively humming a new note-sequence, did his ‘mental’ intentions, tastes, ingenuities, patience, ennui, dodges, inventiveness, tactical and strategic savvy, etc. etc. not get exercised merely because (careless chap!) he was humming aloud and not as-if-humming in his head? Or can ‘mental’ cover things that are overt? And then does ‘Mentalese’ cover your and my chattings in English, calculating on the backs of envelopes, frowning, scratching our heads, toying with clay? (Incidentally, the idea of Fodor that we each do, or might, have our private “Mentaleses” (which Locke mildly rejects) is what L.W.’s ‘private languages’ offensive was an offensive on, though L.W. surely did not know his Locke. Knowing Russell would have been enough. Or his Fodor. But we are now in 1976!³⁷²

Ryle’s letter, the perfect counterpoint to Freud’s Questionnaire, comments a review on Fodor that Dennett had sent to *Mind*. Ryle claims to have liked it, even though, for reasons he has now forgotten, he is anti-Fodor. Ryle is rejecting, as described in his book *The Concept of Mind*, the assumption that we are vessels with hidden contents. For the author, bodies do not hold a hidden interiority, they do not contain one’s secrets and do not lead a separate life from that of the mind. In fact, mind and body are indistinguishable, i. e. there is no ghost inside the machine. This is the reason why there is no “inner life” and nothing going on in one’s head (thus, his refusal of cognitive psychology). Paraphrasing Ryle’s characterization of “mentalese”: if “internal” is being used to name non-external things and events merely because they are “imagined-as-heard-seen-uttered”, then Dennett, even though denying Descartes, is reproducing his notion of mental (i. e., what takes place in someone’s mind, such as mental images, soliloquies or humming a tune). Beliefs, desires, attitudes and intentions are not mental states, but a form of speaking about others. In his denial that “mental” covers things that are overt, Ryle strikes a cord, as chatting in English, calculating and, to what concerns us here, frowning, may not be described in Mentalese. The argument, made clear in Ryle’s writings, concerns the denial that frowning is something that takes place inside one’s head:

³⁷² Gilbert Ryle, “Letter to Daniel Dennett,” 22 Feb. 1976, *The Electronic Journal of Analytical Philosophy*, University of Louisiana, accessed 25 July 2011, <http://ejap.louisiana.edu/EJAP/2002/RyleLett.pdf>.

I hear and understand your conversational avowals, your interjections and your tones of voice; I see and understand your gestures and facial expressions. I say ‘understand’ in no metaphorical sense, for even interjections, tones of voice, gestures and grimaces are modes of communication. We learn to produce them, not indeed from schooling, but from imitation. We know how to sham them by putting them on and we know, in some degree, how to avoid giving ourselves away by assuming masks³⁷³.

In the section on “Emotions”, Ryle names and distinguishes feelings, moods, motives, inclinations, agitations, and so on. According to the author, we do understand things about others when we analyze their tones of voice and gestures, but we are able to make sense of what we see due to the fact that we have observed the way other persons behave. Physical signs do not represent interior feelings or streams of consciousness, but rather reproduce a learning process, according to which we mimic the reactions of other persons (we learn about anger, sadness, etc., by observing those emotions). Therefore, as seen in the second chapter, if a police investigator wonders whether someone is guilty, he should observe the suspect’s (public) behavior, to conduct a proper investigation, interrogate friends and family, search for political convictions, etc. In what we say and do lies the explanation to our actions. Ryle is, of course, right when he argues that most of the things sometimes described as being hidden are, indeed, visible. To observe, to ostensibly show something, to describe and to justify our thoughts are public forms of examination. Ryle denies, however, the possibility that we may conduct an inquiry regarding other persons’ inclinations (something which represents the problem our examiners attempt to solve):

I discover my or your motives in much, though not quite the same way as I discover your abilities. The big practical difference is that I cannot put the subject through his paces in my inquiries into his inclinations as I can in my inquiries into his competences. To discover how conceited or patriotic you are, I must still observe your conduct, remarks, demeanour, and tones of voice, but I cannot subject you to examination-tests or experiments which you recognize as such. You would have a special motive for responding to such experiments in a particular way. (...) The tests on whether a person is conceited are the actions he takes and the reactions he manifests in such circumstances³⁷⁴.

