

**The Return of the Subject: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of A  
Selection of William Shakespeare's Plays In the Light of Julia  
Kristeva's Theories of the Mind**

**By**

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## Abstract

The present research deals with the application of Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories of the mind to a selection of William Shakespeare's plays. Kristeva's key psychoanalytic terms – the symbolic, the semiotic and the abject – are first elaborated in detail and are then applied to different situations and characters in the plays. The plays discussed in this thesis are *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew* for the comedy section, *Richard II*, *1 & 2 Henry IV* and *Coriolanus* for the English and Roman History section, and *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* for the Tragedy section. The reason for choosing the above plays is that I believe there is a gap of knowledge in this regard and no thorough research on this scale has been conducted up to this time. The intention is to discuss and explicate the moments in which the dramatic heroes undergo some unconscious-driven experiences that can be best explained by Kristeva's post-Freudian psychoanalytic approach. In short, what I am going to show in the present study is the psychoanalytic assumption that Shakespearean characters, forced by internal or external elements, leave the symbolic and take refuge in the semiotic. In such moments, the characters inevitably face the abject which is an archaic memory comprising the elements of enchantment and horror. The abject can be best described as the archaic memories of a distant past when the self had no border and was associated with the semiotic, a subject's harmonious beginning. In its early childhood, to become a subject, an individual breaks its semiotic ties and, by so doing, enters the realm of the symbolic which is associated with grammar and law. The symbolic awards a subject a distinct identity and helps it stay on the route to signification. Kristeva's understanding of the process of individuation is explained by her 'subject in process', a journey in which a subject always oscillates between the symbolic and the semiotic. The key point in Kristeva's psychoanalytic thought is that the semiotic does not fade away and hovers around a subject's border of identity and remains a constant threat for its symbolic identity. To remain immune from the annihilating forces of the semiotic, a subject has to remain vigilant and protect its borders of identity. My main goal in this thesis is to show that, in some particular situations in the plays, Shakespearean characters fail to remain vigilant and, inevitably, their subjects are exposed to the abject. In other

words, in moments of ambition, anger, love or fear, they surrender or take refuge in the semiotic and face the abject. Although Shakespearean plays have previously been approached by Sigmund Freud's (and some other major practitioners') theories, the application of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories of the mind gives the opportunity to approach the plays from a new perspective that would otherwise have remained unknown. Thus, the originality of this research lies in its extensive application of Kristeva's theories to the selected Shakespearean plays, theories that, although they derive from those of Freud, have the potential to shed light on those psychoanalytic aspects of the plays that Freud either neglected or left unfinished.

Key words: The symbolic, the semiotic, the abject, subject in process.

### **A Note on Verb Tenses Regarding Writings**

Literary texts create mental effects in the minds of their readers and, in the case of Shakespeare's plays, in the minds of playgoers watching them performed. To that extent, we may speak of the plays existing in a continuous present, being made and remade in fresh interpretations by critics and performers. It is reasonable then to refer to what Hamlet "does" rather than what he "did" in the play about him. Other writings such as literary criticism and theories of the mind have a more ambivalent relationship with history. We may want to refer to what Sigmund Freud's ideas "do" rather than what they "did", since the concepts he created have an ongoing effect in the world. Equally, for critics who are still alive it seems reasonable to refer to what they "argue" rather than what they "argued". But what about critics who have recently died, or those long dead? Is it right to say that Jacques Lacan "claims" or "claimed" that the unconscious is structured like a language? In order to cut through the competing principles at play if we try to overthink this problem, the present thesis applies a simple arbitrary rule: all literary works are written of using the present tense and all other works (critical, theoretical, historical) are written of in the past tense.



## Introduction

Elaborating on Samuel Johnson's remark regarding Shakespeare's method of invention, Harold Bloom stated that "what Shakespeare invents are ways of representing human changes, alterations not only caused by flaws and by decay but effected by the will as well, and by the will's temporal vulnerabilities" (Bloom 1999, 2). This notion of hybridity – of characters that are both types and individuals – complicates early modern drama and has steered readers and playgoers away from merely allegorical readings. In a major departure from his predecessors, Shakespeare makes his characters responsible for their flaws and does not blame fate or supernatural elements, even if his characters themselves use such excuses. For Shakespeare, the mind is a repository of powerful forces that shape life. Such forces can affect a human's will and are able to take control of our actions in times when we are weak and vulnerable. Thus, the early modern human being, as dramatized by Shakespeare, is a subject at the mercy of the powerful forces that originate in the mind and manipulate our actions. Each of Shakespeare's major heroes – Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, and Othello, among others – shows signs of a weakness that is brought about by a flaw in his character, symptoms which have their roots in minds. This notion of a character flaw Shakespeare got from Aristotle,<sup>1</sup> but the extended exploration of the psychological playing out of this *hamartia* was his own invention.

The study of Shakespeare's characters as if they are real people attracted considerable critical attention in the twentieth century, after three centuries of relatively uncontroversial investigation. At worst, thinking this way about Shakespeare is still in some circles considered a distinct critical fallacy that students must be taught to avoid. In a notorious example, A. C. Bradley imagined what Othello would think of King Claudius from *Hamlet* and what Hamlet would think of *Iago* from the play *Othello* (Bradley 1924, 175). Much reviled by certain literary critics, such critical hypotheses are in fact routinely entertained by actors preparing for roles, since in their craft it is widely considered

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<sup>1</sup> The notion is explained in detail by Aristotle in *Poetics* (Aristotle 1996).

essential to ask particular questions about personality that the plays do not themselves ask us to consider. What Lady Anne would do if Richard III seemed openly gay may for the actors be a distinctly pertinent question when preparing for a modern production in which this interpretation of Richard is to be offered.

In reply to Bradley's approach, L. C. Knights published a withering critique (1933) insisting that our responses to the words that Shakespeare actually wrote – not our hypotheticals about the characters we conjure from those words – offer the only valid bases for literary criticism. Knights's argument is vulnerable not only to the critique that what actors do with dramatic texts is relevant to literary understanding (not least because Shakespeare was an actor) but also to the objection that the creation of plausible literary characters requires authorial modelling of the human mind and that we are as entitled to enquire into those models as readily as we enquire in real human minds. If authorial creations are realistic, this may well be because they capture something of the mysterious workings of the human mind that psycho-analytic theory has subsequently thrown light upon.

“The answer to the question “why Shakespeare?”, Harold Bloom wrote, must be “who else is there?” (Bloom 1999, 1); indeed Shakespeare has achieved a unique position not only among the English-speaking writers but also among writers throughout the world. No other dramatist has been as influential as Shakespeare. His extant works – at least 38 plays (the count is rising), two narrative poems, and 154 sonnets – have been translated into all living languages in the world and have made a lasting impression on many countries' literature. This is the so-called ‘Argument from Centrality’, and it becoming a commonplace does not weaken its force. So many scholars have written on him and ample criticism has been applied to his works, making him the most widely discussed and critically analysed writer of all time. His plays have been performed on numerous stages and are being taught in many institutions in different languages.

Ben Jonson, though Shakespeare's rival dramatist and critical of his works at times, was perhaps the first writer who recognized Shakespeare's universalism, saying

that he “was not of an age, but for all time!” (Shakespeare 1623, b3). The tradition of praising Shakespeare’s universalism continued for years after his death and men of literature such as Samuel Johnson have referred to him as the most original literary craftsman of all time beside Homer (Bloom 1999, 2). In Johnson’s view, what has made Shakespeare so great and popular is his gift for invention, an extraordinary trait that gave him an edge over his contemporaries. Although the idea of western character, Harold Bloom opined, dates back to classical times, the concept of human personality, with its mind-driven fluctuations, is a Shakespearean invention (Bloom 1999, 4). Shakespeare was a master of inventing different capacities of human mind, which was a gift that “has taught us to understand human nature” (Bloom 1999, 2). In this view, Shakespeare’s mastery in the illumination of human experience and his ability to summarise the range of human emotions in profound and eloquent language gives the readers and spectators the chance to get to know the characters’ nature. Shakespeare’s depiction of human nature has supplanted the Bible’s religious (or supernatural) conceptions of human deeds with their providential roots. Indeed, as Bloom continued, “he has become the first universal author, replacing the Bible in the secularized consciousness” (Bloom 1999, 10). As the Bible declares God to be at the centre of the universe, Shakespeare, alternatively, puts humankind there and aims to convince his readers that our deeds are governed by impulses deeply rooted in our minds.

Shakespeare’s method of characterization gives the impression that he, at least implicitly, was familiar with the modern notions of psychology. Shakespearean characters more often make decisions based on their intuitions and emotions rather than on their cognitive reasoning, which gives Shakespeare’s approach a transhistorical and universal colour. The most important decisions of Shakespearean characters are made in their moments of anger, madness, love or jealousy, by minds far removed from the processes of logic and sound reasoning. Shakespeare skilfully depicts such moments in his characters’ deeds and gives us ample clues that their flaws are deeply rooted in unstable faculties. In this way, Shakespeare can be called a proto-Freudian, since most of the psychoanalytic concepts can be found at work in his plays. One can call Shakespeare’s dramatic characterization an important precursor of psychoanalysis

because many instances in his plays anticipate Freud's theories. As an example, "primal ambivalence", as Bloom put it, "popularized by Sigmund Freud, remains central to Shakespeare, and to a scandalous extent was Shakespeare's own invention" (Bloom 1999, 11). This basic state of mixed feelings, associated with contradictory ideas regarding people or things, can be observed in many Shakespearean characters' responses to situations. Examples are Coriolanus', Hamlet's and Othello's respective relationships with Rome, mother and wife.

Conversely, Freud himself was inspired by Shakespeare when he started reading his plays in English in childhood. Freud drew on Shakespearean psychology for his theories of human nature and considered Shakespeare a master at depicting a human state of mind, especially in the character of Hamlet. The play *Hamlet* has attracted a great deal of psychoanalytically inflected criticism and for this reason it will not be considered in detail in this thesis, but because it provides a way into Freud's impact upon our analysis of Shakespeare's plays (and his impact upon Kristevan theories of the mind), some discussion of Freud's view of Hamlet is pertinent at this point. In Freud's terms, Hamlet can be regarded as a neurotic, anxious person who suffers from repressed sexual wishes that surface in surprising ways. Hamlet might be the best example of a person living in a state of, as John Keats put it, "negative capability, that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (Rollins 1958, 193).

In "The Oedipus Complex As An Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive", Ernest Jones, Freud's disciple and biographer, elaborated on the cause of Hamlet's uncertainties and hesitations using psychoanalytical theories. "The central mystery", he wrote, "namely the cause of Hamlet's hesitancy in seeking to obtain revenge for the murder of his father, has well been called the Sphinx of modern Literature" (Jones 1910, 74). Jones considered the obsessed Danish prince a typical modern psychoanalytic case and thought that "the particular problem of Hamlet [...] is intimately related to some of the most frequently recurring problems that are presented in the course of psychoanalysis" (Jones 1910, 73). The Oedipus complex is the most

obvious Freudian concept that can be applied to Hamlet due to his unconscious rivalry with his uncle, a father substitute, over his mother. Put simply, Claudius has done what Hamlet unconsciously wanted to do: kill Hamlet Senior and thereby obtain sex with Gertrude. Hamlet's unsuccessful attempts to possess his mother and protect her from a much more powerful and virile figure best exemplify Freud's notions regarding a subject who has not undergone a normal Oedipal separation. The plausibility and critical success of Jones's reading of the play – which strongly influenced Laurence Olivier's 1948 cinematic adaptation – are powerful evidence that Shakespeare was a psychoanalytical thinker *avant la lettre*.

*Hamlet* explains the core of Shakespeare's philosophy regarding human nature: that individuals' acts and behaviours are always under the influence of the contents of their minds. Looking through a Freudian lens, one can say that Shakespeare had an implicit knowledge of the unknown and inaccessible part of the human mind: the unconscious. The cause of Hamlet's jealousy, hatred and madness (whether feigned or real) must be sought in that unreachable section of his mind that is the repository of his repressed wishes. For the same reason, Hamlet is unable to execute what he has in mind and, to put it in Jones's words, is "fundamentally incapable of decisive action of any kind" (Jones 1910, 76). The main cause of Hamlet's vacillation, in a Freudian perspective, is an ongoing and unfinished battle between different types of psyche, the symptoms of which can be seen in his acts and speech. Several thinkers before Freud had written on Hamlet's temperamental behaviour, the most notable of whom is Samuel Taylor Coleridge who called the issue "an overbalance in the contemplative faculty" that makes Hamlet the creature of meditation and denies him the power of action (Hawkes 1959, 164). This overbalance in the mind, Coleridge continued, results in a morbid sensibility, "producing the lingering and vacillating delays of procrastination; and wasting in the energy of resolving, the energy of acting" (Hawkes 1959, 165). But it was Freud who produced an extensive analysis of Hamlet's obsessive moods and inability to strike a balance between his inward abnormalities and outward deeds. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud called Hamlet a neurotic and repressed subject who is suffering from the inhibiting consequences of what happens inside him (Freud 2010g,

282). His behaviour throughout the course of the play, to put it into Freudian terms, might be quite similar to what is presented in the ‘manifest dream’, as opposed to the unreachable contents of the ‘latent dream’. “The Prince in the play”, as Freud continued, “who had to disguise himself as a madman, was behaving just as dreams do in reality; so that we can say of dreams what Hamlet said of himself, concealing the true circumstances under a cloak of wit and unintelligibility” (Freud 2010g, 452). Freud believed that the play is built around Hamlet’s hesitations over fulfilling the task of revenge of his father’s murder by his uncle (Freud 2010g, 282), which has its root in the Prince’s obsession with his Oedipal stage.

Jones remarked that Hamlet’s hatred toward his uncle is much more complicated than it appears (Jones 1910, 100). “He of course detests his uncle”, Jones argued, “but it is the jealous detestation of one evil-doer towards his successful fellow” (Jones 1910, 100). Hamlet is torn between envy and hatred of his uncle, who is both rival and role model. Basing his argument on Freud’s belief concerning the Oedipus Complex theory, Jones remarked that there is an unconscious force that does not let Hamlet put the thought of murdering his uncle into practice, “for the more vigorously he denounces his uncle, the more powerfully does he stimulate to activity his own unconscious and repressed complexes” (Jones 1910, 101). What Claudius has done is in fact the fulfilment of Hamlet’s childhood unconscious wish in removing the rival father and possessing the first object of love: the mother. Thus, Hamlet’s initial hesitation and subsequent failure in committing the act are due to the Freudian psychoanalytic assumption that his uncle managed to do an act that Hamlet himself was not able to perform in infancy. This internal conflict within Hamlet prolongs Claudius’s life to almost the end of the play.

Freud’s theories and his terminology were developed and refined over the course of his career, and notions that were dominant in his early explanations of mental illness are almost entirely absent in the final works. The broad outlines of Freud’s changing ideas and concepts can be had from Terry Eagleton’s summary in *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Eagleton 2005, 151–93). For the present purposes, in which Julia Kristeva’s further development of Freud’s ideas is the focus, the changes in Freud’s thinking over

his career may be set aside as I sketch his core ideas. As far as the application of his psychoanalytic terms was concerned, Freud found Shakespeare's plays the most amenable among works of literature. Freud's notions of the 'id', 'ego' and 'superego' can find their locus in different Shakespearean characters' minds. The id is the instinctual and primitive drive of one's psyche, deeply rooted in his unconscious (Freud 2011, 10). It is the repository of some very basic (also taboo) components like libido and Thanatos, which are the sexual and aggressive instincts, respectively. Forming at childhood, the id does not develop as the person grows up but rather keeps its infantile characteristics, so that it is not affected by reality and the logic of life. It is based on the pleasure principle, an instinctual need that, regardless of any consequences, requires immediate gratification. During adulthood, the sexual demand can be transferred to other objects – demand for power and dominance, for instance – and make the individual violate social norms and standards. The id, if uncontrolled, can make a beast out of a human and lead it to its destruction.

The ego, Freud wrote, is “that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (Freud 2011, 14). So, as Freud defined it, the ego acts as the mediator between the instinctual id and the external real world. In other words, contrary to the chaotic and totally unreasonable id, the ego is rational and acts according to the reality principle, which is the mind's potential to assess the reality of the external world in order to moderate the individual's actions. The ego, like the id, seeks pleasure, but with the difference that it anticipates and avoids trouble on its road to obtain pleasure. It is always concerned with devising a realistic approach to please the subject without any consequent pain and harm. However, on many occasions, the ego will not be a match for the headstrong id and the only thing it can do is to show the right path and wait. Freud, in a famous analogy, compared the ego and the id to rider and horse: “like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse” (Freud 2011, 15).

Developing in an infant between the ages three to five years, the superego is the ethical component of the personality and is responsible for providing a set of moral standards for the ego's operations. The moral standards of the superego are transmitted

from the traditions of the family and the surrounding society and, if it is successfully formed, it tames aggressive and inappropriate impulses. At the same time the ego is persuaded to pursue moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones, which is a kind of manipulation that can put the ego on its path to perfection. The conscious aspect of the superego has the quality to punish the ego whenever the latter gives in to the id's demands, causing the subject to experience feelings of guilt. The superego's ideal aspect, on the other hand, sets up an imaginary picture of how one ought to be in order to secure a proper and acceptable place for itself in the society.

In Freud's view, Shakespeare was the best example of an early modern writer who managed to create characters who were at the mercy of the three agencies discussed above. Specifically, he referred to Hamlet as a subject who, because of id-ego-superego confusions, has arrived at a very critical situation: neurosis. Contrary to the normal repression in which what is repressed (the id) is under control of the force of repression (ego and superego), "in the neurotic", Freud wrote, "repression is by way of failing; it is unstable, and requires ever renewed effort, an effort which is spared by recognition" (Freud 1960, 147). In such an unstable kind of repression, different aspects of human weakness can be depicted and, consequently, analysed. To push the theory a little further, as Freud put it, "it is only in the neurotic that such a struggle exists as can become the subject of drama; but in him also the dramatist will create not only the pleasure derived from release but resistance as well" (Freud 1960, 147). Individuals who get affected by such psychopathic states become enthralled to id-run impulses that have their roots in early childhood. Such subjects experience the return of the id, the horror, which chooses to annihilate their subjectivity. Dramatic works having such psychically disturbed characters are ideal cases for psychoanalysts such as Freud.