This passage puts the understanding of motives and abilities side by side, as both may be understood through the observation of someone’s behavior. In order to comprehend

³⁷³ Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, introd. Daniel C. Dennett, 1949. London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 111.

³⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

another person's inclinations I must pay attention to their words, actions and tones of voice; whereas to appreciate competences I may conduct a similar type of observation but, in addition to it, I am able to test skills. This capacity to devise a series of examinations in order to assess competences is something we do on a daily basis: understanding if someone has learned to read, write, calculate or cook, involves testing them and observing the results. Particular descriptions of the polygraph, however, contradict the thought that we may test others' abilities, but not their inclinations. Take, for example, a polygraph examiner wishing to realize whether a double spy is patriotic. Although the test's results are not without interpretation (they require the capacity to ask questions, to observe and to analyze the charts, as well as a certain amount of intuition) the examination may help to uncover things that the subject wishes to conceal. These may or may not be related with the examination, but are definitely inclinations. CIA polygraph examiners have argued that, in compulsory examinations to the Agency's employees, they have obtained more information about a subject's sexual inclinations and the use of forbidden substances than they have caught double spies. In such cases, the outcome of the test would not be the intended result, but it would be a way to test an inclination. Diplomats, spies, actors and, Ryle would say, hypocrites, are artful at deceiving others because they are trained to control and to feign emotions. But does the fact that they are able to mimic these sentiments, contrary to what Ryle maintains, point to a correlation between our feelings and their visible expressions?

But though agitations, like other moods, are liability conditions, they are not propensities to act intentionally in certain ways. A woman wrings her hands in anguish, but we do not say that anguish is the motive from which she wrings her hands. Nor do we inquire with what object an embarrassed man blushes, stammers, squirms or fidgets. A keen walker walks because he wants to walk, but a perplexed man does not wrinkle his brows because he wants or means to wrinkle them, though the actor or hypocrite may wrinkle his brows because he wants to appear perplexed³⁷⁵.

The author sustains that it is difficult to attribute causes to agitations, namely to assert that a certain agitation had an interior cause, such as an itch or a qualm, etc. The fact that these are not intentional actions (only actors and hypocrites wrinkle their brows to

³⁷⁵ *Op. Cit.*, p. 94.

appear perplexed) leads Ryle to consider that a causal relation may not be determined between anguish and the way a woman wrings her hands. The same happens with moods and feelings, in the sense that none may be described as motives and thus no causal explanation may be suited to portray them:

Feelings, in other words, are not among the sorts of things of which it makes sense to ask from what motives they issue. The same is true, for the same reasons, of the other signs of agitations. Neither my twinges nor my winces, neither my squirming feelings nor my bodily squirmings, neither my feelings of relief nor my signs of relief, are things which I do for a reason; nor in consequence, are they things which I can be said to do cleverly or stupidly, successfully or unsuccessfully, carefully or carelessly – or indeed to at all. They are neither well managed or ill managed; they are not managed at all, though the actor's winces and the hypocrite's sighs are well or ill managed³⁷⁶.

Ryle's thesis (which would be indeed a good objection to those who argue in favor of the use of torture and the polygraph) sustains that, if feelings are not intentional, then it does not make sense to describe them using the language of motives. If one is unable to manage bodily sensations and physical signs (instead of those deliberately faking them) then it makes no sense to claim that they appeared for a reason, that they were skillfully managed. The same can be said for other expressions that we apply to characterize activities in which attention is required. In this context we might hark back to Hamlet's mousetrap. Hamlet's way of testing Claudius is based on the assumption that the fact that these bodily signs are not intentional is precisely what makes them accurate. As seen in this case, a twinge, a wince, or a bodily movement reveals hidden intentions, feelings one does not wish others to discover or uncovers things one does not know. What Claudius can't manage in himself, Hamlet would say, is more truthful than what he controls. Although Hamlet would probably contradict the thought that body signs are always causal and unequivocal, the idea that none of them may be explained does not appear to be sensible. Reasons may indeed be credited to emotions (we do tend to find *a posteriori* explanations for feelings or emotions we did not at first know how to formulate). The fact that something is not intentional does not necessarily mean that a cause may not be determined in order to later explain it.