"The foremost modern drama of this kind", Freud suggested, "is *Hamlet*, which deals with the theme of a normal man who, because of the particular nature of the task enjoined upon him, becomes neurotic – a man in whom an impulse hitherto successfully repressed seeks to assert itself" (Freud 1960, 147). What was repressed a long time ago continues to put Hamlet's subject under pressure by its threatening forces and, thus,



affects his behaviour. His neurotic impulses throughout the play make him involved in a constant ambivalent relationship with his mother and her current sexual possessor, which is a process that ultimately leads to his madness. The recalcitrant force that thrives in Hamlet haunts his unfinished subject and makes his identity vulnerable in the real world. Hamlet, Freud suggested, can be regarded as the ultimate example of an individual who is the victim suffering from the return of the repressed desire that is deeply rooted in his unconscious and which belongs to the early stage of his individual development. In Freud's opinion, all of us are able to identify ourselves with Hamlet because we can find many similarities between our unconscious desires and his (Freud 1960, 147). Thus, "it is easy for us to recognize ourselves in the hero" (Freud 1960, 147) for he is one of us, a universal figure. As modern individuals, we find ourselves in him because Shakespeare injects some innate, unchangeable and universal human traits and characteristics in him that we trans-historically and trans-culturally recognize. Shakespeare can be regarded as the first early modern dramatist who, albeit implicitly, taps into an important aspect of human mind: that it is responsible for most of our (ab)normal behaviours and misdeeds throughout our lives.

A great deal of criticism has already been expended upon Freudian interpretations of *Hamlet*, and whilst there may be more to say on this, my focus in this thesis is Kristevan theories of the mind and what they might tell us about behaviours and impulses at work in Shakespeare's plays. The case of *Hamlet* and its interpretation in psychological terms is offered briefly here for two purposes: i) to introduce some of the key psychological ideas upon which Kristeva built, and ii) to illustrate the claim that theories of the mind first codified three centuries after Shakespeare was writing can nonetheless illuminate his plays. For the second of these two purposes, it must be accepted that using Freud to read Shakespeare is not anachronistic and that, as a corollary, there is some force to the claim of Shakespeare's universalism – a claim arising from his insight into the structure of the human mind – that was first made by Jonson in the 1623 Folio.

It is also worth bearing in mind that, because Shakespeare writes by animating dramatic characters, his plays have a seemingly endless capacity to be psychoanalytically reinterpreted; thus, they will not be reduced to a single, though dominant, approach. For this reason, we may usefully turn to the second wave of psychoanalysts who, although considerably influenced by Freud, managed to alter the Viennese scholar's theories and produce their own views that build upon his. Among such psychoanalysts, Kristeva's psychoanalytic views are especially applicable to many of Shakespeare's plays in ways that offer opportunities for critical originality. Kristeva, a distinguished philosopher who taught herself psychoanalysis, has undergone a long journey in this subject and has made many outstanding explorations and discoveries in the way the human mind works and how it affects our personality. Owing a great debt to Freud, Kristeva managed to ponder many specific psychosexual aspects of a human's mind that Freud either neglected or left unfinished. Kristeva's contribution to psychoanalysis, explained in detail in Chapter One, has opened a new way to approach works of literature that would otherwise remain unknown.

As we shall see, Kristeva offers us a new way to think about narrative techniques and to see that Shakespeare has what we may call an anti-symbolic method of story telling. Her account of the abject in the formation of human personality allows us to see subjectivity as an ongoing process rather than as a fixed feature, as ideas derived ultimately from Aristotle would have us think. The Kristevan approach to inner consciousness is a radical break with previous models and it helps us explain the recurrent phenomenon of Shakespeare's characters seeming to be in danger of collapsing back into ways of relating to the world that were dominant in early childhood and that were – as the ego would have it – long since abandoned.

I want to prove and maintain in this thesis that Shakespeare was the first writer to create such a modern human. Reading Shakespeare's plays, one can arrive at this important psychological notion that he understood his individual characters' inner demons and was, of course, an expert in expressing them in writing for the theatre. The psychoanalytically approachable characters in his major plays are not possessed by the

demon of the clerical phantasy, as was thought during the Middle Ages,<sup>2</sup> but are manipulated by agencies inside their minds. After explaining the inner demon's potential detrimental effects on individuals' minds in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud remarked that, "the demon's vengeance must be averted" and that one must always "beware of the wrath of demons!" (Freud 2004, 28). In "A Seventeenth Century Demonological Neurosis" Freud suggested that the demons inside one's body "are bad and reprehensible wishes, derivatives of instinctual impulses that have been repudiated and repressed" (Freud 2010e, 3996).

The repressed instinctual impulses are responsible for making the great dramatic heroes experience horror that would form such a crucial part of Kristeva's explanation of the psyche, thus driving them to the verge of mental breakdown. Freud, however, fails to give a detailed account of the origins of such impulses and here Kristeva's theories aid the critics in unpicking some of the more complex issues in her theories of the mind. Considering Shakespeare's writings in the light of Kristeva's theories can help the reader and playgoer better understand Hamlet's obsession with his mother's second marriage, Lear's division of his kingdom among his daughters, Macbeth's manipulation by Lady Macbeth, and Coriolanus' ambivalent relationship toward Rome and his mother. According to Kristeva, we must analyze an important phase that exists prior to Freud's Oedipal stage, a time when the little child is associated with its mother. Although, as Marvin Bennett Krims put it, "Shakespeare rarely gives us a glimpse of his characters' childhoods" (Krims 2006, 143), the literary critic can, like a psychotherapist and by the help of the characters' behavioural symptoms, excavate deep into their unconscious minds as depicted in their words and deeds and thereby discover motivations that would otherwise be impossible to grasp. Thus, a reader familiar with psychoanalytic theories may construct a kind of dramatic childhood for the characters based on what can be

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<sup>2</sup> Freud was of the opinion that "we merely eliminate the projection of these mental entities into the external world which the middle ages carried out; instead, we regard them as having arisen in the patient's internal life, where they have their abode" (Freud 1981b, 3996).

grasped about them from their words and deeds in the plays. Kristeva completed Freud's theories by adding her own view that the repressed wishes are in fact an adult person's semiotic memories of a pre-oedipal period of infantile association with the mother. The semiotic, which rejects social rules and standards, is cast off (in Kristeva's terms, abjected) by the little child at the Oedipal phase for the sake of identity acquisition. The semiotic, however, does not leave an adult subject alone and hovers around the borders of identity in the form of abject forces. These forces are perpetually threatening and wait for a flaw in an individual's identity in order to attack with their overwhelming forces.

This thesis will show that some Shakespearean characters, in rare moments of their dramatic lives, face the forces of the abject. The abject is the archaic memory of a love object with whom an adult subject was associated and unified, in a strong tie that does not break after years of separation. The plays considered in this thesis have been previously analysed by Freud's psychoanalytic theories that fail to consider the important psychoanalytic notions that Kristeva developed. In short, we can do psychoanalytical literary criticism more effectively with Kristeva's help than by Freud's lights alone. I have had to be selective, choosing ten plays across three genres: comedies, English and Roman history plays, and tragedies. I will conduct a Kristevan psychoanalytic investigation of them. Each chapter will consider plays from a specific genre and highlight those aspects of the plays that are best explicated by an application of Kristevan theories. I offer here a brief account of the approaches taken in my thesis and explain the reason behind my choices of theory and plays.

Chapter One gives a detailed account of Kristeva's contribution to psychoanalysis in the context of some contemporary philosophical and psychoanalytic theories. I elaborate on Kristeva's seminal views in her theories of semanalysis and highlight the notions which differentiate her from her predecessors. I analyse some philosophical views of Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Bataille that had an important role in forming Kristeva's philosophical and psychoanalytic ideas. The psychoanalytic background of Kristeva's theories is analyzed in detail and the two major psychoanalysts that are discussed are, necessarily, Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

The aim in this section is to highlight the main psychoanalytic notions that helped Kristeva to devise her key psychoanalytic terms. Then I turn to the question ‘why Kristeva and Shakespeare?’. While referring to some of Kristeva’s remarks regarding the applicability of her key psychoanalytic terms to great works of modern literature, I show that her theories are relevant to early modern literature as well. As Shakespeare’s works have previously been read using Freud’s and some other major psychoanalysts’ theories, I argue, it is to Kristeva that we must turn in order to develop further our literary readings regarding theories of the mind. I illustrate what I call Shakespeare’s anti-symbolic method of history telling with the major emphasis on his resisting the prevalent and dominant Tudor and Stuart doctrines in his plays. The intention here is to illuminate some aspects of Shakespeare’s craftsmanship which was sometimes in opposition to the spirit of his age. In short, I will prove in this section that, like Kristeva’s notion of the abject itself, Shakespeare’s writing style possesses some anti-symbolic qualities that challenged political and social norms and standards.

Chapter Two deals with my three selected comedies: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *As You Like It* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The reason for choosing these plays is that Kristeva’s theories regarding the semiotic, the symbolic and the abject are best suited to them. I elaborate on the main characters’ psychological situations in these plays and illuminate some rare mental experiences that resemble what Kristeva describes as a subject’s encounter with the abject. In the first two plays, the focus is on the main characters’ fleeing to the forest in order to escape the harsh realities of the world outside it, which flight provides a chance to test Kristeva’s theories regarding the semiotic and the symbolic and apply them to the two contrasting settings in the plays. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the flight is, as it were, from plain meanings and definitions: it is when Petruchio and Katherine undertake that flight that the symbolic is resisted by the forces of the abject.

Chapter Three applies Kristeva’s theories to three English history plays from the second tetralogy – *Richard II*, *1&2 Henry IV* – and *Coriolanus* from the Roman history plays. In the first three plays, the main focus will be on Richard and Henry’s obsessions

with securing their identities against outside threats, which aspect of the plays invites the application of Kristeva's notions regarding the threatening nature of the abject. This is explored through the changes that Shakespeare has made in his historical sources, the prose chronicles of Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall. Shakespeare's departures from the main sources add some abject qualities to his plays and make them resist the prevalent and dominant Tudor and Stuart doctrines of kingship. In reading *Coriolanus* via Kristeva, we see his abjection of the city of Rome, and the mother figure, for the sake of an independent identity. The absence of a strong father gives rise to the presence of a dominant mother, which is an important aspect of Coriolanus' life that affects his identity development.

Chapter Four is on three tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Examined through a Kristevan psychoanalytic lens, one can say that by falling desperately in love with Juliet, Romeo becomes the target of the strong force of desire and loses his identity. By the same token, in turning her back on her family's rules and preferences Juliet resists the symbolic and embraces the semiotic. In relation to *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, I argue that Shakespeare was aware of the inner demons and the horror residing inside humans, which allows me to compare this aspect of his dramaturgy with the demonic characteristics of the abject. The inner demon in *Macbeth* shows itself in the form of a queen who persuades him to destroy the symbolic and pushes him to commit the horrible acts throughout the course of the play. At the end of the play, *Macbeth*, to a great degree, resembles what Kristeva calls horror that must be exterminated for the sake of the society's identity. *Lear* becomes aware of the recalcitrant demon in his body after he banishes Cordelia and is then mistreated by his other two daughters. The demon inside him does not leave him alone and, due to its abject qualities, pushes him toward madness.

I conclude in this research that Shakespeare was able to make sense of the demons that were deeply rooted in his characters' minds and that to a remarkable degree he preempted the theories of the mind presented much later by Kristeva, just as he did those of Freud. It is now a critical commonplace to apply Freudian theories of the mind to Shakespeare's plays, and the originality of my thesis lies in its demonstration that

Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories are at least as powerful as the critical tools given to us by Freud. There are in the Anglophone tradition no book-form studies of Shakespeare in the light of Kristeva's ideas. Katherine Woods's unpublished PhD thesis (2013) draws upon Kristeva's ideas in various places, but with a specific focus on the early modern dramatic stock character of the witch that distinguishes it from the present study. A number of journal articles and chapters in collections of essays bring together certain aspects of Kristeva's thought with the study of Shakespeare's plays and these are addressed throughout this thesis as their ideas intersect with the present author's. Overall, however, Kristeva's work remains relatively neglected in professional literary criticism. Julia Kristeva, I assert, should stand alongside Sigmund Freud as our best two guides to the exploration of the human mind through the medium of dramatic performance.

## **Chapter One. Kristeva on Shakespeare: Heterogeneous In Appearance, Homogeneous In Outcome**

### **Introduction**

Julia Kristeva, born on June 24, 1941, is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, psychoanalyst, feminist and novelist, famous for her seminal post-structuralist theories challenging the traditional notions of identity. While a postgraduate student at the University of Sofia, she was awarded a Charles de Gaulle research fellowship that enabled her to continue her studies in France, an opportunity that served as a focal point in her professional life. Her entering Paris coincided with the new post-structuralist thought that was prevalent at the time, and was making its way into the field of humanities. Influenced by Roland Barthes, Lucian Goldmann, and Émile Benveniste, she embarked on pursuing her interest in linguistics and managed to defend her book-length thesis, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, in 1974.

Her later writings, however, cover a wider range of subjects. During the course of her academic research in Paris, Kristeva found a unique and profound approach to different aspects of humanities by making links between linguistics, philosophy and psychoanalysis. “In each of these fields”, wrote Rachel Widawsky, “she has questioned established assumptions while grounding contemporary theories within the broader context of the Western cultural heritage” (Widawsky 1999, 169). The nature of Kristeva’s interdisciplinary thought, with its extensive exploration of the human mind, took its lead from the edifices of a variety of different subjects. The psychoanalytic terms she is now famous for – the symbolic, the semiotic, the abject, and the chora – are the outcome of her journey among many disciplines, a fact that enabled her to initiate and develop the concept of intertextuality in the French academic canon. Kristeva advocated the intertextual idea that words and definitions do not have fixed referents and could only become meaningful relative to other words and experiences, which is an approach that challenged Saussure’s semiotics and its emphasis on the presence of meaning within the



structure of the text. Where Saussure's theories supposed the transmission of meaning from writer to reader by a text's relationship to a body of rules and conventions, Kristeva's intertextual approach suggests that meaning is mediated through codes revealed to the writer and reader by other texts. "Kristeva's polylogous understanding of the text and especially her rereading of literary works", as Birgitte Huitfeldt Midttun put it, "soon brought her into conflict with the structuralist establishment in France at the time, and through this, she became one of the groundbreaking theoreticians of the French poststructuralism" (Midttun 2001, 165). Kristeva's poststructuralist approach to literature does not limit itself to a single and closed meaning but looks for the many interpretations available for any given text. Her innovative approaches to literary works of different genres have become the subject of many books and articles throughout the world, making her a popular and widely read intellectual figure worldwide.

I will first give an account of Kristeva's outstanding contribution to psychoanalysis, starting with some important features of her so called 'semanalysis' theories and especially those regarding the concept of subject in process. Secondly, I will go through some background philosophical notions (primarily from Martin Heidegger and Georges Bataille) and psychoanalytic notions (primarily from Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan) that I believe heavily influenced Kristeva's line of thought and inspired her to formulate her philosophical and then psychoanalytic theories. I will explain Kristeva's contribution to these theories, including the aspects of her predecessors' strands of thought that she challenged or amended. Then, I will move to Shakespeare and try to make clear why I believe Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories are applicable to my selected plays. After a general overview of the major relevant themes in the plays, I will, briefly, examine each play one by one and highlight the points that are going to be discussed and examined later in the thesis. And, finally, I will focus on Shakespeare's method of history/story telling with its special subversive qualities that were unusual for his time. My main focus will be on how Shakespeare resisted the conventional norms and standards in his masterpieces and why his works are suitable to be analysed by Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories.

## Julia Kristeva

Before obtaining her doctorate, Kristeva, in the late sixties, published *Séméiôtiké: Recherches Pour Une Sémanalyse* (Kristeva 1969), which was later translated to English and published as *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Kristeva 1980). Mainly dealing with the topic of semanalysis, the book includes essays that, although focusing on literature and art, do not amount to either literary or art criticism. Conducting an intertextual approach, Kristeva argues, the essays' concern "remains intratheoretical: they are based on art and literature in order to subvert the very theoretical, philosophical, or semiological apparatus" (Kristeva 1980, VII). Inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin, Kristeva considered text as an energised object and aimed to show that "what we call 'literary' work is manifested in our times as text [...]. These are productions that call for [...] a theory, and this theory must be developed through an analytical linguistic approach to the *signifier-emerging as text*" (Kristeva 1980, 217). Her concept of semanalysis, due to its insistence on defining the movements of the signifying process, departed from the Cartesian definition of the said process (significance). Kristeva regarded "the sign as the mirror (reflective) element engaged in the representation of this engendering [...]" (Kristeva 1980, 218). Developing the sign in its context of René Descartes' mathematical logic, Kristeva located her discussion with the "successive reshapings and reweavings of the web of language" (Kristeva 1980, 225). In this view, the text undergoes an ongoing oscillation between the languages of the phenotext and the genotext, with their respective references to finite and infinite signification processes, respectively (the terms 'phenotext' and 'genotext' are explained below). Thus, by pushing forward her theories regarding semanalysis in *Desire in Language*, Kristeva laid the foundation of her viewpoint that a sign or a subject tends to elude stasis and is always in a kind of signifying process.

Through her views concerning semanalysis, Kristeva embarked on a dramatic departure from her predecessors. "Although greatly influenced by Russian formalism and French structuralism", as Kelly Oliver put it, "Kristeva was dissatisfied with their treatment of the speaking subject and the history and the process of language itself"

(Oliver 1993, 91). Kristeva took issue with their theories regarding a linear and static subjectivity that lacked history. To introduce her innovative ideas on the concept of subject in process, Kristeva then developed her semanalytic theories in *Revolution in Poetic Language* with more emphasis on the dynamism of a speaking subject as opposed to a static one:

Our philosophies of language, embodiments of the idea, are nothing more than the thoughts of archivists, archaeologists and necrophiliacs. Fascinated by the remains of a process which is partly discursive, they substitute this fetish for what actually produced it [...]. These static thoughts, products of a leisurely cogitation removed from historical turmoil, persist in seeking the truth of language by formalizing utterances that hang in mid-air, and the truth of the subject by listening to the narrative of a sleeping body – a body in repose, withdrawn from its socio-historical imbrication, removed from direct experience [...]. (Kristeva 1984, 13)

To set the groundwork for her theories regarding semanalysis, Kristeva cast doubt on her contemporary theorists of language and literature, namely Saussure, Noam Chomsky, C. S. Pierce and Edmund Husserl. From Kristeva's standpoint, what the above scholars failed to do was to take into account the important role of a speaking subject in language. In other words, Kristeva thought that the tradition of modern linguistics that starts with Saussure had always denied the speaking subject the truth and meaning of language. She took issue with the Cartesian subject, Husserlian transcendental ego and even Chomsky's generative grammar-based subject, considering them unified and lacking histories. The subject defined by the above thinkers was an autonomous entity with a clear past, relying upon the belief that there is a complete split between the body and mind. Such theories fail to see an important process that takes place prior to meaning, a crucial phase in the development of a speaking subject that does not mean and is associated with rhythms, tones and nonsense. In Kristeva's opinion, the first scholar who found out about and referred to such a history in a speaking subject's life was not a linguist but a psychoanalyst: Sigmund Freud. The Austrian psychoanalyst, as Kristeva put it, was "the

first to think of the work involved in the process of signification as anterior to the meaning produced and/or the representative discourse: in other words, the dream-process” (Kristeva 1986, 83). In his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud came to this seminal view that our dreams have their roots in unconscious memories that are prior to meaning. Thus, basing her assumptions on Freud’s psychoanalytic theories, “Kristeva suggests that there is a scene behind the scene described by contemporary linguistics, Freud’s ‘other scene’” (Oliver 1993, 92).

In “The System and the Speaking Subject”, Kristeva explained that semanalysis is a combination of psychoanalysis and semiology, which “conceives of meaning not as a sign-system but as a signifying process” (Kristeva 1986, 28). The traditional linguistic sign system was structured on a direct semantic relationship between the signifier and signified, leading to clear and understandable definitions. In Kristeva’s model, however, the signifying process tends to elude the rules of the language and, as Kristeva continued, “one might see the release and subsequent articulation of the drives as constrained by the social code yet not reducible to the language system” (Kristeva 1986, 28). This signifying system can be best seen in poetic language in which “the semiotic disposition will be the various deviations from the grammatical rules of the language” (Kristeva 1986, 28). Such a poetic language cannot be “reducible to the language system as a genotext and the signifying system as it presents itself to phenomenological intuition as a phenotext” (Kristeva 1986, 28). The genotext and phenotext signifying systems are built by analogy on the biological notions of ‘genotype’ (genetic material) and ‘phenotype’ (the body and characteristics made by the genetic material). Poetic language with its genetic characteristics challenges the very possibility of science with its phenotic traits, and, by the same token, has the potential to transform its meaning by its own “completely new terminology” (Kristeva 1986, 80). Kristeva calls this process intertextuality, which deals with the history of the text and its semantic relations with other texts of varying genres. The kind of history referred to by intertextuality cannot be explained by orthodox critical theory methods because it shakes the stability of the thetic – the moment when the subject takes up a distinct and independent identity in the symbolic world. Oliver remarked that “movement between signifying systems, the activity of intertextuality,

requires continuous rearticulations of thethetic” (Oliver 1993, 93). In such a moment, Kristeva argued, the relationship between subject and object becomes unstable:

If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. (Kristeva 1984, 60)

As mentioned above, contrary to the tradition of modern linguistics, semanalysis is interested in the history of transformation in the identity of a subject that is always in process or on trial. This new type of history is called monumental history, as opposed to the linear one with its fixed and stable approach. While the linear history considers the individual subject as the end product, its monumental version deals with the “types of signifying production prior to the product” (Kristeva 1986, 85). Kristeva accused structuralism of applying a linear method in approaching signifying systems and, thus, she regarded “only the image of the unconscious as a depository of laws and thus a discourse” (Kristeva 1984, 85). In her view, structuralism fails to discover unknown aspects of a subject with a long history of identification. To find a solution for this problem, Kristeva had to turn to poststructuralism, as Oliver put it, “to remove these structural operations from their ‘phenomenological refuge’ and define their function in the signifying process” (Oliver 1993, 94). Her poststructuralist method, semanalysis, could enable her to analyse a subject with reference to its long history of identity formation.

It is worth mentioning that Kristeva’s contribution to psychoanalysis also has its roots in some mid-twentieth century philosophical theories. Before elaborating on the psychoanalytic background in general and specifically the concept of abjection and the ways it can affect an individual’s identity, it is necessary to review the philosophical background through which one may be able to have a solid grasp of Kristeva’s ideas regarding horror and the abject.

## **Martin Heidegger**

In “What is Metaphysics?”, Martin Heidegger deals with the notions of ‘absence’ and ‘presence’ as fundamental states of being. Heidegger’s ‘Being’ (with a capital B), as distinguished from specific beings, is a kind of ‘is-ness’ that, unlike the Cartesian subject, is impossible to define. Heidegger was of the opinion that although a crucial philosophical matter, Being had been avoided by philosophy since the time of the Ancient Greeks, since when philosophers have mainly dealt with the analysis of particular beings instead. Before Heidegger, western philosophers had always equated presence with truth and reality without considering what gives being over to presence. A person will not be able to experience the presence permanently because there are moments when lack of presence puts a subject in an abyss-like situation. In such moments of non-presence, or absence, the unreal hovers around one’s being. Heidegger later explained this notion in detail in his unfinished book, *Being and Time*, in which he dedicated himself to recover the question of the meaning of Being, as opposed to being. Heidegger called this difference the ontological difference, which is a crucial distinction between Being and beings. “The question of the meaning of Being and beings”, as Michael Wheeler put it, “is concerned with what it is that makes beings intelligible as beings” (Wheeler 2016, 3). Being has its influence on all of the beings, its presence can be felt, but it eludes a clear-cut definition.

Reading Heidegger through Kristeva, Noëlle McAfee decided to “consider how difference could be seen as an ontological possibility for subjectivity – how the dread of the foreigner can be transformed into a welcoming of difference” (McAfee 1993, 117). Being must be present everywhere in order to give meaning to other beings and its absence brings a sense of anxiety and nothingness. Kristeva never explicitly equated the foreigner with the abject, but she gave ample room for such a reading. By abjection, Kristeva meant the process in which a subject defines itself by distinction from that which it is not but which it easily could be or of which it used to be a part. The ultimate abjection is one’s break from one’s mother, whom one used to be part of and (upon birth)

ceases to be part of. Abjection is a mental experience in which one expels part of oneself – and treats it as a foreigner – in order to escape nothingness. However, the individual is not able to resume its existence without the fear of the return of the nothingness (the abject). There are many similarities between the way Heidegger treated Being/nothingness and Kristeva's approach to the abject. In fact, as McAfee puts it, "the state of mind of one experiencing abjection has its parallel in Heidegger's description of the state of encountering the nothing" (McAfee 1993, 119). Nothing (non-Being) and the abject have many characteristics in common and both are able to put the individual, in Kristeva's words, "on the edge of nonexistence and hallucination" (Kristeva 1982, 2). In encountering both, one's very being is shaken and is made to experience vertigo and loss of boundaries. In such circumstances, one's border of identity is constantly threatened and one is put on the verge of annihilation.

In such moments of non-presence, when nothing prevails, an individual, a subject, undergoes a mode of disposedness that Heidegger called anxiety. One must not confuse anxiety with fear because the latter is formed when one is scared of different kinds of entities. The type of anxiety Heidegger tried to introduce exists in an, impossible to define, state of being and non-being and is not directed towards any specific object. This anxious feeling eludes an exact description because it does not give one an intelligible worldview and, using Kristeva's description of the abject, "is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 1982, 2). What the anxiety, caused by the nothing, is able to reveal to the subject is an unintelligible world without the subject, or, to put it in Wheeler's words, "the possibility of my not-Being-in-the-world is revealed to me" (Wheeler 2016, 6). In such a mood, all the conventional meanings and definitions collapse and the disoriented subject, in a state of perplexity, hopelessly tries to figure out its place and position in the world. In "What is Metaphysics", Heidegger called this state of indeterminacy anxiety, which draws the individual toward nothing. There is no way to escape anxiety, it is inevitable:

We hover in anxiety. More precisely, anxiety leaves us hanging because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole. This implies that we ourselves [...] in the midst of beings slip away from ourselves. At bottom therefore it is not as though 'you' or 'I' feel ill at ease; rather it is this way for some 'one'. (Heidegger 1977, 103)

The way Heidegger described anxiety is very similar to Kristeva's notions regarding the abject, for in the state of abjection, one stands at the threshold of acquired identity and nonsense similar to Heidegger's notion of Being and non-being. The abject hovers around the borders and pushes the subject to where the 'I' blurs. The abject serves as to threaten the individual, it threatens him with annihilation. The subject can never be certain of its being and presence since the ultimate Being (or what Lacan calls the Thing) is always there to suck it back to where it originally belonged, to the realm of nonsense: the semiotic. By the semiotic, Kristeva meant the pre-linguistic world such as that of the neonate, which is in opposition to the symbolic, the linguistic world in which words can denote things. The baby leaves the semiotic to enter the symbolic as it starts to differentiate itself from its mother and starts to see itself as an individual self. The symbolic beings are always under the threat of the archaic Being that has the enchanting power of the maternal origin. It attracts and expels at the same time and has the potential to push the subject to psychosis, an unknown place where meaning collapses. The double aspect of Being is what both Heidegger and Kristeva agree on: "The time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth" (Kristeva 1982, 9).

In "What is Metaphysics", Heidegger wrote that "no-thing is the complete negation of the generality of being" (Heidegger 1977, 40). In Heidegger's philosophy, the no-thing is responsible for the probability of negation because it resides at the border of the meaningfulness of beings. This no-thing is in fact a going-beyond-things that occurs in the very essence of human existence. The not-ness cannot be seen or felt unless its origin, with its repelling characteristics, emerges from hiddenness and becomes analogous with being. This way, Heidegger argued "the no-thing ceases to be the vague



opposite of things; instead, it is seen to belong to the very being of meaningful things” (Heidegger 1977, 40). Both the abject and no-thing are similar in function because they do not respect borders and, as a result, expose the being/subject to the Lacanian real. In Heidegger’s view, all beings are under the immediate threat of nihilation due to the return of Being/no-thing: “As the repelling gesture toward the retreating whole of beings, [...] [nihilation] discloses these beings in their full but heretofore concealed strangeness as what is radically other – with respect to the no-thing” (Heidegger 1977, 105).

In his magnum opus *Being and Time*, Heidegger used the term Dasein, and introduced it as the other side of no-thing. Heidegger was not the first philosopher who has used the term, in fact it was introduced most notably by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel meaning human existence or presence. The German word is composed of da-sein, literally meaning there-be. By invoking Dasein, Heidegger intended to uncover the primal nature of Being as always engaged in a coherent world. The ontological nature of Dasein, by its insistence on a never-ending process of involvement with the world, gives it an anti-Cartesian approach to selfhood. Dasein is not a Cartesian abstract agent; it is none other than “being held out into the no-thing” (Heidegger 1977, 106). “[The] state-of-mind”, as Heidegger argued in *Being and Time*, “which can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from Dasein’s ownmost individualized Being, is anxiety. In this state-of-mind, Dasein finds itself face to face with the ‘no-thing’ of the possible impossibility of its existence” (Heidegger 2013, 310). In Heidegger’s philosophy, without “the original revelation of the no-thing [...] [there is] no selfhood and no freedom” (Heidegger 1977, 106), so that as McAfee put it, “only through encountering the no-thing can one fathom one’s own being” (McAfee 1993, 121). Facing the nothing makes being/selfhood possible, and one can find a parallel idea in Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theories, in which abjection makes subjectivity possible. Thus, it becomes apparent that, Kristeva’s opinion regarding the state of abjection carries with itself the legacy of Heidegger’s notions about a being’s encounter with the nothing. They both repel the subject/being and have the potential to push the ‘I’ to the verge of annihilation. Kristeva went even further than Heidegger by proposing this viewpoint that the abject is at the same time able to simultaneously reinforce the unity of subject because, and this is

crucial to all poststructuralist thinking, the self is defined in opposition to what it is not and yet at the same time acknowledges (perhaps only unconsciously) that this makes the self dependent on what it is not for its own definition. So the what-it-is-not paradoxically thereby becomes part of the self in the very act of being rejected by the self. McAfee calls the abject the vandal and the policeman of the self, because it is a strong force that is, at the same time, able to dissolve or reinforce the subject, so “just as the no-thing lays the ground for being, the abject lays the ground for being a subject” (McAfee 1993, 121). The idea is best supported by Kristeva:

If it be true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that it is none other than abject. The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural *loss* that laid the foundations of its own being. (Kristeva 1982, 5)

Kristeva’s subject-in-process starts with the *loss* caused by abjection, an unconscious phenomenon that puts its mark on the ‘I’ throughout its life. The memory of that ultimate Being lives with the subject throughout its existence and uses every opportunity to remind it of its archaic past. Looking at Kristeva through a Heideggerian lens, one can say that, in the words of McAfee, “subjectivity is constituted by being held out into the nothing that abjection heralds” (McAfee 1993, 122).

### **Georges Bataille**

As far as Kristeva’s theories on the abject (especially those regarding filth and defilement) and the horror associated with it are concerned, the French philosopher George Bataille is the most significant predecessor. Kristeva began chapter three of *Powers of Horror* with a quotation from Bataille’s *Essay on Sociology*:

Abjection [...] is merely the inability to assume with sufficient strength the imperative act of excluding abject things (and that act establishes the foundations of collective existence). [...]. The act of exclusion has the same meaning as social or divine sovereignty, but it is not located on the same level; it is precisely located in the domain of things and not, like sovereignty, in the domain of persons. It differs from the latter in the same way that anal eroticism differs from sadism. (Kristeva 1982, 56)

In Kristeva's view, the concept of the abject is founded upon the logic of prohibition, and "George Bataille remains the only [...] [philosopher], to my knowledge, who has linked the production of the abject to the weakness of that prohibition [...]" (Kristeva 1982, 63). What Kristeva managed to learn from Bataille is that one has to prohibit and exclude part of the loved object in order to make it tolerable or even sacred. She thought that Bataille was the first thinker who referred to the abject in terms of its subject/object characteristics (Kristeva 1982, 63). However, Bataille was not the one who generated the idea, as the concept of abjection was first explained and developed by Bataille's precursor, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, in aphorism 59, puts forth the idea that

When we love a woman, we easily come to hate nature because of all the [widerlich] repulsive natural functions to which every woman is subject; we prefer not to think about it at all, but when our soul for once brushes against these matters, it shrugs impatiently and, as just said, casts a contemptuous look at nature: we feel insulted; nature seems to intrude on our property and with the most profane hands at that. (Nietzsche 2001, 70)

Widerlich (as Nietzsche uses it) can also be translated as the abject; thus, the first sentence claims that stripping a love object of abject qualities enables a person to elevate it to the level of the sublime, or the Thing. We expel the natural functions (the abject) and

protect our object of love against its destructive side effects. In fact, a subject, by prohibiting the repulsive natural elements in an object, tries to keep its soul away from filth and defilements.<sup>3</sup> The person in love does not adore the body of the beloved but is fascinated by something associated with it, something beyond the limits of the person's physical beauty. "In cases like this", as Nietzsche continues, "one refuses to hear anything about physiology and decrees secretly to oneself" (Nietzsche 2001, 70) because what one is looking for cannot be felt or seen. In fact, "the human being under the skin is an abomination and unthinkable to all lovers" (Nietzsche 2001, 70), so they tend to ignore it and love the beloved's soul, a royal path that can lead them to their object of desire. Nietzsche also referred to the notion of distressed ego that every beautiful love contains within itself. By distressed ego, Nietzsche meant a self that is obsessed with possessing objects of love, an innate disorder that has its roots in the unconscious. This "most unprejudiced expression of egoism" can show itself at best in eroticism and sex, through which the subject aims at "excluding the whole world from a precious good [i.e. the beloved]" (Nietzsche 2001, 40). The distressed ego, by conducting such an intense desire to push the physical limits, craves for a momentary indistinguishability between itself and the other.

Believing that Bataille was heavily influenced by Nietzsche, Jason Wirth wrote in "Bataille and Kristeva on Abjection" that "this distress of love and its inability and unwillingness to love beyond the Other's beautiful nature as well as its self-overcoming in eroticism is a central concern in the writings of Georges Bataille" (Wirth 1999, 5). Becoming obsessed with physical beauty and giving room to sexual desire, a subject tries to fill in the gap of the lack that is really the empty place of its mother. In Bataille's philosophy, desire is thought to be at cross-purposes with regards to beauty for it is able to attract and repel at the same time. In other words, as Wirth puts it, "it both desires

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<sup>3</sup> Such anxious denial of naturalness is exemplified at best in Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, (Kundera 1984, 248). The term Kundera uses is 'kitsch' which is interpreted as the absolute denial of shit, both in its literal or figurative senses.

beauty as the denial of *Natürlichkeiten* as well as beauty as the promise of *Natürlichkeiten* [natural qualities], that is, of the very Goodness that it denies” (Wirth 1999, 5). The problem with the distressed ego is its eagerness to move towards boundlessness in order to experience the eroticized desire, a situation that, according to Wirth, “abjects the plenitude of the Good in favor of the relative Good of the creaturely” (Wirth 1999, 5). However, due to “the sacred quality hidden in the experience of eroticism”, what can happen at the same time is that the ego is able to “defile the creaturely in favor of the Good” (Wirth 1999, 5). This is eroticism’s special quality that cannot be expressed in words easily and thus it makes Bataille a difficult writer. The subject’s creaturely or erotic relationship to the Good (or the Thing) is ambivalent and discontinuous, so it can be interpreted as “the desire of the discontinuous for a continuous Good, which has always already been sacrificed” (Wirth 1999, 5). Bataille believed that we are cast away from our origin and all our endeavours to fill in the place of the Good are doomed to fail: “we are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we are nostalgic for our lost continuity” (Bataille 1986, 15).

The foregoing considerations on Bataille’s thought can shed light on some of Kristeva’s theories regarding abjection and the subject’s consequent mourning. Bataille’s point has its focus on the hopeless endeavour of the subject to fill the place of what it has lost during its archaic past, a loss for which he mourns incessantly. He called the object of desire an ‘impossible’ thing, the departure from which has put us in calamities and is directing us toward death (Bataille 1986, 146). In such a miserable condition, the subject is eroticized by some pseudo or partial objects in order to, albeit temporarily, forget about the pain of being. In this context, eroticism can be thought as the only remedy for the anxiety caused by the discontinuity. The anxiety or pain that has started since the abjection of the main object of desire does not fade and shows threatening appearances from time to time. The subject’s encounter with the impossible thing or the abject will be limited to some moments of stress when its identity borders get weak, making the subject vulnerable to the attack of the archaic forces. In Bataille’s viewpoint, to find a more effective remedy for the loss, a highly mournful subject might turn to sex and taboo and

ignore the law of prohibition.<sup>4</sup> The resulting intense desire can put the subject in a position to forget about the dark end of being: “how sweet it is to remain in the grip of the desire to burst out without going the whole way, without taking the final step!” (Bataille 1986, 141). This strategic self-deception is able to help the subject cope with discontinuity and make the world a tolerable place to live.