³⁷⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p.102.

Ryle himself provides the explanation we have been looking for, when he claims that when we look for the criteria we use to class bodily sensations such as a dull load in the stomach, if the pain is related to loss of appetite and nausea, then perhaps it is due to indigestion. So, Ryle is claiming that some bodily pains have a reason, an argument I would apply to the rest of the sensations, moods and agitations he was previously describing. As the author maintains: “The answer is that we learn both to locate sensations and to give their crude physiological diagnoses from the rule of thumb experimental process, reinforced, normally, by lessons taught by others”³⁷⁷. This perspective is in agreement with what has been portrayed in the thesis, in the sense that, as the author claims, bodily feelings are not self-explainable, we must test them, and find an accurate way to describe them. But the idea that we may discover causal explanations for them helps to consubstantiate the thought that they may indeed be justified.

Returning to Ryle’s refusal of the idea that we may test inclinations, the author maintains that sometimes an “*experimentum crucis*” may be needed in order to identify a hypocrite or a charlatan:

All that we need, though we often cannot get it, is an *experimentum crucis*, just as the doctor often needs but cannot get an *experimentum crucis* to decide between two diagnoses. To establish hypocrisy and charlatanry is an inductive task which differs from the ordinary inductive tasks of assessing motives and capacities only by being a second order induction³⁷⁸.

I would argue, although Ryle would most likely disagree with the thought, that these procedures are a form of conducting the experiment he is describing. We do learn to identify charlatans and hypocrites with experience, through observation and in time, and the task of assessing their motives reproduces the strategies we use with other persons. Still, skilled judges, experts in this type of determination, are more efficient than most of us. Part of their talent consists in the capacity to devise small tests that will lead them to correct assumptions, in their capacity to learn with experience, to be suspicious and to improve in time. In fact, Ryle’s argument about examiners is in accordance with this perspective: “It is a truism to say

³⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, p.101.

³⁷⁸ *Op. Cit.*, p. 165.

that the appreciations of character and the explanations of conduct given by critical, unprejudiced and humane observers, who have had a lot of experience and take a lot of interest, tend to be both swift and reliable; those of inferior judges tend to be slower and less reliable”³⁷⁹. Good observers are here portrayed as those who are critical but unprejudiced, who possess experience and take an interest (a feature which had not been described and yet is of extreme importance). In his distinction of unstudied *versus* guarded talk, Ryle characterizes the problem interpreters in this thesis are dealing with.

No sleuth-like powers are required for me to find out from the words and tones of voice of your unstudied talk, the frame of mind of the talker. When talk is guarded – and often we do not know whether it is or not, even in the avowals we make to ourselves – sleuth-like qualities do have to be exercised. We now have to infer from what is said and done to what would have been said, if wariness had not been exercised, as well as to the motives of wariness. Finding out what is on the pages of an open book is a matter of simple reading; finding out what is in the pages of a sealed book requires hypothesis and evidence³⁸⁰.

As the author maintains, we often are unable to determine the type of talk we are dealing with, which is why these sleuth-like qualities – and I argue that not everybody is in their possession –, are used to differentiate types of persons. Frame of mind, an expression Ryle uses often but which is never fully characterized in his book, stands for something the author would refuse to be interior. But in this sentence, as in others, frame of mind could be substituted for what our other exegetists would claim to be someone’s inner moods or intentions. In fact, despite themselves, Freud’s portrait of Dora’s public behavior and Ryle’s denial that sleuth-like powers are required for us to understand one another are very similar. Both would find, in a speaker’s signs of wariness, the explanation for what is said and done. At the same time, Ryle’s example of literature does not appear to be sensible in his argument that opening a book and reading its pages is sufficient for those wanting to describe it. It was seen, throughout the thesis, how to characterize the contents of a book also requires intuition, the formulation of hypotheses, and the gathering of evidence. At the same time, when the book is sealed, one may not understand what it is about, although we may indeed

³⁷⁹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 164.