Kristeva’s adoption of Bataille’s idea was not limited to the latter’s views on desire and discontinuous being; she is, in fact, influenced by Bataille in several other respects too. At the beginning of her career as a philosopher, Kristeva was fascinated by Bataille’s anti-scientific approach to politics and literature, which constituted a transgressive method that ignored rationalism and objectivism in its dealing with social matters. Bataille tended to focus on the absence of reason and aimed to figure out how such a phenomenon might occur. In this sense, he tried to explore beyond the boundaries of reason with a transgressive approach by pushing being to its limits. What Kristeva learned from Bataille at best is the way to examine the transgressable boundaries of subjects (or even societies) whose borders have failed to protect them in times of crisis. Bataille’s notions regarding transgressions and revolt, though seeming rather generalized on the surface, have helped Kristeva to enrich her philosophical, and also psychoanalytic, views to a great extent. In the following paragraphs, some of the key Bataillean terms are discussed and then Kristeva’s adaptations and contribution will be explained.

In “The Joy of Transgression: Bataille and Kristeva”, Catharine Marchak remarked that at the core of Bataille’s theories are two opposing/complementary concepts which are conceived as universals and common to all cultures: the homogeneous and the heterogeneous (Marchak 1990, 354). Bataille elaborates on both concepts in detail in

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<sup>4</sup> The idea is best exemplified in Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 2004). Freud believed the law of prohibition, as a means to prevent taboo, dates back to primitive civilizations in which people of the same totem were prohibited from breeding. In Freud’s view, prohibition was a kind of sexual repression. According to Bataille, an anxious subject has a tendency to take refuge in these primitive incestuous wishes.

“The Psychological Structure of Fascism”, in which, starting with homogeneity, he stated that “a psychological description of society must begin with that segment which is most accessible to understanding – and apparently the most fundamental – whose significant trait is tendential homogeneity” (Bataille 1979, 64). Such a trait, which plays a crucial role in establishing the order and productivity of any society, as Marchak stated, “may be thought as what is assimilated, made obedient to rules, [and] made orderly [...]” (Marchak 1990, 354). Bataille made it clear at the outset that by homogeneity he meant commensurability of elements and making sure that all the constituent parts of a society are aware of this commensurability. In such a system, as Bataille continued, “human relations are sustained by a reduction to fixed rules based on the consciousness of the possible identity of delineable persons and situations” (Bataille 1979, 64). So, every subject is given a fixed identity by the system which has, at the same time, the responsibility to protect it. Such an orderly system, Bataille believed, is the ideal community for a capitalist governing system whose only concern is the quality of the end product. In other words, the identity of the individual members of such a homogeneous society is assigned in order to increase the quantity and quality of production. Putting forth the view that “production is the basis of social homogeneity”, in such a “useful society”, Bataille remarked, “every useless element is excluded, not from all of society, but from its homogeneous part” (Bataille 1979, 65). In this unified system, all members must be involved in useful activities, which are measured by the foundation of social homogeneity: money (Bataille 1979, 65). In such a culture, continuity is guaranteed by the system as long as its constituent members contribute to enhance the level of productivity. “According to the judgement of homogeneous society”, as Bataille puts it, “each man is worth what he produces; in other words, he stops being an existence for itself: he is no more than a function, arranged within measurable limits, of collective production” (Bataille 1979, 65). So, this type of society creates and protects a collective identity represented by all members in an orderly manner.

A homogeneous society’s identity is, however, always under the threat of what Bataille calls the heterogeneous elements. “The very term heterogeneous”, as Bataille defined it, “indicates that it concerns elements which are impossible to assimilate; this

impossibility which has a fundamental impact on social assimilation, likewise has an impact on scientific assimilation” (Bataille 1979, 67–8). Heterogeneity, for Bataille, is a quality that has elements of transgression in itself. “Transgression, for both Bataille and Kristeva”, as Marchak puts it, “occurs in the most basic sense when (excluded) heterogeneous elements are introduced in the realm of homogeneity” (Marchak 1990, 354). Each culture is, thus, dualistic, combining opposites: the exalted and pure versus the impoverished and impure. To protect the homogeneous structure of the society, the state is in a constant struggle with the heterogeneous elements and tries to neutralize their forces. All representatives of such forces are excluded from the orthodox structures and are under constant censorship by the state. In a homogeneous system, there is no room for any signs of heterogeneity like human waste, disease, lawbreakers and, especially, the unconscious. Bataille’s view in classifying the unconscious had a profound effect on Kristeva’s development of psychoanalytic theories.

Through a psychoanalytic lens, Bataille compares homogeneity and heterogeneity with the conscious and unconscious, respectively: “The exclusion of heterogeneous elements from the homogeneous realm of consciousness formally recalls the exclusion of the elements, described (by psychoanalysis) as unconscious, which censorship excludes from the conscious ego” (Bataille 1979, 68). The return of unconscious memories is recognized as a threat to the unity of a homogeneous system and is thus subject to censorship. The egoist and rule-based approach of the state is strictly defined and is based in reality and science, so it is at odds with the mystical characteristics of the unconscious. The repressed unconscious desires can be repressed but one cannot completely destroyed. They tend to resurface at different stages of a subject’s social development in some very unlikely forms and venues. Though constantly suppressed and censored, the heterogeneous forces have the potential to put the identity of the whole system under threat. So the state has to strengthen its borders of identity and remain vigilant against the return of the heterogeneity, which is always inevitable.

“As with Bataille’s theories”, Marchak remarked, “Kristeva’s linguistic theory, semanalysis, can be simplified to the level of the homogeneous versus the



heterogeneous” (Marchak 1990, 355). With the introduction of the concept of subject in process in her semanalytic theories, Kristeva puts the traditional linguistic notions, with their insistence on a static subject, under question. These theories examine language as a heterogeneous process, which begins before a subject learns to speak. In fact, what Kristeva added to Bataille’s theories is that the above-mentioned opposing forces form at birth and play an important role in an individual’s psycho-sexual development. To push the theory a little further, one should say that, in Kristevan psychoanalysis, a little child is governed by heterogeneous drives that she called the semiotic, meaning the surrounding drives that govern the infant in its preoedipal stage. “Drives”, as Kristeva wrote in *Revolution in Poetic Language*, “are the repeated session of matter that generates significance, the place, where an always absent subject is produced” (Kristeva 1984, 167). The drives register their marks on the unconscious memory of a subject in such a way that even repression and abjection will not be able to erase them. The end product will be an adult who is absent in both its philosophical and psychoanalytic perspectives. “The absent subject”, as Oliver put it, “is also heterogeneous” (Oliver 1993, 32), represented by two opposing beings. The first one is the subject who, due to a complete separation from its mother, as what Lacan called the transcendental subject, enters the social stage and embraces the symbolic world. The second, however, as Oliver continued, “is the absent semiotic subject, the semiotic body, that is repressed in the signifying process and produces the transcendental subject” (Oliver 1993, 32).

The final, and maybe the most important, influence of Bataille’s socio-philosophical standpoint on Kristeva’s thought was his views regarding sovereignty. “Sovereignty,” as Bataille remarked in *Literature and Evil*, “is the object which eludes us all, which nobody has seized and which nobody can seize for this reason: we cannot possess it, like an object, but we are doomed to seek it” (Bataille 1985, 193–4). In a regularized society, the sovereign force aims to do what Bataille called the impossible, which an instance of unknowing with the aim of the complete eradication of all signs of homogeneity. The term sovereign, as Bataille himself explained, “comes from the lower Latin adjective *superaneus* meaning superior” (Bataille 1979, 73). Though originally meant by Bataille to be a political theory (in both “The Psychological Structures of

Fascism” and “The Accursed Share”), the general notion of sovereignty was suddenly detached from such an approach and is then directed toward the properties of the inner relations of persons to the objects of their desires. Being the most terrifying form of the return of the repressed, sovereignty is in fact, as Bataille put it, “in opposition to the impoverished existence of the oppressed” and has a “clearly differentiated sadistic activity” (Bataille 1979, 73). Sovereignty takes pleasure in harming the homogeneous system with its imperative form of heterogeneous existence. “In individual psychology”, Bataille continued, “it is rare for the sadistic tendency not to be associated with a more or less manifest masochistic tendency” (Bataille 1979, 73). The sovereign force can at the same time have sadistic and masochistic characteristics, something that loves and hates simultaneously. It has the power to at the same time attract and repel, to destroy and construct.

“For Kristeva”, wrote Marchak, “what is beyond is remarkably similar to Bataille’s sovereignty and inner experience – the abject” (Marchak 1990, 359). Kristeva has borrowed the term abjection, along with its association with sovereignty, from Bataille and has used it as her key psychoanalytic term. As far as the concept of abjection is concerned, what Kristeva has learned from Bataille is summarized in the quotation at the beginning of this section: “Abjection [...] is merely the inability to assume with sufficient strength the imperative act of excluding abject things” (Kristeva 1982, 56). The abject cannot coexist with the norms and standards of a community that calls it impure and aims to eradicate it. While comparing the abject with sovereignty, Bataille pointed out that the act of eradicating the abject has the same meaning as sovereignty but with the important difference that “it is precisely located in the domain of things and not, like sovereignty, in the domain of persons” (Kristeva 1982, 56). Here lies Kristeva’s main departure from Bataille’s notion regarding sovereign force for she found the abject and its domestic characteristics more appealing for her research. Thus, Kristeva’s contribution lies in the psychoanalytic approach to abjection and its effect on individual human beings. To push the theory to a more precise standpoint, one should say that Kristeva’s theories deal with the ramifications that the abject might have on a subject’s mind. It is worth noting that Kristeva has coined the semiotic and the symbolic as equivalent terms

for the heterogeneous and homogeneous forces. So, an ego, even after having entered the symbolic stage of its life, is still vulnerable to the return of the semiotic which was abjected a long time ago.

## **Jacques Lacan**

Kristeva's emphasis on the heterogeneous nature of a would-be speaking subject marked a strategic departure from her psychoanalyst predecessors. While Jacques Lacan thought that the unconscious is structured like language, she, in *Revolution In Poetic Language*, put forth her notion that language is comprised of two heterogeneous elements: the semiotic and the symbolic. These opposing forces are in constant struggle with each other and affect an individual's identity to a great degree. Kristeva's major departure from Freud and Lacan came when she decided that they had ignored the power (even the existence) of the semiotic in the preoedipal phase of an individual's life. By semiotic, Kristeva meant the mysterious and harmonious atmosphere a little child experiences with its mother before entering the symbolic, the social stage. In *Tales of Love*, Kristeva put emphasis on the important role of the mother during the preoedipal phase when the child is associated with rhythm and music. The reason behind Freud and Lacan's ignoring this aspect of the unconscious, as Kristeva speculates, were perhaps that they were unfamiliar with music and were not mothers (Oliver 1993, 192).

Kristeva taught herself psychoanalysis in order to find out how a demarcated subjectivity arises out of undifferentiated being. Prior to her, Freud and Lacan had tried to explain how a child manages to establish an independent identity for itself. Freud's seminal theory regarding the Oedipus complex explained how a male infant fantasises about a sexual union with his mother, a desire that cannot be fulfilled because of the threat of a stronger rival: his father. Seeing his father as an unbeatable rival, and also fearing castration, the child decides to break its ties with his mother in order to establish a distinct identity for himself and possess a female object, just as his father did by becoming sexually active with his mother. For Lacan, identity formation happens at 6-18 months old when the child, upon seeing its image in the mirror, mistakenly takes it to be

itself (a misrecognition, since the image both is and is not the child). The child, then, identifies itself with the image because the image gives the sense of real unity that it has never experienced. Lacan calls this phase the stage when ego ('I') is constituted and the first thought of identity formation emerges in an individual's mind.

However, Kristeva thought that relying on Lacan's notions regarding the mirror stage to explain what a child undergoes during the pre-Oedipal stage meant missing a significant aspect of an infant's psychic development. Kristeva believed that what one experiences in one's Oedipal phase or mirror stage is in fact secondary repression; the first repression happens during an earlier time when the self is undifferentiated in a receptacle Kristeva calls the chora. Both repressions are responsible for creating subjectivity. What Kristeva tries to add to Freud and Lacan's theories, as McAfee stated, is the idea that "the subject/object dichotomy (difference) cannot set in until the child represses the chora: the state of being one with all" (McAfee 1993, 177). Kristeva's equivalent term for Freud's repression is abjection, with the difference that in the latter one expels something that was once part of one's being. Thus, what the little child does in its first phase of maternal repression is abject part of itself from itself; indeed, because of course the child was at one time part of (and inside of) the mother. To create itself, physically and psychically, it spits out its mother's warm milk in order to pave its way to create an identity and establish itself as an 'I'. An important point that must not be ignored is that abjection is not a one-time event and it will be impossible for the subject to forget about the memories of the early chora. One always has to be afraid of the return of the abject, which is a potential threat that resides at the other side of the identity border and has the power to destroy one's subjectivity.

For Kristeva, what Lacan failed to recognize is the price the subject has to pay in order to step out and take a look at the symbolic world. She completed Lacan by asserting her viewpoint that the mirror stage process is completed at the cost of repressing drives. Through the Lacanian psychoanalytic lens, the drives reside in the realm of the impossible real (the unspoken and undefinable phase before the mirror stage) which, unlike Kristeva's the semiotic, are not traceable and are, therefore, impossible to repress.

Lacan put forth the view that as soon as the mirror stage happens, everything turns to the symbolic, even the real. However, in Oliver's words, "Kristeva argues that her theory is distinguished from Lacan's because for her the drives operate on a material level that is logically and chronologically prior to the onset of the symbolic" (Oliver 1993, 32). This is her main departure from Lacan since, as a multidisciplinary theorist, Kristeva's background in philosophy and semiology helped her to develop a one-dimensional psychoanalytic theory into a more complicated and multi-dimensional one. Using the legacies of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Bataille, she peppered Lacan's (and to considerable degree Freud's) psychoanalytic thought with her intertextual approach. Unlike Lacan's notion of the real, there exists within Kristeva's the semiotic an *other* that is repressed and abjected. Kristeva accused Lacan of Kantian agnosticism, according to which the real is cut off forever, and she argued that it will be able to survive and stay very close to us throughout our lives.

## **Sigmund Freud**

One major Kristevan contribution to Freudian psychoanalysis was the addition of the concept of exclusion to the already existing Freudian terms of denial or negation. "Kristeva suggests", wrote Oliver, "that the abjection operates outside of the dialectic of negativity that is central to the theory of the unconscious upon which Freud's analysis [...] is based" (Oliver 1993, 58). Basing his theories on his case studies, Freud arrived at this understanding that his neurotic patients were used to denying or substituting the object; however, Kristeva tried to correct Freud by arguing that such phobias are caused by the abject that is based on exclusion rather than denial. She did not completely agree with Freudian theory that all the contents of the unconscious are repressed wishes and desires that, although apparently locked up, are able to affect a subject's speech and behavior. In her opinion, however, the unconscious is a depository of excluded memory of the object. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva remarked:

The 'unconscious' contents remain here excluded but in a strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for secure differentiation between subject and object,

and yet clearly enough for a defensive position to be established—one that implies a refusal but also a sublimating elaboration. As if the fundamental opposition were between I and Other or, in more archaic fashion, between Inside and Outside. As if such an opposition subsumed the one between Conscious and Unconscious, elaborated on the basis of neuroses. (Kristeva 1982, 7)

Kristeva's abject, unlike Freud's denial, has the capacity to be ameliorated. In some cases, the abject can sublimate the object and take its place:

The abject might then appear as the most fragile (from a synchronic point of view), the most archaic (from a diachronic one) sublimation of an 'object' still inseparable from drives. The abject is that pseudo-object that is made up before but appears only within the gaps of secondary repression. The abject would thus be the 'object' of primal repression. (Kristeva 1982, 17)

What Kristeva meant by sublimation is a healthy response to the abject. It can serve as a perfect means to put the other under control: "in the symptom, the abject permeates me. I become abject. Through sublimation, I keep it under control" (Kristeva 1982, 38). The sublimated and properly repressed other, stripped of non-purity, is what Kristeva named the sacred, which is, "a threatening otherness – but always nameable, always totalizable" (Kristeva 1982, 17).

Kristeva's concept of abjection might signal some deeper intra-subject ramifications compared with Freud's uncanny. Freud defined the uncanny as an object which seems familiar but in an unnerving sense, and is something repressed but uncovered due to a particular situation. In his view, the repressed unconscious has an inherent tendency to return in the form of internal differentiations and psychic recesses that are not benign nor stabilized and make the subject experience a form of a radical strangeness. The uncanny is the telling sign of this radical strangeness, a form of ego-disturbance that harkens back to an unknown time. "It is undoubtedly", Freud remarked, "related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror" [...] [so] it tends to

coincide with what excites fear in general” (Freud 2010c, 3675). This alien subject, who was once familiar, though long forgotten, hauntingly returns and, in some cases, insinuates itself within the threatened subject. The abject, however, registers a more profound horror that has a peculiarity that, as Megan Becker suggested, “involves the throes of the body and the violence of the drives” (Becker-Leckrone 2005, 33). Unlike the uncanny, the abject is “neither subject, nor object” (Kristeva 1982, 2), so it summons the subject to a “place where meaning collapses” (Kristeva 1982, 2). It is worth noting, however, that there is more at play here than a simple opposition between the uncanny and the abject. Kristeva remarked that “essentially different from ‘uncanniness’, more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory” (Kristeva 1982, 5). Although both the uncanny and the abject result in the arousal of horror, the former is founded upon a sense of familiarity, while the abject deals with the loss of familiarity. The abject’s power of horror possesses the potential to draw a vulnerable subject to the “land of oblivion” where the identity is repulsed and, thus, the subject ceases to be. What induces the sense of abjection, is not a separate object but an object with whom the subject had been associated during its preoedipal phase. The abject does not care about the boundaries; it approaches the subject from within and gets the subject under its control.

### **Why Kristeva and Shakespeare?**

Kristeva considered literature an ideal ground to practice and explore her psychoanalytic terms in general, and specifically the abject:

Because it occupies its place, because it hence decks itself out in the sacred power of horror, literature may also involve not an ultimate resistance to but an unveiling of the abject: an elaboration, a discharge, and a hollowing out of abjection through the Crisis of the Word. (Kristeva 1982, 208)

She believed great literature is full of heterogeneous forces that are in constant struggles in their political, social or psychological contexts. Literary characters, in different

situations, undergo certain unusual experiences that put the contents of their minds on display. Their reactions to mental strains can be justifiable if analysed with regard to Kristeva's psychoanalytic terms. The experience of abjection, for example, can be seen in many famous literary characters who experience horror at specific junctures in their lives. Kristeva believes that abjection can be seen in the works of modern, avant-garde writers because there are many instances in them in which meaning is resisted and boundaries violated. In her *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva used the examples of Louise Ferdinand Celine, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, James Joyce and some other twentieth-century writers whose works, she argued, can best be approached using her theories regarding the abject. Following Kristeva's lead, many French and Anglo-American psychoanalysts and literary theorists so far have applied her theories to modern works in different genres. However, there have been few applications of Kristeva's theories to literary genres of other historical periods. Hence the originality of this thesis is the examination of a selection of William Shakespeare's plays using Kristeva's major psychoanalytic terms.

William Shakespeare's plays, especially his tragedies, have proved themselves proper cases for psychoanalytic criticism, most of which are directly or indirectly related to Sigmund Freud's theories. Anglo-American thinkers such as Ernest Jones, Coppelia Kahn, Stephen Orgel and Janet Adelman, in their articles and books, have investigated different aspects of parent-child and husband-wife relationships, utilizing, directly or indirectly, Freud and Carl Jung's psychoanalytic theories. The famous application of Freud's Oedipus Complex to the character of Hamlet set the ball rolling for similar psychoanalytic approaches to Shakespeare's plays using other Freudian notions like unconscious, repression, id, ego, super ego, and uncanny. Only once has Kristeva written on Shakespeare (Kristeva 2001). To introduce the analyses that will be offered more fully in subsequent chapters, it is useful here to summarize how Kristeva's ideas will apply to each of nine Shakespeare plays.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a major Kristevan theme can be found: a subject's taking refuge in the semiotic. By fleeing Athens and its strict laws and entering the forest, the lovers resist the symbolic. The forest, like the semiotic, serves them as a safe haven in which they are immune to the harsh symbolic world. Nick Bottom, the



weaver, experiences the abject: his waking in the forest demonstrates a resistance of meaning and is subsequent to his earlier experience of dwelling with the abject. Freud famously proposed that dreams can provide insights into the unconscious mind, but as we will see Kristeva's ideas actually make better sense of Bottom's dream.

The underlying Kristevan psychoanalytic theme in *As You Like It* is quite similar to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Forest of Arden serves as a safe haven where the main characters of the play can take refuge in order to be safe against the court and its cruelty. It is a place in which many elements and characteristics of the world outside are resisted and lose their boundaries. There is little sense of time or regularities in the forest, so the lovers, free of the symbolic pressures, can court each other and pursue their love stories at leisure. The experience of the lovers in the forest, with its freedom, can be compared to the harmonious world of the semiotic in which the child associates itself with its first love object: the mother.

*The Taming of the Shrew* is a play in which the symbolic codes of language are resisted in several instances. The reverse psychology employed by Petruchio, and its implications of perverse signification (for example, when he claims the moon is the sun), fills the play with certain moments that approach meaninglessness. Conducting a Kristevan psychoanalytic approach, one can say that, in Shakespeare's time, shrewish women like Katherina were regarded as the abject that had to be refined in order to be made tolerable and manageable.

*Richard II* tells the story of a weak monarch who fails to protect his borders of identity against the attacking forces of the abject. He exiles Henry Bolingbroke to live in exile because he considers his cousin a threat to his symbolic identity. However, Richard's failure to remain vigilant gives Bolingbroke the opportunity to have an abject-like return and usurp the king's title. Having penetrated the symbolic borders, the abject will have the ability to shatter a subject's identity. By the end of the play, Richard, who always thought providence will protect him, has to abdicate and give his identity to Henry.

*1 & 2 Henry IV* portray the life of a monarch whose identity is under threat by the forces of the abject. Henry IV has to stay vigilant and prepared in order to eliminate threatening forces, a task which will keep him busy till the end of his reign. The memory of what he has abjected in the past (Richard's murder) continues to haunt him as the play proceeds, giving an uncanny feeling that does not leave him alone. To exacerbate his maladies, his fear that he is not supported by providence weakens the borders of his identity and threaten the return of the abject. Kristeva's theories regarding the abject are also applicable to the incidents of the sub-plot, at the end of which, to meet the standards of a mighty monarch, Prince Hal has to abject Sir John Falstaff and the memories of his experiences in Eastcheap.

Coriolanus can be considered the proper example of an individual whose process of identity formation has been halted by a strong, suffocating mother, who deliberately creates an equally horrific son. He has not been fed properly by his mother and so considers eating food a base need and is raised to feed on his anger. He is dominated by the semiotic for the most part of his adult life and thus his character is moulded based on his mother's wishes. To secure his identity, Coriolanus banishes the Rome that has banished him and takes refuge in a virile and strong father figure, Aufidius. However, on his encounter with his mother near the end of the play, Coriolanus is again dominated by the strong force of the semiotic, which costs him his life.

*Romeo and Juliet* is a good example of a setting where the symbolic rules are pushed to their limits. Facing unnameable and impossible circumstances, the Veronese couple fail to tame their desire and that is the reason they face the abject. In marrying Romeo in violation of her family's will that she marry Paris, Juliet resists the symbolic, which is an act that brings calamity to both families. By the same token, Romeo goes too far in approaching the semiotic, an unconscious-ridden flaw that triggers the play's tragic denouement.

Kristeva's views regarding horror are fully applicable to *Macbeth*. Having been dominated by the suffocating mother of Lady Macbeth, and in order to avoid becoming the subject of the former's horror, Macbeth performs some hideous crimes, but then becomes wracked with guilt. All his horrific acts have their roots in his unconscious fear of being sucked back to his horrific archaic past. He then becomes horror itself that must be abjected for the sake of the peace and order of the realm.

*King Lear* deals with the process of the individuation of a king whose second childishness brings loss and trouble for his realm. Stripped of his symbolic identity by the division of his kingdom between his daughters, Lear starts to suffer from inside. His grave mistake in abjecting his only loyal daughter, Cordelia, gives the opportunity to the suffocating mother to haunt him. Dominating him from inside is the return of the abject that pushes him to the verge of madness by its annihilating power. Lear's final reconciliation with Cordelia can in fact be interpreted as another return to childishness, during which he has the chance to reunite with the semiotic.

Although originally intended for application to twentieth-century avant-garde transgressive literature, Kristeva's theories are ideally suited to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of Shakespeare's drama. Her sophisticated psychoanalytic notions serve as a tool by which consumers of Shakespeare can achieve a more nuanced understanding of the unconscious significance of key events and motives at work in the plays. Although they might seem very different in appearance, the applications of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories to Shakespeare's plays will bring about fruitful outcomes.

## Shakespeare's Anti-Symbolic Method of Story Telling

Comparing Shakespeare's method of history telling with the chronicle histories upon which he bases some of his plays, we see that he manipulates, and to some degree violates, the historical accounts. Some scholars argue that Shakespeare manipulates historical accounts purely for dramatic purposes, while others claim that he does so for political reasons, or both. Wolfgang Iser, in *Staging Politics: The Lasting Impact of Shakespeare's Histories*, stated that "[...] Shakespeare does not merely repeat the course of history. He structures it in such a way that he is able to communicate intentions far outstripping those of a mere history lesson" (Iser 1993, 98). What are the intentions that Shakespeare communicates? As an example, some critics suggest that, by highlighting the weaknesses of the king in *1&2 Henry IV*, Shakespeare puts the authority of the monarchy under question. Iser suggested that in *1&2 Henry IV*, Shakespeare tries to depict history as an outcome of human actions free from the observance of commandments (Iser 1993, 194). What must not be ignored, as Iser puts it, is the fact that, "[...] underlying this play there is an unmistakable element of subversion" (Iser 1993, 162). As Thomas Healy claimed, this kind of subversion gives Shakespeare the opportunity to express his unrepressed intentions in a context where real history is pushed to the background (Healy 1992, 17).

Louise Adrian Montrose warned of the "capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends" (Montrose 1996, 8). However, subversion can also be utilized to function paradoxically. Some critics find that Shakespeare's subversive style of story or history telling, sometimes, albeit very subtly, chooses the ruling body as its target. As an example, in "Invisible Bullets", Stephen Greenblatt put forth the idea that while Shakespeare's art feeds the ruling system, at the same time, it has the potential to consume its subversive energy. Shakespeare's talent in writing, as Greenblatt suggested, made him capable of a successful exploitation of alien voices that could serve him in two contradictory ways: to support the Tudor ideological position while subverting it at the same time (Greenblatt 1988, 35). Such unheard and

alien voices had the potential to expose the faults and weaknesses of monarchy and put the whole providence-based Tudor doctrine into question. Like an invisible bullet, Shakespeare's approach to historical accounts remains unseen and, simultaneously, prepares the ground for the unheard voices to paradoxically register most loudly and clearly. Shakespeare's unique style of narrating history and his skilful manipulations have paved the way for "the testing of a subversive interpretation of the dominant culture" and also the "recording of alien voices or, more precisely, of alien interpretations" (Greenblatt 1988, 35). This mixture of orthodoxy and subversion enables Shakespeare to resist the norms and standards as invisibly as possible.

By looking at the notions raised above through the Kristevan psychoanalytic lens, one can say that, by expressing his 'unrepressed' or 'invisible' intentions, Shakespeare resists the symbolic. It can be inferred from Kristeva's views regarding the symbolic that it is what the authorities maintain to be the norms and standards of the society. *1&2 Henry IV*, for instance, do not promote the Tudors' right to rule. In the Second Tetralogy, unlike the First Tetralogy, Shakespeare violates the Tudor-sponsored method of history telling. In the First Tetralogy, he and his co-authors wrote the plays in line with the Tudor doctrine and introduced the Tudors as the saviours of the realm. But in the second one, at least in the first three plays, the fears of the kings about deposition and assassinations are depicted. For instance, the inefficient Richard II is deposed by Henry Bolingbroke, whose legitimacy is then questioned by the very nobility who helped him onto the throne. Shakespeare's depiction of Henry IV's concerns is different from the depiction of those of Henry VII. The former is shown a disappointed king who believes his son will be another Richard and destroy what his father has achieved. In this way Shakespeare's method of history telling acts like an abject that threatens the Tudor-supported chronicles.

Shakespeare's anti-symbolic method is not limited to his history plays; indeed one can see its traces in some other plays of his as well. An example is *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which the shrewish Katherine, like the abject, is depicted as a threat to the symbolic-governed family structure of the early modern society. Similar to the unpleasant aspects of the semiotic, her rough characteristics must be abjected (tamed) in order that

she becomes fit for her married life. Although at the end the symbolic manages to defeat the semiotic, there are many moments in the play where Shakespeare finds opportunities to inject his anti-symbolic approach in Katherine's words and acts. *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* share the theme of resisting the symbolic and taking refuge in the semiotic. The young couples in both plays resist the cruel laws of their authority figures and flee to the forest in order to resume their love freely. What Shakespeare manages to show in these plays are young people who challenge the restricting authorities by making use of the semiotic and its potential powers.

As part of his anti-symbolic approach Shakespeare, in the aforementioned plays, skilfully manipulates his sources, subverts the real history, and injects his unique method of history/story telling in order to resist the early modern Tudor/Stuart established doctrines and facts. When dealing with British history, Shakespeare was of course constrained by the widely known historical facts that were alive in popular memory and recorded at length in the prose chronicles of Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall that went through multiple editions and were his principal sources. But in suggesting just why history turned out the way it did, Shakespeare found considerable scope for anti-symbolic logic. This was possible not least because major historical events are very often overdetermined in the sense of having multiple causes, any one of which might be said to be sufficient on its own to create the observed effect. To that extent, historical narratives are like dreams in the sense that Freud explored in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Condensing multiple, competing forces into signal moments of societal change in his history, Shakespeare left the way open for wildly differing interpretations of just what those plays meant to depict, from a normative account of the essentially providential rise of the Tudor dynasty (as in Tillyard's influential account) to a Machiavellian (even Nietzschean) will-to-power.

## Chapter Two. The Comedies: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*

### The Case of Hermia and Lysander

Many critics have noted that Shakespeare's depiction of Lysander and Hermia's love is, in fact, a parody of Romeo and Juliet's strong desire towards each other. However, at least in the first scene, there is no sense of a parody. The two Athenian lovers face the same situation as do the Veronese lovers: "the will of a father against the desire of his daughter" (Bate 1993, 133). The Athenian lovers' reactions, when they find union difficult, promise the audience an even more catastrophic ending than that of *Romeo and Juliet*. When they talk together alone in 1.1 they decide to elope; their conception of love is full of images of destruction and violence. As J. Dennis Huston wrote in "Bottom Waking: Shakespeare's Most Rare Vision", "in a single speech Lysander talks of war, death, sickness, siege, shadows, collid night, the jaws of darkness, and quick bright things come to confusion" (Huston 1973, 216). These images seem to make the situation similar to that of *Romeo and Juliet*. Huston continued:

such imagery suggests the language of two other young Shakespearean lovers, Romeo and Juliet, who have a similar fascination with disaster but who inhabit a world which tragically matches the image of their minds with a corresponding violence. No such violence fortunately is available to the lovers in this dramatic world; for here potentially destructive impulses are diffused in the play [...].  
(Huston 1973, 217)

In "Spleen in Shakespeare's Comedies", Nigel Wood emphasized the fact that a catastrophe will not happen because "we know we are watching a comedy, so such scepticism is presumably diluted by the inexorability of the fortunate ending; [...]" (Wood 2015, 143). Therefore, because Shakespeare aims to end the play as a typical

comedy does, the lovers are fortunate enough to celebrate their union at the final scene of the play.

Because their situation is similar to that of Romeo and Juliet, Lysander and Hermia undergo the same psychoanalytic process that the Veronese lovers do. Like Juliet's father, Egeus has found Hermia a husband, Demetrius, and tells Theseus, the Duke of Athens, "this man hath my consent to marry her" (Shakespeare 1979, 1.1.25). Hermia's predicament seems even worse than that of Juliet. When Egeus tells Theseus that his defiant daughter wants to marry Lysander, Theseus threatens Hermia with the Athenian law, according to which she must be obedient to her father, otherwise she has to choose between death or the life of a nun. Lysander's solution is to escape Athens to a place where, "gentle Hermia, may I marry thee, and to that place the sharp Athenian law cannot pursue us" (Shakespeare 1979, 1.1.161-3).

As far as Kristeva's psychoanalysis is concerned, 'the sharp Athenian Law' can be considered a characteristic of the symbolic world the lovers entered after abjecting their semiotic ties. They established their subjectivity a long time ago (after they abjected the semiotic) and have so far lived in the realm of the symbolic. However, as Kristeva described, what is abjected always stays at the border of subjection and waits for an opportunity for penetration. In order to get married, Hermia and Lysander have to escape the symbolic world and enter the realm of the semiotic in which the law of the father is not threatening. The couple's escape to the forest is a journey from the symbolic (the Athens and its law) to the semiotic (the forest and its freedom). However, according to Kristeva, the semiotic process cannot last long and one has to return to the realm of the symbolic after a while. Fortunately, as this is a comedy, when the lovers are called to return to Athens, Theseus convinces Egeus to accept Lysander as his son in law.



## The Case of Bottom

Nick Bottom, the weaver, though a minor character in the play, makes one of the most impressive Shakespearean scenes. Among his friends, he is known to be the least imaginative. As Ronald F. Miller in “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream: The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things*” put it, “Bottom acts as if the imagination did not exist at all” (Miller 1975, 261). Yet ironically Bottom undergoes the most fascinating and imaginative experience of them all. Although it frightens his friends, his Ovidian metamorphosis to a man wearing the head of an ass attracts the attention of Titania, the queen of the fairies, whose eyes are anointed by the love juice. Bottom’s adventures among the fairies and what he recalls when he awakes put him among those Shakespearean characters to whom Kristeva’s views regarding abjection are fully applicable. The moment he gets up in the morning perplexed is the moment of abjection:

I have had a most rare vision.  
I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what  
dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound  
this dream. Methought I was—there is no  
man can tell what. Methought I was-and  
methought I had,-but man is but a patched fool, if he  
will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of  
man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen,  
man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to  
conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.  
(Shakespeare 1979, 4.1.203-12)

What Bottom cannot remember is his having been with his m(other), manifested by Titania, the previous night. Actually, what is ‘[...] not heard [...] not seen’ is his experience of the semiotic. Bottom’s speech in his state of perplexity is a good example of a subject who has experienced alterity (or the other). By letting Bottom experience the

world of the fairies, Shakespeare gives him the opportunity to experience his pre-mirror stage. Huston argued:

That is [...] what Shakespeare is doing when he wakens Bottom from charmed sleep. He is bringing Bottom back from the diffusive world of sleep and dream, from the identity-obliterating fantasies of Titania's bower and a time, in the pleasures of earliest infancy, when self and world were undifferentiated. (Huston 1973, 217)

'The pleasures of earliest infancy' could serve as a good description for the semiotic state a child lives in in its early infancy, which is a dream-like state in which there is no fixed identity. Bottom's asininity gives him the opportunity to experience the semiotic state he used to associate himself with when he was a child. This is the semiotic beginning he had to expel in order to enter the real, symbolic world. The moment he wakes up, he cannot remember anything at first. He is perplexed. All the things that happened to him the night before turn out to have been a 'rare vision', something extraordinary and beyond the grasp of human beings.

### **Cases of Miscognition**

Kristeva suggested that when the subject is threatened by his unconscious abjected drives, it is drawn "toward the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva 1982, 1) and consequently, its attempts to understand the situation in which it is involved fails. In such situations, the subject under the influence of the semiotic impulses that are alien to laws and rules of language undergoes miscognition. In *Shakespeare, Rhetoric and Cognition*, Raphael Lyne remarked in this state "the attempt to comprehend things better is a kind of failure" (Lyne 2014, 100). He then continued, "in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is a comical failure" (Lyne 2014, 100).