³⁸⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 176.

formulate hypotheses. Reading books and identifying charlatans is, from this perspective, very similar.

Freud and Ryle thus seat on opposite sides of the table. Skilled interpreters such as Hamlet or Madame Merle, however, distinguish themselves in their capacity to understand when to attribute a causal intention to a bodily sign or a verbal enunciate. Comprehending and analyzing physical signs and words is placed at the same level, as both express things we wish to say or to conceal, which may be expressive or have no particular importance. Certain body signs do indicate moods and, just like some of the things we say, are important to help us understand one another. It is not uncommon for one to be hearing another person's words while observing his face in order to see if he means what he says. But this does not imply, as Freud claims, that certain physical expressions may always be understood as symptomatic actions pointing to hidden intentions. However, it does not indicate, as Ryle would maintain, that no justifications might be found for the things we do without a reason. Sometimes, I would say, we do have impulses and feelings that may be described as things that impel us to act, and the language of motives may describe not only our unintentional actions, but also our involuntary body signs.

If the several arguments in this thesis prove anything is that interpretative virtue is a mean between two extremes. All physical signs are interpretable, in the sense that they may be described and that we may find reasons for them. This does not, though, suggest that all body signs are causally motivated. And it does not entail that all physical expressions are riddles waiting to be solved, although we may later attribute a single sense to explain the appearance of someone's sweaty hands, and that meaning may prove to be accurate. Simultaneously, even though a unique explanation may determine the sense of a visible expression, body signs do not have an unequivocal value. The appearance of a certain emotion, by itself, tells us nothing about a certain situation. This is the reason, I would claim, why polygraph examiners attempt to register multiple records in a chart, which they afterwards complement with a detailed description, a result of the comparison of the physiological results with other type of data (such as the subject's movement on the chair). As

seen, only someone with lack of knowledge of the procedure would assert that the polygraph, as an instrument, is the center of the procedure. These interpreters' skills consists in learning how to differentiate relevant and irrelevant expressions, a somewhat similar activity to that of distinguishing what Ryle describes as unstudied and guarded talk.

At this point, a parenthesis is perhaps justified, in order to state that although these activities are interpretative techniques, their procedures and skills are not interchangeable, in the sense that a literary critic does not possess a torturer's skill, that a polygraph examiner is not a torturer, and vice versa. Torture, its repellent nature notwithstanding, is a technical endeavor, one which is learnt by trial and error, and in which skill is required. Saying so implies that, as in other specialized interpretative activities, some torturers are better than others in their chosen dismal chore: more able at obtaining confessions, distinguishing authentic testimonies from false ones and at punishing suspects without killing them (an important, but often ignored, aspect of torture). Under immense pressure, both before and during torture procedures, few are able to keep their thoughts to themselves (even if studies show that trained professionals and those with strong religious beliefs are able to resist torture for a prolonged period of time). Claiming that torturers may be deemed exegetists implies that truthful confessions may appear under torture. The talent to ask questions and to detect errors, the proficiency to know when to stop an examination, to determine for how long the suspect should rest before submitting him again to the test, is a highly specialized tool. Moreover, understanding when a suspect under torture is telling the torturer what he longs to hear, and distinguishing such fabricated testimony from a truthful confession also entails skill. It was equally seen how, like other interpreters, torturers acquire features of the test, be those feelings of pleasure or interpretative pains. Placing these procedures side-by-side with literary criticism does not equal saying that critics are torturing their texts (even if some criticism does appear to torture its authors), submitting them to the polygraph or to the ordeal. Each practice is in possession of particular skills, and the way each interpreter devises his mousetrap has been distinguished throughout the dissertation. These practices are, nonetheless, comparable in the sense that they are expert techniques that depend mainly on

the individual talent and knowledge of their interpreters. Although some of these skills may be taught (acquiring a vocabulary, following an explanation and, in the case of the polygraph and torture, learning the basic workings of the instruments), talent depends largely on the development of a group of personal capacities (Isabel Archer's case comes to mind). Gifted interpreters tend to be the exception and not the rule. This is the reason why using these modes of proof as a general method for comprehending the truth does not appear sensible. When in the hands of remarkable interpreters, they do allow for the resolution of interpretative problems, which otherwise could go on forever. But, unfortunately or not, talent is the exception and not the rule.

Maintaining that these techniques are a form of exteriorizing reactions/emotions does not equal saying that all emotions are alike, that they are interior, or that the exterior is always revealing someone's interior. "Interior" assembles hunches, dispositions, moods, as well as emotions and stuff we think but do not say. The term thus refers to things one feels and thinks, which may or may not be acknowledged at first, but that are not said out loud. These emotions or thoughts are invisible in the sense that someone will have to recognize or exteriorize them in order to give them meaning. The expression does not imply, therefore, the existence of an interiority such as that portrayed, for example, in Marjorie Garber's descriptions of the soliloquies in Shakespeare's plays. As seen in *Richard III* what Gloucester says to the other characters, to the audience, and his actions are equally visible, and may be similarly interpreted. And it does not refer to what Susan Orbach considers to be the concealed behavior of her body. I would claim that the moment she feels the sensation of wellbeing, the instant she finds a causal explanation for it and describes it to others, she has acknowledged something she did not know how to clarify and, thus, exteriorized it. Another example would be a hunch, which typifies something that may not be immediately explained, although one can later make sense of it in order to define it. Just like a physical sign, a hunch may impel us to act, and it is sometimes truthful, in the sense that it may help us reach an accurate conclusion about someone or something. A final illustration would be reading a book and knowing how to explain its story but, in Eliot's terms when discussing Wilson

Knight, failing to recognize its pattern. This would be to understand it's "interior", but failing to bring to the fore something in it.

The cases exposed sometimes appear to characterize the unexpected behavior of the body over the mind. This is the reason why a bleeding corpse, God's intentional object, was seen as an entity without a conscience but capable of accusing its killer (something, a Freudian would say, its mind would approve). At the same time, in Haley's therapy, the dislike of the subject's body for certain tasks appears to be a significant factor contributing to his cure, whereas examiners value unintentional body signs appearing in the polygraph charts. It was seen that to describe a certain situation or a person through the concepts of mind and body is not sufficient. In cases representing a self with a divided conscience, i.e. with a body trying to tell the truth about a crime its owner wishes to conceal, the mind seems to be a divided entity (part of it wishing to protect the liar, and part of it feeling remorse and desiring to accuse itself). In such situations, two minds and two bodies appear to have contradictory impulses, which the person (the third entity in this divine trinity) struggles to control. It was equally observed how several different selves evolve through time, cases in which the strict division between mind and body would not make sense. "Exterior", thus, is everything we may see and recognize: body signs, the polygraph charts, the confession obtained in torture, the visible signs of poison in a murder victim, the chosen quotations in a text, Richard III's soliloquies as well as public actions.

"Exteriorization" thus names the group of tests and techniques allowing exegetists to obtain a group of interpretable results, without which a verdict, a conclusion or a justification would not be possible. It names activities that have the ability to make visible things that previously appeared to be obscure. The way Glessner Lee's police investigators learn the technique of observation was, for example, deemed a form of exteriorization of what had been unseen. I would thus like to claim that "mousetrapping" is something similar to the technique of flexing the heel with a spur so that a horse starts to run. Spurring the horse (which in some methods would be equivalent to giving an incentive and in others to pure physical coercion) is a way of pressuring the subject so that physical reactions appear and

may be registered. Although spurring the horse makes him run, it does not presuppose a hidden interiority or the revealing of an inner self. Spurring the horse would be, if one wishes to use Ryle's terms, a form of *experimentum crucis*, but one that denies Ryle's idea that we may not test inclinations.