An example to exemplify miscognition is Bottom's state after he wakes up. In his metamorphosed body, Bottom has been with Titania and her fairies the whole night and

managed to experience the semiotic state again after many years. In his dreamlike experience, his subjectivity is exposed to abjection. When he wakes up, he is distracted and “under the illusion that he is still rehearsing a play” (Lyne 2014, 100). Bottom then notices that it is early morning and that he is alone sitting in the forest, a situation which makes him think of his dream-like experiences the night before. Lyne is of the opinion that Bottom tries to give the audience an accurate account of what happened to him previous night, but he fails. Lyne suggested that at these moments of consternation, simple cognition will not do and instead the audience/reader is exposed to a flow of poetic excess manifested by inappropriate usage of figures of speech by the character. The language is beautiful and full of literary devices but is cognitively wrong because the speaker is under the influence of abjection.

Another example of a character experiencing miscognition is Theseus. He is the symbol of order, law and stability in the play. He appears during daylight and serves as a foil to Oberon who manipulates the night-time forest events. From a Kristevan psychoanalytic perspective, Theseus is associated with the symbolic. According to Kristeva, the symbolic deals with grammar and rule, something which creates meaning. Theseus stays far from the adventures in the forest and by doing so remains vigilant and protects his subjectivity. In *The Unconscious in Shakespeare's Plays*, Martin S. Bergman remarked that “Theseus is the spokesman for the part of the Shakespeare's plays that resists falling under the spell of the poet” (Bergmann 2013, 42). ‘The lunatic, the lover and the poet’, in Theseus’ worldview, have no place in the real world because “in psychoanalytic language”, as Bergmann continued, “all three have allowed their unconscious more power over their lives than sane men allow”. (Bergmann 2013, 42). Theseus cannot believe ‘these antique fables’ and considers them at odds with his own personality which is based on ‘cool reason’:

More strange than true: I never may believe  
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.  
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,  
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend

More than cool reason ever comprehends.  
The lunatic, the lover and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact:  
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,  
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:  
The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
Such tricks hath strong imagination,  
That if it would but apprehend some joy,  
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;  
Or in the night, imagining some fear,  
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!  
(Shakespeare 1979, 5.1.2-22)

Theseus tries to separate opposing mental operations from each other, that is to say the work of 'cool reason' from inventions of imagination and fantasy. He believes that love, madness and poetry are the products of imagination and fancy. However, looking closely at these lines, it emerges that although Theseus's speech seems to have its root in a detached subjectivity, he fails to arrive at simple cognition. Nigel Wood wrote that "at the back of Theseus's consternation is a common impasse: the imagination defies categorization and so it also evades analysis" (Wood 2015, 143). Theseus uses many figures of speech and his sentences are poetically rich, but it appears that his speech suffers from what Lyne called "misguidedness" (Lyne 2014, 104). Theseus opines that some quality of a bush may give us the idea of a bear. The figure of speech used here is synecdoche. However, the miscognition arises when he thinks that "this is the work of an overactive imagination, but in fact, surely, this is something we are all aware of doing,

when the brain fills in gaps around something half-seen” (Lyne 2014, 104). The audience knows that the effects that Theseus attributes to imagination are the work of the fairies.

Theseus’s failure to comprehend the adventures of the forest has its root in his inability to understand the semiotic elements surrounding him. He is not interested in and has no sense of what Kristeva calls poetic characteristics, anti-symbolic features that hover around norms and standards. As a ruler, he has always got what he wanted, even his warrior bride Hippolyta; thus, he does not believe in antique fables of love, nor does he have confidence in the fairies and calls them ‘fairy toys’. Theseus’ misjudgement in assigning extraordinary characteristics to the events around him has its root in a cognition gap that has always existed between his intuition and the agencies existing at the other side of his identity border. Because his subjectivity is not threatened by the abjected drives, he has no sense of non-symbolic operations. A Kristevan psychoanalytic assumption is the reason for his cognitive mistakes.

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* offers examples of moments of abjection experienced by different characters. There are moments when the characters resist the symbolic and open their borders of subjectivity for the semiotic elements. Shakespeare skilfully creates such moments when his characters experience love, epiphany, metamorphosis, perplexity and alterity, all of which lead them to experience abjection. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the Athenian lovers and Bottom expel the symbolic and, by doing so, embrace the semiotic. The semiotic helps them to achieve what appears to be impossible at the beginning of the plays.

### **Metamorphosis Leads to Abjection: An Ovidian Reading of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream***

Publius Ovidius Naso, famous as Ovid in the English-speaking world, composed his Latin narrative poem *Metamorphoses* in fifteen books in the first century CE. Within a mythico-historical framework, the books narrate the history of the world from its creation to the death of Julius Caesar, one year before Ovid’s birth. Although difficult to

put in a particular genre, *Metamorphoses* has mostly been considered an epic of some kind. This long poem consists of many episodes, the unifying theme of which is metamorphosis or transformation. Ovid himself makes his intention clear in the first line of the poem: “my mind leads me to speak now of forms changed into new bodies” [...] (Ovid 2010, 5). He considers the gods to be the agents of metamorphoses: “[...] O gods above, inspire this undertaking [...] (Ovid 2010, 5). Across the fifteen books, the reader learns the history of the gods who by their supernatural power metamorphose the immortals as a punishment or a protection. The metamorphoses range from literal to subtle and metaphorical ones. A literal metamorphosis occurs when Actaeon is turned to a deer by Diana and when Juno changes Callisto into a bear. More metaphorically, by being turned into a wolf by Jupiter, Lycaon’s bloodthirsty, wolfish character makes more sense for the reader, and when King Midas wears ass’s ears his witlessness and lack of knowledge in music are better grasped. Although banned for a while by Emperor Augustus, *Metamorphoses* was widely read in the author’s lifetime and was considered a rival to Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

In 1535, Arthur Golding (1536-1606) made the first English translation of *Metamorphoses* from its original Latin. Shakespeare used Golding’s translation as a source for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare knew Latin and as Geoffrey Bullough suggested in *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* there are a few Ovidian elements not found in Golding, which shows Shakespeare read at least some parts of *Metamorphoses* in Latin. There is also a debate whether Shakespeare imitates Ovid or just alludes to him. Charles and Michelle Martindale in *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity* suggested that Shakespeare’s use of Ovid is “imitative, not allusive; educated members of the audience would recognize the presence of Ovid” (Martindale and Martindale 1990, 23). However, Jonathan Bate in *Shakespeare and Ovid* rejected the Martindales’ view by writing that Shakespeare at that time was under the influence of the “Renaissance conceptions of translatio and imitatio” (Bate 1993, 131) and that “the distinction between stylistic imitation and purposeful allusion would not have been made in this way in the Renaissance” (Bate 1993, 9). In addition, Bate believed that Shakespeare was very good at altering Ovid in order to fit his purpose.

## The Epicureanist World Versus the Subject in Process

In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid proves to be an adherent of Epicureanism, which has its root in the writings of the Greek philosopher, Epicurus (born 340 BCE). Although he was a voluminous writer, little of Epicurus' writings survive and it seems that Ovid became familiar with his thought by reading *De Rerum Natura* (or *On the Nature of Things*) by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, born in 99 BCE (Lucretius Carus 1995). As one of the primary vehicles to establish his master's thought, in several parts of his book Lucretius makes it clear that his aim is to glorify the sublime style and philosophy of Epicurus. The Epicurean philosophy in *On the Nature of Things* consists of three basic components of physics, ethics and canonic, the first component of which can be linked to metamorphosis and, consequently, to abjection. In Lucretian physics everything is composed of tiny, imperishable atoms that can neither be created nor destroyed. This atomism tries to explain "the universe as an ongoing cosmic event – a never-ending binding and unbinding of atoms resulting in the gradual emergence of entire new worlds and the gradual disintegration of old ones" (Simpson 2015, 3). In Epicureanism, "our world, our bodies, our minds are but atoms in motion" (Simpson 2015, 3). It appears that Golding had a difficult time in conveying the pagan philosophy that is dominant in *Metamorphoses* because he had to take account of Ovid's Epicureanist, non-Christian thought, in which the existence of multiple gods is emphasized. In his approach to the gods and their influence on the mortals, Ovid differed from his predecessor. Lucretius' materialist (not to be confused with atheist) worldview did not deny the existence of the gods but insisted that "all human civilizations and arts came into being and evolved without any aid or sponsorship from the gods" (Simpson 2015, 3). In fact, Lucretius believed that the gods are uninterested in human affairs. Despite this, in *Metamorphoses* the readers encounter many scenes in which the mortals undergo change and transformation as a result of the gods' wishes. (A claim that Lucretius' characterization of the gods as indifferent to human affairs paved the way for modern secularism after the poem's rediscovery in the early fifteenth century is central to Stephen Greenblatt's book

*The Swerve* (Greenblatt 2012), named for the supposed random motion of atoms (Greenblatt 2011); historians of the period have been largely sceptical of this claim).

Ovid was under the influence of physical aspects of Epicurean thought while he was composing his long narrative poem of transformation. The world of *Metamorphoses* is full of events in which the creatures are shown in process and change. Nothing is stable or still. Inspired by the view that atoms move randomly in unpredictable movements, Ovid created a metamorphic world full of changes and instability; that he lets his characters dwell in a world in process can be likened to Kristeva's notions regarding subject in process. In short, the Epicurean worldview that is prevalent in *Metamorphoses* suggests a way to apply Kristeva's views regarding abjection to some of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Ovid's world, the creatures are at the mercy of external forces that threaten their subjectivities, and so are the selected Shakespearean characters, whose identities, viewed through a Kristevan psychoanalytic lens, are constantly threatened by abject forces.

### **Moments of Metamorphosis in *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

The characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are of two types: the fairies and the mortals. Among the fairies, Shakespeare manages to invent his own equivalents of Ovidian gods and goddesses. Oberon, Puck and Titania are Shakespearean versions of Jupiter, Cupid and Diana, respectively. In "From the Ridiculous to the Sublime: Ovidian and Neoplatonic Registers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*", Sarah Carter argued that the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "are ambiguous conglomerations of myth, demonstrated by the common Renaissance substitution of English folklore fairies for classical nymphs and goddesses" (Carter 2006, 1). At the same time, Shakespeare has some mortals bear the roles of Ovidian characters, which highlights the anthropocentric nature of the play. For example, the role of rapacious Apollo is played by Demetrius who chases Shakespearean versions of Daphne, Hermia and then Helena, in the forest. In three major scenes, Shakespeare parodies three famous stories of *Metamorphoses*. The first occurs in Book 11 where King Midas is punished by growing a pair of ass's ears. In



Shakespeare's play, Bottom, after getting the head of an ass, is rewarded with the company of Titania, the fairy queen. Bottom's story also parodies the story of Actaeon who is punished for spying on the naked Diana by being metamorphosed into a deer and is consequently torn apart by his own hounds. Bottom's metamorphosis even starts sooner than that of Actaeon. Peter Holland wrote that "unlike Ovid's luckless hunter, Shakespeare's Actaeon is metamorphosed before he sees his Titania" (Shakespeare 1998, 78). The third parody is Shakespeare's incorporation of a farcical version of the tragic story of Pyramus and Thisbe from Book 4. The play's moments of metamorphosis and transformations, both mental and physical can be linked to Kristeva's notions of abjection. Inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare's characters' minds and bodies are, in moments of stress, manipulated so that their subjectivities are exposed to the abject. In such moments, the characters resist the symbolic and take refuge in the semiotic. It seems as if Shakespeare is making his own version of the semiotic in this play; by sending the major characters to the forest where different allusions to Ovid are made, Shakespeare temporarily casts them from Athens and its strict laws to a place in which all logic and laws are broken. Shakespeare invites his reader to his own land of temporary metamorphoses. Bate wrote that "the Shakespeare of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* goes even further than Ovid: he invites us to consider the possibility that the love-gods are no more than a dream [...]" (Bate 1993, 135). The playwright invites readers and playgoers to observe the metamorphoses of normal things into things strange and unknown.

Here Kristeva's views become applicable. When something is metamorphosed, it resists meaning and becomes elusive because rules of language and logic cannot be applied. Bottom's experience of Ovidian metamorphosis, his asininity, is manipulated by Shakespeare in such a way that, unlike King Midas, he is rewarded with a series of abjective moments during which he floats in his dreamlike interactions with Titania. By this manipulation, Shakespeare gives Bottom the opportunity to temporarily go back to his pre-Oedipal time when he is able to make love with the origin of the semiotic, his m(other) manifested by Titania. By putting an ass's head on Bottom, Shakespeare makes Bottom's subjectivity susceptible to the abject, which leads to his resisting the symbolic.

In “The Body of Signification” Elizabeth Gross remarked that “Kristeva is fascinated by the ways in which proper sociality and subjectivity are based on the expulsion or exclusion of the improper” (Gross 1990, 86), a notion that makes sense when Bottom’s subjectivity is reinstated when his ass head is removed by Puck.

Another abjective moment created under the influence of Ovid is the final scene when Peter Quince and his actors perform the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe, which turns out to be a ridiculous, unintentional comedy. Bate remarked that “Quince’s impromptu theatrical troupe do not understand the true nature of translation. Their obsessive literalism renders their performance risible” (Bate 1993, 131). In Kristeva’s terms, what causes this ridiculous performance is Bottom and his friends having a false understanding of the symbolic. Still haunted by the events of the night before, the actors’ subjectivity seems to be exposed to the abject and, thus, the simple, clear meaning will not do and poetic excess (a by-product of the semiotic) dominates their speeches. One significant difference between the semiotic and the symbolic is that the former is the language of the unconscious and has nothing to do with the public performances. The symbolic must govern the language of the actors, but Shakespeare has something else in mind. By parodying Ovid, Shakespeare succeeds in pushing aside the symbolic elements and paves the way for the semiotic to master the minds of his characters. Because of their unpreparedness as performers, Bottom and his friends resist the symbolic and embrace the semiotic.

Shakespeare changes Ovid’s material to achieve his own intended metamorphosis. Leonard Barkan observed that “the blood-coloured mulberry into which Pyramus and Thisbe are metamorphosed is replaced by the flower named love-in-idleness which works metamorphic magic when squeezed upon a sleeper’s eyes” (qtd. in Bate 1993, 138). In this example, Shakespeare acts as a clever imitator who artfully adapts his source. Bate suggested that “these changes signal to the careful listener that Shakespeare is varying his great original, as a good imitator should” (Bate 1993, 139). Oberon like Jupiter is the one under whose command metamorphoses happen:

I fell upon a little western flower –  
Before, milk-white; now, purple with love's wound –  
And maidens call it love-in-idleness.  
Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.  
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid  
Will make or man or woman madly dote  
Upon the next live creature that it sees.  
(Shakespeare 1979, 2.1.166-72)

Thanks to the changes Shakespeare makes, the audience can see that the juice of this flower is metamorphic but not tragic. It helps the Athenian lovers to pair with whom they like and the result, as Puck rightly predicts, is that “Jack shall have Jill, Nought shall go ill;” (Shakespeare 1979, 3.2.461-2).

The kind of metamorphosis the Athenian lovers experience in the forest could be explained by Kristeva's views regarding abjection. Puck, as Oberon's agent, puts the love juice on Lysander's and Demetrius' eyes and becomes the cause of the night's confusions. When Demetrius and Lysander both love Helena, it seems that they are out of their minds and mentally metamorphosed. Kristeva maintains that one has to always stay vigilant against the threat of the abject, otherwise exposure to it will be inevitable. One moment of negligence can put subjectivity under threat. In particular moments, for example when one is drugged or falls in love, one's vigilance fails. This is exactly what happens to Demetrius and Lysander. When they wake up, under the influence of the love juice, they are exposed to the abject.

As we have seen, Bottom's metamorphosis starts earlier than his colleagues. His translation to an ass takes place during the rehearsal. Unlike King Midas, Bottom is rewarded after his transformation and, comically, gains the power of a man wearing an ass's head. It is possible that Shakespeare got this idea from Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* of 1584 (Scot 1989), but the main influence remains Ovidian. Bottom experiences the semiotic state he used to associate himself with when he was a child.

Bottom's metamorphic experience affects his language and lets us hear the confessions of a subject that has been exposed to its semiotic origin. In other words, his subjectivity is still exposed when he thinks what he experienced the night before was a dream that [...] the eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen [...] (Shakespeare 1979, 4.1.209). This disorderly language by which Bottom attempts to convey his experience is at once utterly meaningless and yet perfectly suited to the disorderliness of that experience. It is perfectly apt nonsense, and as such his account is in a way quite true. By contrast, Theseus's scepticism or miscognition has its roots in his inability to understand and conceive the events of the forest. He has not been the target of any metamorphosis and, therefore, his subjectivity remains intact. However, by the same token, his lack of cognition shows his symbolic reasoning fails to comprehend the events of the forest correctly in the absence of the semiotic.

### ***Coda on A Midsummer Night's Dream***

There are many scenes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which Shakespeare uses Ovid's concept of metamorphosis and transformation to manipulate the mind and body of his characters. Shakespeare proves himself a capable imitator who manages to get the material from *Metamorphoses* and change them to fit his purpose, which is inducing mental and physical transformations. The four Athenian lovers experience a dream-like night and are manipulated by Oberon and his agent, Puck. The love-in-idleness juice, which possesses metamorphic effect, is applied to Lysander and Demetrius while they are asleep. Bottom is the only character that undergoes both physical and mental transformations. Inspired by the story of King Midas in *Metamorphoses*, Shakespeare put the head of an ass on Bottom and, like Actaeon, sends him to meet a beautiful fairy. Titania, the queen of the fairies, becomes mentally metamorphosed by the juice and falls desperately in love with Bottom and his asinine head. The last Ovidian trace in the play is at the end of the play when Shakespeare parodies the famous story of Pyramus and Thisbe.

We have seen that we can apply Julia Kristeva's views regarding the semiotic, the symbolic and especially the abject to the play. The Epicurean philosophy that influences Ovid's thought is, in many respects, similar to Kristeva's views regarding the subject in process. Shakespearean heroes are under constant subjective metamorphoses. Thus, the experience of metamorphosis equals the state of abjection, generating an uncanny feeling that attacks an individual's subjectivity. In this sense, the moments when Shakespearean characters undergo metamorphosis during the course of the plays are strikingly similar to what Kristeva describes as the experience of abjection. In their moments of metamorphosis, Shakespearean characters are mentally manipulated and cannot think clearly. In these moments of stress, characters fall in love, commit suicide, become perplexed and experience miscognition. Through Kristevan psychoanalytic approach, one can say that, in these moments of metamorphoses, the individuals resist the symbolic, take refuge in the semiotic and, consequently, their subjectivities become exposed to the abject.