Observe how, if taken literally, the previous comparison is a faulty one, in the sense that all horses, and not merely those who are guilty, run when they are spurred. This would mean, when translated to our procedures, that these methods would have the capacity to initiate a causal reaction, but that the results of each response would not differ among themselves. And it was, of course, seen that this is not the case. "Mousetrapping", then, must be portrayed as a skilled form of pinching to which only some entities answer. Response varies immensely, depending on the form of testing and on its objectives. Every so often, interpreters wish to prove someone's culpability, in which case the test aims to identify a deceitful testimony, an inauthentic entity, or a charlatan. In other situations, authenticity is at stake. Identifying guilt and innocence, authentic *versus* inauthentic, could be deemed matching procedures, and in a certain sense, they are. What distinguishes them is the outcome they aim to obtain, whether spurring will make the guilty horse or the innocent one run.

Hamlet described it best when, during *The Mousetrap*, he sought Claudius' uneasy assent: "Let the galled jade wince, \ our withers are \ unwrung." (III, ii, 37-38). The Arden edition explains how "a galled jade is a horse which is rubbed sore, especially on the withers through an ill-fitting saddle"³⁸¹, and directs us to the OED, in which "wince" and "winch" are considered different forms of the same word. "Wince" is defined as "2. To start or make an involuntary shrinking movement in consequence of or in order to avoid pain, or when alarmed and suddenly affected"³⁸². The Arden notes also quote Lyly's *Eupheus*: "None will winch excepte shee bee gawled, neither any bee offended vnless shee be guiltie"³⁸³. Hamlet's characterization illustrates, obviously, his wish to deeply affect Claudius (whose guilt makes

³⁸¹ Cf. Harold Jenkins in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990, p.302.

³⁸² *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, vol. XII. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.

³⁸³ Cf. Harold Jenkins in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982. New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990, p.302.

him sore). But it also helps us redescribe the example of the horse, and to understand that sore horses have reason to move, as they are impelled to avoid pain. Hamlet's remark highlights, as do our examples, the idea that a skilled interpreter must possess both the ability to realize if a horse is sore, due to an ill-fitting saddle, and to apply pain in the tickling point, thus making him move. Granting "mousetrapping" is being defined as the application of a method to which the analysis of results follows, but causing the reaction and interpreting its outcome are not, as will be seen, different procedures.

Before continuing, notice that if "mousetrapping" may be seen as the equivalent to pinching somebody in order to obtain a physical reaction, although a polygraph examiner is under the impression that he is searching someone's inner soul, his capacity lies instead in the ability to start a causal reaction (which is a form of obtaining both physical signs and verbal enunciations). In this sense, "mousetrapping" is a technical procedure, synonymous to putting someone or something to the test, which sometimes implies conceiving a form of evaluation, and at other times entails the application of a method or a form of understanding. At this point, it could be argued that if the interpreter's aptitude consists in producing causal reactions, then the skill of analyzing these expressions does not appear to be required, in the sense that the interpreter does not need to distinguish causal signs from unmotivated ones (the test would do all the work). This is not, of course, the case.

Manipulating the stone, similar to the procedure of someone who wishes to test the quality of gold and uses quartz to do it, implies devising a test (or a series of tests), conducting it, observing and interpreting its results. The exteriorization described consists, thus, in the elaboration of a form of evaluation, which, as seen, varies immensely, and that allows interpreters to gather the proof they need in order to obtain an interpretation. Nonetheless, conducting the test and interpreting its outcome may not be thought upon as distinct activities, in the sense that devising the examination already entails knowing where to search, how to point ostensively, and in what way to judge the results obtained. Spurring the "galled jade" involves knowing how to ride, how to spur, when to do it, as well as being

able to predict how fast and in which direction will the horse run³⁸⁴. As seen, interpretation entails this set of activities (that are in fact one and the same), which require proper training and having conviction about given entities. This is the reason why “mousetrapping” something or someone is considered, more than making an entity visible, giving it importance in the context of a description. Although these procedures do seem to be a mode of obtaining visible reactions, they must be subject to analysis (i.e. to interpretation), for others may disagree with the results and validate them differently. Knowing how to spur the horse does not imply knowing one will win the race, even if that may sometimes happen. In