### **Orlando and Oliver**

*As You Like It* begins with a pair of duelling brothers in a conflict, which, in the words of Louis Adrian Montrose "arises out of the circumstances of inheritance by primogeniture" (Montrose 1981, 30). Orlando objects to the way he has been brought up by his elder brother, Oliver, the main inheritor of their father, Sir Rowland de Boys. At the beginning of the play, he tells Adam how Oliver keeps him "rustically at home" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.7) and that even "his [Oliver's] horses are bred better" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.10-11) than him. He also tells Adam that Oliver denies "the place of a brother, and, as much as in him lies, mines my gentility with my education" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.19-21). Orlando claims it is his right to receive the same upbringing and education as the middle brother, Jaques, whom Orlando "keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.5-6).

In his *The State of England Anno Dom, 1600*, Thomas Wilson elaborated on the situation of younger brothers and how "their state is of all stations for gentlemen most

miserable [...]” (T. Wilson 1936, 23). As a younger brother himself, Wilson confesses that “my elder brother forsooth must be my master” (T. Wilson 1936, 24). The entire family fund was for the ‘master’ because, as John Draper, in “Orlando, the Younger Brother”, put it, “family honor and future policy required that what money there was should be spent on the oldest son [...]” (Draper 1934, 73). Orlando considers himself the victim of the principle of primogeniture, which although not mandated by law in Shakespeare’s England, was a firmly entrenched part of conventional treatment of heirs. Montrose noted that “in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, primogeniture was more widely and rigorously practiced in England – by the gentry and lesser landowners, as well as by the aristocracy – than anywhere else in Europe” (Montrose 1981, 31). Draper goes even further by saying that “primogeniture was an established custom consecrated in the Bible [...]” (Draper 1934, 73). The law was so cruel to the younger brothers that, as Joan Thirsk noted, “during the sixteenth century to describe anyone as ‘a younger son’ was a short-hand way of summing up a host of grievances” (Thirsk 1969, 360). The main reason behind this law was that the landowners did not want their lands to fragment into smaller parcels over the generations. To prevent fragmentation, the eldest son inherited the whole estate and became master of the household, but, as Thirsk put it, “they rose at the expense of their younger brothers” (Thirsk 1969, 359). Jack Goody wrote that this “manner of splitting property is a manner of splitting people; it creates [...] a particular constellation of ties and cleavages between husband and wife, parents and children, sibling and sibling” (Goody, Thirsk, and Thompson 1976, 3). To speak more precisely, the inevitable outcome of such a system was inequality, animosity, and greed. In fact, according to Montrose, this “tense situation [...] was a familiar and controversial fact of Elizabethan social life” (Montrose 1981, 31). Many younger sons in Shakespeare’s time had the same situation as Orlando: “primogeniture sacrificed them for the sake of their elder brothers” (Thirsk 1969, 359).

Therefore, as Lawrence Stone emphasized, “the prime factor affecting all families which owned property was [...] primogeniture”, something which “could govern the relationship between the siblings” (Stone 1977, 87–8). In early modern England, the application of the law of primogeniture affected the sibling relations. After the deaths of

their fathers, the elder brothers were elevated to the position of the father in the household. They were expected to undertake fatherly duties. Denied any share in their fathers' wealth, the younger siblings became the dependants of the elder ones. This kind of relationship caused many problems among the siblings because, as Montrose put it, "the eldest son assumes a paternal relationship to his siblings; and the potential for sibling conflict increases when the relationship between brother and brother becomes identified with the relationship between father and son" (Montrose 1981, 30). At this phase, fraternity gives way to filiation, and here is where psychoanalysis becomes applicable. Orlando cannot tolerate this cruel father-substitute and is experiencing the second Oedipal phase in his psychosexual life. During the first phase, if we imagine a life for Orlando outside of the play, we might consider that he has been denied his mother by his father, and in this second time, the father-substitute denies him of what he considers his right. In the first Oedipal phase, the fear of castration made him forget about the mother, while in the second time, "the courtesy of nations" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.45-6) is denying him of what he must possess.

From a thorough psychoanalytic analysis of the reason behind Orlando's spleen, one can arrive at a more complicated cause than the Oedipus complex. Applying Kristeva's theories regarding the symbolic, the semiotic and the abject to this case, one can say that Orlando, after abjecting the semiotic, and entering the symbolic phase of his life, has been mistreated while experiencing the latter. The symbolic law was cruel and harsh to him. The promises were not fulfilled and that is the major psychoanalytic reason for his rage. According to Kristeva, in order to enter the world of meaning, the symbolic world, a little child has to abject the semiotic. Kelly Oliver, in *Reading Kristeva*, wrote that "on the level of personal archaeology, abjection shows up as the struggle to separate from the maternal body" (Oliver 1993, 56). So, the symbolic starts at the expense of the semiotic. By entering the symbolic phase of its life, the child gains an identity. This identity is developed and completed throughout the course of the person's life and promises to place him in a position that suits him.

However, in some cases, the promises are not fulfilled and one faces problems with one's symbolic identity. This is the case with Orlando. He is not what he is supposed to be. He is desperate. He tells Oliver "I have as much of my father in me as you" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.49). He is also Sir Rowland de Boys' son and should live and be treated like a lord. That is his true identity. Montrose remarked that "in this conspicuously motherless play, the social context of reciprocal father-son hostility is a male struggle for identity and power fought between elders and youths, first-born and younger brothers" (Montrose 1981, 37). Orlando considers his brother the usurper of his identity. In fact, this fraternal dissension is a fight for identity. The fraternal conflict reaches a peak when the wrestling match starts. Orlando seems to be an easy target but to everyone's surprise Charles the wrestler is defeated. Using Freud's psychoanalytic theories, this can be explained by the notion of transference. Orlando's hatred toward his brother is transferred to the wrestler. In order to give it a Kristevan orientation one can say that by winning the wrestling match in front of the crowd, Orlando does his best to reinforce his position in the symbolic. Actually, Orlando's victory over Charles the wrestler is the beginning of the process of his journey to prove himself to his brother and acquire his true identity.

Elaborating on Kristeva's notions regarding the semiotic and the symbolic, James M. Russell proposed that, "without the symbolic, all signification would be babble or noise. But, without the semiotic, all signification would be empty and have no importance for our lives" (Russell 2015, 279). It can be understood from her remark that the symbolic alone sometimes fails to solve the problems of the world. It is supposed to communicate, because it has the language in its possession, but it fails to do so. It lacks something. The symbolic is sometimes too harsh to understand. It can also be so cruel. There sometimes need to be elements of the semiotic to make a balance, to neutralize the symbolic threat. Kristeva thought that there could be no effective communication without the semiotic collaboration because "[...] without the semiotic, [...] we would have empty speech" (Oliver 1993, 97). The symbolic needs a semiotic touch to become understandable and tolerable. One cannot exclude the semiotic from its life. Although it is abjected from one's life for the sake of identity, the semiotic "hovers at the periphery



of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood" (McAfee 2004, 46). It does not fade, but it stays with us and is ready to help us when necessary. This is the reason people sometimes escape from the symbolic and take refuge in the semiotic. The symbolic is harsh, dangerous, and threatening to Orlando. He is warned by Adam to "Come not within these doors; within this roof" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.3.17). The symbolic has the potential to destroy everyone who does not conform. Orlando has to stay away from his lodging because, as Adam puts it, "this house is but a butchery: Abhor it, fear it, do not enter it" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.3.28). Orlando feels the immediate threat of the symbolic. He has to flee to somewhere: "No matter whither" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.3.30).

According to Michael Jamieson, "[...] in several of the comedies Shakespeare gives us not a single but a dual world; the action moves between two realms" (Jamieson 1975, 12). The two realms are full of antitheses: the first one as the rule-based, strict or even corrupt world, while the second one suggests the opposite. Just as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *As You Like It* Shakespeare chooses a forest as the second realm. Similar to the Athenian lovers, who finally found their mates in the forest of Athens, the main characters in *As You Like It* find the opportunity to solve their problems in the Forest of Arden. There is no sign of cruelty and corruption in there; it is a world apart. There is a sense of timelessness in the forest that lets the forest dwellers pursue their desires. Jay L. Halio remarked that "Shakespeare throughout the play contrasts the timelessness of the forest world with the time-ridden preoccupations of court and city life [...]" (Halio 1962, 204). The forest dwellers pass their time carelessly and have time for everything: love, music, and poetry. From a Kristevan psychoanalytic perspective, it can be suggested that to protect himself against the threats of the symbolic world Orlando has chosen the right place to take refuge.

There are many literary critics and scholars who have written about the similarities between the forest of Arden and Ovid's golden world. Stephen J. Lynch wrote that "the myth of the golden age in the opening book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* seems to lurk behind Shakespeare's representation of the forest of Arden" (Lynch 2003,

10). He compared Duke Frederick's court with Ovid's degraded iron world. The forest and its resemblance to Ovid's golden world can be regarded as the semiotic, as opposed to the iron world of the city and court life. While the latter is stained with the symbolic rules, the semiotic is a timeless place in which the troubles of the iron world have no effect. The Forest of Arden, with its semiotic characteristics, causes the previously wrongful characters to change for the better. The moment Oliver steps foot in the Forest of Arden he is transformed to a loving brother he has never been before. This change reveals an essential difference between the symbolic and the semiotic. While the former brings many obstacles such as greed, jealousy and hatred that can put brothers at feud, the latter is linked with peace, harmony and love and is able to reconcile the brothers. Kristeva believed there must be a combination of both the symbolic and the semiotic to arrive at signification. She insisted that "this combinatory moment [...] is always produced with reference to a moment of stasis, a boundary, a symbolic barrier. Without this temporary resistance [...] the process would never become a practice [...]" (Kristeva 1984, 102). In the Forest of Arden, the semiotic comes to help; it solves the problem that existed between the brothers. When Orlando stumbles upon a ragged man asleep in the forest, who is about to be preyed upon by a "green and gilded snake" (Shakespeare 1975, 4.3.108), he succeeds in scaring the snake away, only to see a hungry lioness emerge from the underbrush. After discovering that the ragged man is his brother Oliver, Orlando's first impulse is to let him die, but that would not be according to the principles of the golden world. Orlando fights off the lion and saves Oliver's life. Maurice Hunt argued that "traditionally, the lion is a figure of wrath; the playgoer understands that Orlando has triumphed over anger (both his own and Oliver's) through the heroic fury of his fight" (Hunt 2008, 39). Giving it a psychoanalytic interpretation, one can say that by saving his brother from the immediate threat of death, Orlando unconsciously overcomes his deeply engrained hatred toward the father-substitute, which is an act that greatly moves the latter. Oliver is a changed man now. He is ready to give his brother his share in their father's wealth. Now both of them can enjoy the symbolic, which is something that could not have been done without the help of the semiotic. The Forest of Arden proves to be capable of healing the wounds inflicted by the corrupt hierarchies of the symbolic world.

## **Duke Senior and Duke Frederick**

The Forest of Arden has other inhabitants, most of whom are among the lords and courtiers. They are gathering there in support of their banished lord, Duke Senior, the former ruler. Duke Frederick, his brother, staged a coup against him and forced him to live in exile. Charles the wrestler's description of Duke Senior is worth noting here:

They say he is already in the forest of Arden, and a many merry men with him; and there they live like the old Robin Hood of England: they say many young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world (Shakespeare 1975, 1.1.114-9).

Stephen J. Lynch believed that Duke "Frederick's usurpation is all the more unnatural, and would evoke biblical associations with Cain and Abel" (Lynch 2003, 21). Duke Senior, like the biblical Abel, has fallen victim to the greed and jealousy of his brother. He is in fact betrayed by the 'unnatural' symbolic, and is sheltered by the semiotic. In Kristevan psychoanalysis, the semiotic is abjected at an early stage of one's life because of the need to enter the social stage. In other words, the symbolic entrance is done at the expense of the semiotic. While the former dominates and controls the world, the latter does not fade away and is ready to shake the symbolic foundations. The 'unnatural' symbolic is not legitimate. After Duke Senior is forced to abdicate and is consequently banished, the symbolic has lost its legitimacy and no longer has the support of the majority of the nobles. Duke Frederick's show of power is fake. He knows that other people have opposing opinions, saying to Orlando "The world esteem'd thy father honourable, but I did find him still mine enemy" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2 214-15). There are many people who have objections to his legitimacy. Therefore, many 'merry gentlemen' have joined Duke Senior in the forest. They 'fleet the time carelessly' as people 'did in the golden world'. Duke Senior claims to prefer the comfort and ease of living in the Forest of Arden to the dangers of the court: "are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court?" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.1 3-4). He and his followers,

rejected by, or rejecting, the symbolic, unconsciously, have returned to their pre-Oedipal state, when they had a strong tie to the semiotic. By gathering around and supporting the banished Duke, the 'merry' men have chosen him as the leader of an opposing force, potentially able to threaten the symbolic. Charles the wrestler's account of the Forest of Arden dwellers highlights their increasing popularity. Their return to the semiotic in increasing numbers has left the symbolic front in the weak position. The power of the semiotic starts to outweigh that of the symbolic. Duke Frederick's abdication in favor of his brother in the final scene of the play supports the view that a subject with a weak identity border is vulnerable against the strong force of the abject. Duke Senior and his followers, though were initially expelled by the symbolic force, have an abject-like return and replace the symbolic.

### **Rosalind and Orlando**

Rosalind and Orlando first meet before the wrestling match, when the former, along with her cousin, Celia, try to dissuade him from fighting. Orlando has made up his mind and they fail to sway him. Rosalind's last words before the match are: "the little strength that I have, I would it were with you" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2.183-4). Orlando prevails but his happiness is ruined when he hears Duke Frederick saying: "I would thou hadst been son to some man else" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2.213). The young women rush to him to congratulate him on his win. Orlando's happiness is restored when he hears from Rosalind that Duke Senior was fond of his father: "My father loved Sir Rowland as his soul, and all the world was of my father's mind" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2.224-5). What happens next is the spontaneous overflow of love on both sides. Rosalind and Oliver become mutually smitten, but are tongue-tied and unable to express their growing love. Rosalind's words "Wear this for me [...]" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2.236) when giving Orlando the chain from her neck are signs of her emerging love for the young wrestler. Orlando's monologue, after Rosalind leaves, shows although he won the physical fight, he lost the emotional one: "What passion hangs these weights upon my tongue? I cannot speak to her, yet she urged conference. O poor Orlando, thou art overthrown! Or Charles or something weaker masters thee" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.2.247-50).

What Orlando experiences while saying the above lines is similar to Romeo's feelings after he sees Juliet for the first time: "Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night" (Shakespeare 1980, 1.5.43-53). Both lovers experience an epiphany. To analyse it under the light of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory, one can say that the moment of epiphany is quite similar to the post-Oedipal return of the semiotic: "[...] for men, accessing the semiotic [...] engenders a postoedipal return of the maternal within the symbolic" (Oliver 1993, 111). In such a moment, a subject's border of identity becomes weak and vulnerable against the abject-like return of the semiotic. Orlando knows that he is 'overthrown'. His identity is exposed. Now that the symbolic world does not let him reach his love, he must take refuge in the semiotic and develop his love for Rosalind. In fact, as Halio put it, "Rosalind and Orlando [...] in the timeless pastoral world of the Forest of Arden, where past and present merge [...] find refuge and there flourish" (Halio 1962, 200). They will have ample time in the timeless nature of the forest to exercise their love. The semiotic will help them to do so.

Orlando is consumed by love. He has composed some poems, the subject of which is his burning love for Rosalind. He runs in the forest and hangs his poems on trees. Poetry can be regarded as the perfect language for expressing love. Orlando's poems address Rosalind, but Ganymede reads them. Ganymede is in fact Rosalind in disguise. The confusion becomes complete when Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, starts impersonating Rosalind. Ganymede promises to help Orlando to overcome the pain of his love: "I profess curing it by counsel" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.355). Rosalind vows to cure Orlando if he "would but call me Rosalind and come every day to my cot, and woo me" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.392-3). Orlando's answer, having been convinced by Ganymede of the healing power of his treatment, is "now, by the faith of my love, I will" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.416). The audience here experiences a kind of confusion, perplexity, or difficulty in understanding how the forthcoming incidents in the play are going to happen. Harold Jenkins wrote that in this play "though things are rarely what they seem, they may sometimes be in a deeper sense. What is wisdom and what is folly is of course never decided – you may have it 'as you like it'" (Jenkins 2002, 50). Nothing is

certain. Shakespeare creates a situation in which the symbolic meaning is resisted, and, therefore, various interpretations and meanings are suggested. A good example is the notion of cross-dressing. Of course, Shakespeare often used cross-dressing to allow his heroines to achieve what would otherwise be unachievable. Some of Shakespeare's heroines, like Portia or Helena, disguise themselves to achieve their aims. But the question regarding Rosalind's disguise is whether she does it for the sake of protection or, there is another reason. The audience knows that Rosalind's first intention is to protect herself for she is aware of the dangers ahead: "alas, what danger will it be to us, maids as we are, to travel forth so far!" (Shakespeare 1975, 1.3.104-5). However, later, in the forest, she uses her disguise to start a game of love with Orlando: "Come, woo me, woo me, for now I am in a holiday, humour and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very very Rosalind?" (Shakespeare 1975, 4.1.65-8).

It is not clear whether Orlando really wants to learn wooing from Ganymede or the latter's beautiful, womanish face is the main cause of his involvement. The audience gets suspicious of Orlando's way of expressing his love when they hear such a sentence: "Fair youth, I would I could make thee believe I love" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.375-6). It seems that although Orlando is in love with Rosalind, he also enjoys practicing a romance-like relationship with a beautiful, young boy. It looks like the beauty of a boy who resembles the woman he loves is more appealing than the woman itself. Some critics emphasize the theme of homoeroticism in *As You Like It*. Cynthia Marshal argued that "Ganymede's masquerade as Rosalind opens up the equivocacy of Orlando's desire: it is apparent during the love play in Arden that Orlando desires them (Marshal 1998, 380). Lynch's reasons for such an emphasis are Orlando's begging a kiss from Rosalind ("I would kiss before I spoke" (Shakespeare 1975, 4.1.69), and also the name Rosalind chooses for her alter ego. He suggests the name carries strong homosexual connotations because, as Lynch observed, "the mythical Ganymede was a young boy seduced by Jupiter" (Lynch 2003, 34). Therefore, the true nature of a cross-dressed female called Ganymede (played by a male actor in Shakespeare's time) might be too confusing for the audience to understand. Jean E. Howard argued that cross-dressing was mostly viewed negatively in early modern England, and female transvestites were punished for the

transgressive act. Although she admitted that “some [women] may have worn male clothing for protection in travelling about in the city; some may have been driven to prostitution by economic necessity, with their cross-dressed apparel becoming a demonized ‘sign’ of their enforced sexual availability” (Howard 1988, 421). There were also anti-theatrical polemicists such as Philip Stubbes who did not cease condemning cross-dressing. In *The Anatomie of Abuses* Stubbes wrote that “our apparell was given us as a signe distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therefore one to weare the Apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde” (Stubbes 2002, F5V). According to Howard, there was a widespread belief that “the mannish woman not only produces bastards but is one herself, and she threatens the collapse of the entire class system” (Howard 1988, 425).