³⁸⁴ Dissent about the use of the whip in horseraces recently led the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) to regulate the number of times jockeys may use it. Let me briefly sum up the discussion. In “A Review of the use of the whip in Horseracing,” the BHA imposed that: “a maximum of seven strokes in flat races and eight over jumps may be applied, whereas the whip may only be used five times after the last obstacle or in the final furlong”³⁸⁴. Severe penalties were to be enforced on those failing to comply with this new regulation. Jockeys threatened to strike. Christophe Soumillon was initially forced to forfeit his winner's percentage after winning the Qipco Champion Stakes at Ascot, for stroking his mount six times in the final furlong; whereas Richard Hughes gave up his riding license in protest over the regulations.

Under pressure, on October the 21st, the BHA softened whip rules and lifted Soumillon's penalty. The new regulations read as follows: “jockeys can use the whip seven times in flat races and eight times over jumps; the additional restriction of a maximum of five strikes in the closing stages is lifted; jockeys exceeding the limit by one strike will be suspended, exceeding the limit by more than one strike will mean the jockey forfeits share of prize money”³⁸⁴. At first sight, these adjustments appeared to be a response to the jockeys' main objection regarding the limitations of the use of the whip in the final furlong. As jockeys need to push their horses on the final steps of the race, it makes no sense to regulate the use of the whip at this stage of the race. Although the BHA new policies would solve this problem, the issue is not yet solved, as jump jockeys threaten to keep protesting³⁸⁴.

The jockeys' main argument is of a technical nature. What appear to be sensible rules, such as “showing the horse the whip and giving it time to respond before hitting it” are, jockeys claim, of difficult execution during the race. In order to win the race, they need to be able to use the whip, and to do so is more often than not an intuitive act. Taking the time to ponder the number of times one has used the whip before reaching the final furlong may actually lead the runners to lose the competition. Jockeys are arguing that knowing when to strike, how and where to do it (e. g. the BAH regulations claim the whip arm must be above shoulder height) should be professional decisions, based on experience and on intuition. Resolutions such as these are, naturally, what makes jockeys professionals and sometimes winners.

The BAH's attempt to adjust the use of the whip by counting the number of times it is being used, by determining how, where and when to do it, is an attempt to reply to the jockey's technical arguments with a set of procedural advices on their own. It is also, of course, the reason why angry jockeys claim they are being fined on technicalities. Jockeys probably know best what to do in order to win a race, so claiming their skills will not be undermined by this new set of rules will only have the obvious effect of making them angry. The problem here is that an ethical discussion on animal's rights is being debated as if the matter were a technical issue. Animal Aid (and the BAH's report) present evidence that the use of the whip is harmful and that jockeys have abused it in the past (as seen in the first chapter the whip is one of oldest instruments of torture, and it is difficult not to notice the uncanny similarities between rule (D)37 – Whip Specifications – and regulations for torture instruments). When Animal Aid claims the whip should be banned, the argument is of an ethical nature, and it may not be refuted through the use of technical terms (a good illustration of this is the article “A jockey whipped me 'as hard as I'd hit a horse' and it didn't hurt”³⁸⁴). The BAH's attempts to rationalize the issue using the jockeys terms is, I suspect, bound to fail. The discussion should not be focused on whether and how does the whip work (it obviously does), or on the amount of pain it may provoke (reports prove horses are wounded), but on whether it is legitimate to strike a horse in order to win a race.

¹ “Responsible Regulation: A Review of the Use of the Whip in Horseracing”, British Horseracing Authority, September, 2011, accessed 26th October, <http://www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/WhipReview.pdf>.

² “BHA Announces Adjustments to Whip Rules”, British Horseracing Authority, 21 st October, accessed 26th October, <http://www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/>

³ Cf. “Anger over new whip rules leads to threat of protest at Towcester race course”, *Northampton Chronicle*, 26 October, accessed 26 October, <http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/local/anger-over-new-whip-rules-leads-to-threat-of-protest-at-towcester-race-course-1-3180688>.

this sense, a skilled interpreter may have accurate expectations regarding the consequences of his activity, but the result of the method is not determined *a priori*.

Let me add to this description of “mousetrapping” that the term names the practice (pornographic websites are particularly hospitable to this type of device) of launching a series of pop up ads which prevents users from leaving the webpage:

This practice is known as “mousetrapping” (or “selling exist traffic” in the industry), and a mousetrapped user who tries to leave a sexually explicit site is automatically forwarded to another such site. (...) Technically, mousetrapping refers to a process enabled by Java script (a scripting language for Internet browsers) in which the closing of one window automatically directs the user to another Web page. The second Web page can do the same, so that attempting to exist the second page spawns a third page, and so on³⁸⁵.

In this technical sense, “mousetrapping” is a way to lure the viewer of the site, so that he remains trapped and is unable to leave the page. One-time visitors will be bombarded with numerous banners and pay-per-click links (the presumption appears to be that the site will not be able to count with repeat visits from the same user, so it is more profitable to resort to deception). In this technique to entrap visitors, even though technical skill is a requirement and someone’s exterior is being revealed, the purpose is not that of discovering something or of testing others. More importantly, the algorithm is neutral towards his users, who are arbitrarily chosen. Once the first step has been given, every user is randomly ensnared, which is the reason this procedure differs from others previously mentioned. Remember how in the polygraph, for example, specific questions had to be devised in each evaluation: although the same general method was applied, each subject underwent a different inquiry.

Determining the truth in a nutshell is the capacity to find the entity, or the group of entities, capable of enlightening us, of being the starting point for a discussion. These tests do not allow us to obtain irrefutable facts, but they do begin a process that, if properly conducted, will allow for understanding. This is the reason why “mousetrapping” does not entail pinching someone arbitrarily, or in a random place. As mentioned, part of the

³⁸⁵ Dick Thornburgh, Herbert Lin, National Research Council (U.S.), Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Internet Content, National Research Council (U.S.), *Youth, pornography and the Internet*. National Academic Press, 2002, n. p.

interpreter's skill entails his conviction about where and how to make the scratch on the stone or to spur the horse. There are, as observed in the thesis, numerous differences between the aforementioned procedures and literary criticism, as critics do not generally need to formulate specific tests (even if a number of methods which are based on this assumption may be enunciated). Conducting an experiment, in the case of literary criticism, implies having an intuition and contrasting it with the text so that a group of conclusions may ensue. Talent is, as seen, perceived in the ability to select a series of quotations in a text, which exemplify the critic's thoughts, afterwards systematized in a justification. In literary criticism, highlighting a passage does not necessarily mean that it was previously hidden, but it does imply that a certain critic saw in it what others failed to acknowledge, that he gave it importance, and knew how to find a justification for it. Highlighting a passage implies making it visible to others, but also letting them understand the implications of such a choice in an argument. Disagreeing with previous analysis and being able to spot mistakes are equally important parts of a critic's professional activity.

It may now be perceived how, in this discussion of the existence of self-explainable proof, of entities capable of diminishing our uncertainties and golden sentences, importance is gradually given to a group of technical procedures and particular interpreters. Arnoldians are, therefore, skilled exegetists, those able to distinguish significant quotations, emotions and words, capable of giving a meaning to each person's behavior and enunciates. From this perspective, good interpreters, in possession of a series of particular talents, are those able to highlight meaningful signs, pointing to them, describing them and justifying the reasons for their claims. These interpreters and their methods tend to proceed by trial and error, gaining the evidence that will help them reach a certain verdict. This is the reason why better interpreters are more able at finding the truth, interpreting a text, understanding other persons' intentions. The skill of Arnoldians does not rely in the use of the method alone (as sometimes they wish us to believe), or solely in the capacity to produce a reaction, but in their intuition about someone, and the capacity to learn with experience. Being an Arnoldian, from this perspective, implies one has acquired a certain knowledge about himself and other

persons; that one's descriptions tend to be more accurate and to improve with time. "Mousetrapping" is not, consequently, the mere act of scratching the stone, but the ability to do so knowingly.

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