The audience faces difficulty in understanding whether Orlando is flirting with the young man or he knows the true identity of Ganymede. That Ganymede and Orlando’s dialogues in the forest fail to convey a clear-cut meaning may be linked to Kristeva’s view that in some literary texts, language oscillates toward the repressed semiotic. Kristeva called this the language of the genotext, “language’s underlying foundation” (Kristeva 1984, 87). The genotext opposes the phenotext, which is the “language that serves to communicate, [...]. The phenotext is a structure [...]; it obeys rules of communication” (Kristeva 1984, 87). She believed that the genotext is the language constrained by the symbolic. However, the genotext does not cease in resisting the semantic rules that dominate the phenotext. The genotext exists within the language and makes it difficult to understand. Kristeva wrote that “the presence of the genotext within the phenotext is indicated by what I have called a semiotic disposition” (Kristeva 1986). The couple’s dialogues in the forest have genotic characteristics. One cannot figure out what exactly they, or even Shakespeare, mean in the wooing scenes in the forest. Their language is the language of the genotext; it evades meaning.

Timelessness is the essence of the semiotic; a little child, in its pre-Oedipal time, is unaware of the passage of time. It can be said that a little child passes the time carelessly in the semiotic world surrounding it. By taking refuge in the forest, Orlando

and Rosalind put the symbolic world aside and embrace the semiotic world. When Rosalind asks Orlando "what is 't o'clock?" his response is "You should ask me what time o'day: there's no clock in the forest" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.295-6). In the forest time is not measured by a symbolic measuring system like clock. There is no need to measure time as they do in cities because the forest dwellers do not care about it. They pass their time carelessly.

The last point to consider is the anti-symbolic nature of Rosalind's character. Shakespeare's Rosalind breaks all the symbolic rules of Elizabethan time. She is an exception even among other famous Shakespearean heroines. Edward Berry was of this opinion that "she is simply Shakespeare's 'ideal woman'" (Berry 1980, 43). She says more lines than any other female character in Shakespeare's plays. She is the main character in the play. Her power to surprise and entertain is even greater than that some famous Shakespearean heroes. Berry wrote that Rosalind "has a capacity that exceeds even Prospero's: an ability to surprise her audience [...]. Even more mysteriously than Prospero, she can bring down a god to sanction her festivities" (Berry 1980, 45). More importantly, she has control over her body, which was not common in early modern England. Peter Stallybrass argued that "[...] discipline and control of woman's body were central patriarchal preoccupations" (Stallybrass 1986, 123). The state dictated how a good woman was supposed to behave in society. Howard, approving Stallybrass, continued, "the orifices of that body were to be policed, the body's actions circumscribed. Women who gadded about outside the home or who talked too much (by male standards) were suspected of being whores [...]. The good woman was closed off: silent, chaste, and immured within the home" (Howard 1988, 424). But Shakespeare's Rosalind breaks such clichés and proves herself a strong woman who is able to mentally manipulate her suitor. She is in full control of the matchmaking scene at the end of the play and she steps out of the fiction to perform the epilogue. She admits that this breaks theatrical customs: "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue" (Shakespeare 1975, 5.4.198). Rosalind is a transgressor who has the potential to violate the norms and standards, a characteristic that gives her an edge in her encounter with what Kristeva calls the symbolic world.



## Shakespeare and Lodge

Nearly all critics and early modern scholars agree on where Shakespeare found materials for *As You Like It*. Geoffrey Bullough wrote that “his main source was the romance *Rosalynde* or *Euphues’ Golden Legacy* (1590) which Thomas Lodge had written to alleviate the boredom of a voyage to the Canaries” (Bullough 1958, 143). The main essential characters are the same in Shakespeare; just their names are changed. However, like his many other plays, Shakespeare proves to be a great manipulator of the source materials. Bullough wrote that “Shakespeare’s approach to his sources was twofold; he regarded them as repositories of incidents, ‘lazzi’, plots and personages, but he also looked into them for ‘themes’ – not fixed ideas [...] but general motifs to be manipulated in the process of recreation” (Bullough 1958, 150). The main change Shakespeare makes is the way the youngest brother is treated by his father. In Lodge’s account, Sir John of Bourdeaux gives the most share to Rosadar, the youngest brother:

First therefore unto thee Saladyne, the eldest, and therefore the chiefest pillar of my house [...] to thee I give fourteene ploughlands [...] But, unto Rosadar, the youngest, I give [...] sixteene ploughlands; for if the inward thoughts be discovered by outward shadows, Rosadar will exceed you all in bounty and honour. (Greg 1907, 3)

There is no theme of primogeniture in *Rosalynde*. So, why does Shakespeare make such a significant departure from his source? The reason could be that Shakespeare was concerned with the side effects of the application of the law of primogeniture to the class of gentry. Patrick Wallis reported that in the sixteenth century a large proportion of the younger sons of the gentry were in London, pursuing university degrees, working as apprentices or spending time in one of the Inns of Court (Wallis 2011, 42). Montrose observed that “Shakespeare’s audience must have included a high proportion of gentle born younger sons-adults, as well as the youths who were students and apprentices” (Montrose 1981, 33). Shakespeare knew his audience, he wanted to sympathise with them; that is the most likely reason he changed the story. Shakespeare was neither a

member of the gentry, nor was he the younger brother, but he was able to understand how they felt. Thirsk thought that “Shakespeare, himself an elder brother, but with the will and sympathy to see things from the younger brother’s point of view, launched Orlando on his adventures in *As You Like It* with a powerful protest against the iniquity of primogeniture” (Thirsk 1969, 359).

To put it in the main theoretical focus of this section, one can say that, making the above change in the source materials is an act of protest against the symbolic. It is likely that Shakespeare knew many younger sons who were working or studying in London. He also knew that all of these people were financially dependent on their elder brothers. And, most importantly, he was sure that all of them considered primogeniture cruel and unjust. In Shakespeare’s time, the elder brothers controlled their siblings. Orlando is not allowed to study, he is raised like a peasant. Shakespeare skilfully portrays these disadvantaged people’s problems. *As You Like It* is anti-symbolic in its approach.

### **Jaques and his Melancholy**

Jaques is the most incongruous figure among Duke Senior’s attendants in the Forest of Arden. Although he has chosen to accompany the banished Duke in the forest, his ideas clash with the other noble foresters in the play. While the main characters of the play strive against their imposed fates brought about by the symbolic, he does not cease bitterly mocking them. The First Lord tells Duke senior that Jaques considers the latter a greater usurper compared with his brother: “you do more usurp than doth your brother that hath banish’d you” (Shakespeare 1975, 2.1.27-8). He means that Duke Senior and his followers violate the golden world quality of the Forest of Arden by hunting. Seeing a wounded stag by the river, he became so grieved that he “stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook, augmenting it with tears” (Shakespeare 1975, 2.1.42-3). He even takes issue with Orlando’s writing love poems on the leaves of the trees and tells him “I pray you, mar no more trees with writing love-songs in their barks” (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.255-6). He considers the human inhabitants of the forest as intruders who are destroying the harmony in there. The question, then, is why Jaques cares about the forest

and its natural inhabitants? The answer is that the whole setting unconsciously reminds him of his early beginning, the earliest phase of his life when he was associated with the semiotic. The foresters are violating the central characteristics of the semiotic, its harmony and rhythm. That is the main reason behind Jaques' objections to them.

Jaques's mind is obsessed with the melancholy thought. He delights in being sad and claims that he "can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.5.11-12). Most Shakespearean scholars do not take his melancholy seriously. For instance, Jenkins suggested that Jaques' melancholy is "not the fatigue of spirits of the man who has found the world too much for him" (Jenkins 2002, 45), or, according to Cynthia Marshall, "the melancholy Jaques makes his living, we might say, by cheerfully lampooning what he could be but is not" (Marshall 1998, 378). Agnes Latham called Jaques' melancholy a misplaced type that could have escaped ridiculousness if it had been expressed in a different setting (Shakespeare 1975, lxxvi). Jaques has his own unique type of melancholy. He stresses the particularity of his malady and considers it different from others' like those of the scholars, lawyers or lovers, and says, "it is a melancholy of mine own" (Shakespeare 1975, 4.1.15-16). In the forest he has lost interest in his previous life in the court and, generally, with real life affairs. For this reason, he does not return to the court with Duke Senior and the others and decides to stay in the forest forever.

Basing her approach on Freud's theories regarding 'negation', Marshall argued that the root of Jaques' melancholy is his unconscious "method of striking a balance with otherwise disruptive or even destructive energies" (Marshall 1998, 377). This method, according to Freud, is "a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed" (Freud 2010b, 4141). Jaques's negation-based melancholy can also be approached by Kristeva's theories. In *Black Sun*, Kristeva claimed that a melancholy subject is involved with the "impossible mourning for the maternal object" (Kristeva 1989, 9). Kristeva continued:

I have lost an essential object that happens to be, in the final analysis, my mother, is what the speaking being seems to be saying. But [...] since I consent to lose her

I have not lost her (that is the negation), I can recover her in language. (Kristeva 1989, 43)

From the above quotation, it can be inferred that by expressing melancholic remarks Jaques is, unconsciously, searching for the lost 'Thing', his mother. By the same token, that is the same reason he prefers to stay in the forest forever. Unlike the other major characters of the play, Jaques does not consider the semiotic a temporary haven in which one can prepare itself in order to fight back the symbolic. Rather, he thinks of the semiotic as a solution to permanently get rid of the symbolic. In his travels, Jaques has witnessed that the symbolic has added to the problems of the world, a bitter fact "in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness" (Shakespeare 1975, 4.1.18-19). Psychoanalytically, he thinks there is no remedy to ameliorate the maladies brought about by the symbolic. Deriving from Freud's psychoanalytic theories, in Kristevan psychoanalysis the little male child, after leaving the semiotic and entering the symbolic phase of his life, is always looking for a mother-substitute in order to make the harsh symbolic world tolerable. He fails to find a substitute for the 'Thing' during his childhood and "postpones his desire for his mother until he can find an acceptable substitute when he grows up" (Oliver 1993, 27). According to Freud and Kristeva, love and marriage can serve as a valve for protecting the individual against the side effects of the symbolic life. But Jaques is of the opposing opinion. Being homosocial in nature, he considers heterosexual love a futile solution. He indirectly calls Orlando a fool when he sees that the latter is in love because he thinks the "the worst fault you have is to be in love" (Shakespeare 1975, 3.2.277). The only solution, in his view, is to escape from the symbolic forever and live in permanent exile. The forest reminds him of the 'Thing' he lost years ago. He fails to find a substitute for the 'Thing', and, therefore, decides to stay in the Forest of Arden forever and mourn for the abjected semiotic.

### ***Coda on As You Like It***

In *As You Like It* symbolic elements are resisted in various ways and the semiotic is shown as a safe haven where the main characters can take refuge. Shakespeare's

alterations to his source materials make primogeniture one of the highlights of the play. Orlando, its victim, does his best to get what he considers his right, but fails to do so because of the threat and power of the symbolic. The only remaining solution for him is to take refuge in the Forest of Arden in which with the help of the semiotic elements of the forest he not only manages to reconcile with his brother but he is also able to express his love for Rosalind. The main characters in the play, in a way or the other, are harmed or threatened by the symbolic. Rosalind is banished by Duke Frederick, the usurper of her father's title, and has to go to the Forest of Arden to protect herself against the symbolic threats. Duke Senior, banished by his brother, is also living in the Forest of Arden with his followers. As a repository of the semiotic elements, the forest has the power to defeat the symbolic. It can be understood from Kristeva's theories that in the absence of the semiotic the symbolic often fails to communicate with people; it becomes empty and meaningless or even harsh and cruel. The symbolic needs the semiotic to become effective and understandable. And here is where the importance of the Forest of Arden is felt. It reminds the readers of the importance of the semiotic, and that how, sometimes, a return to the semiotic can solve problems caused by the symbolic.

### **Sly's Dream**

Having fallen asleep a drunken stupor outside of an alehouse, Christopher Sly has no idea what he is going to undergo after he wakes up. Indeed, his transformation to a lord is one of the best examples of metamorphosis among Shakespeare's plays, both in its mental or its physical sense. Although, ironically, in his conversation with the hostess, he confusedly boasts of his glorious lineage and asserts, "we came in with Richard Conqueror" (Shakespeare 2009, Induction, 1.4), the reality of living like a true descendent of a mighty lord is far from the mind of a poor tinker who cannot afford to pay for the glassware he has broken in his inebriated clumsiness. When he opens his eyes at the beginning of the second scene of the Induction, everything looks like a dream for him. He apparently remembers the hostess who warned him that she would "go fetch the thirdborough" (Shakespeare 2009, Induction, 1.9-10), to which he replied, "I'll not budge an inch, boy. Let him come, and kindly" (Shakespeare 2009, Induction, 1.12). Instead of

an angry thirdborough, Sly finds himself surrounded by servants and attendants in a luxurious bedchamber. In this dreamlike situation, he is dressed like a lord, drinking sack instead of ale. His first reaction is resistance: “I am Christophero Sly; call not me ‘honour’ nor lordship: I ne’er drank sack in my life” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.5-6). However, when he is convinced that he is “nothing but a lord” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.62), and has a wife “who is much more beautiful than any other woman in this declining age” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.63-4), Sly stops resisting and his language changes from plain prose to iambic pentameter. As noted by Karen Newman “Sly is only convinced of his lordly identity when he is told of his wife” (Newman 2001, 150). Indeed, perhaps unconsciously, as soon as he discovers that he might be physically satisfied, his new condition seems more appealing to him and, therefore, he stops resisting it.

To give Sly’s experience a psychoanalytic experience, one can say that, by taking Sly out of his context and manipulating his identity, Shakespeare gives him the chance of revisiting his archaic past when he was associated with the semiotic. Like Nick Bottom in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the metamorphosed Sly is given the opportunity to approach a member of the opposite sex. The reason Sly stops doubting his new condition is an appealing psychological force that reminds him of his mother. After hearing that he has a wife, Sly commands, “well, bring our lady hither to our sight” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.75). His situation here is very similar to what Kristeva calls a post-Oedipal return of the semiotic: “[...] for men, accessing the semiotic [...] engenders a post-Oedipal return of the maternal within the symbolic” (Oliver 1993, 111). Sly’s immediate reaction upon seeing his wife is to satisfy his lust after years of absence: “Madam, undress you and come now to bed” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.118). Although he is denied immediate satisfaction by his supposed wife (impersonated by a young servant), the gratification promise is the vital energy force that convinces him to continue his role as a lord. Upon hearing that a play is going to be performed in his presence, Sly invites his wife to “sit by my side and let the world slip: we shall ne’er be younger” (Shakespeare 2009, Ind.2.142). So, the Induction ends with Sly ready to watch *The Taming of the Shrew* with the ease

and carelessness of his semiotic beginning, with a woman by his side symbolising his mother.

When the play proper starts, Sly and his company disappear until the end of 1.1 when he drowsily struggles to keep his eyes open. He apparently falls asleep and misses the rest of the play. In a contemporary play of a similar name, *The Taming of A Shrew*, which has an uncertain relationship to Shakespeare's play, the characters of the Induction return after the end of the inset play so that the framing device of the beginning is mirrored in a matching frame at the end. But in Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Sly and the other characters do not return at the end. Margie Burns asserted that because the major characters in the play proper resemble those of the Induction, Shakespeare thought that "any enclosing form would ill-suit an action of release and expansion [...]" (Burns 2010, 97). Perhaps after creating better equivalents for Sly and his companions, and as a result, developing a more entertaining story for his audience, Shakespeare decided to drop the closing frame. Sears Jayne, on the other hand, argued that from 1.1 till the end of the play the audience watches an account of what happens in the sleeping Sly's dream. Jayne suggested that "from the first entrance of Petruchio (1.2), we are no longer watching the play put on by the players, but Sly's dream-sequel to the one scene which the players have performed" (Jayne 1966, 48). Newman also wrote that "Sly is presented with two 'dreams', the dream he is a lord [...] and the 'dream' of Petruchio taming Kate" (Newman 2001, 150). The most obvious support for this is the fact that the moment Sly falls asleep, Petruchio arrives in Padua to find a wife for himself, which justifies the notion that Petruchio is indeed a version of Sly. Jayne also highlighted this notion that "Sly must be a bachelor in order to woo and wed Kate in his dream-identity as Petruchio" (Jayne 1966, 54). In his dream, Sly embarks on a taming adventure, the process of which highlights some psychoanalytic aspects of his character that would otherwise remain unknown.

The theory that the whole play proper happens in Sly's dream can be developed further, as Jayne suggested: "As Sly falls asleep, he imagines that he is the conquering hero (descended as he is from 'Richard' [i.e. William] the Conqueror) who comes to the

rescue of the young lovers” (Jayne 1966, 53). In his short trip to his semiotic origin, Sly aims to build up a new, much stronger, identity for himself. Jayne added that “his sexual wrestling with the reluctant ‘lady’ to whom he has been introduced shortly before the play, becomes translated in his dream into the unnecessarily vigorous physical contact of his conquest of Kate” (Jayne 1966, 53). In his dream, Sly does not resemble the weak and feeble drunkard, ejected by the hostess. He wants to create an assertive character like that of Petruchio for himself, someone who is able to tame the shrew. Although he failed to establish such a character for himself on his first separation from the semiotic, on this second departure, though temporarily in a dream, he is given the chance to form such a strong subject that enables him to take revenge upon those who humiliated him. Jayne argued that Sly’s dream can be regarded as the reflection of what happened to him at the beginning of Induction, and here is where

the significance of the widow becomes clear. The widow is the hostess of the induction, against whom Sly has held a grudge all this time; in his role as Petruchio he has a chance to get even with her by having Kate rail at her. (Jayne 1966, 54)

Thus, some scenes in the play proper, especially the taming scenes, might be seen as referring to an unconscious-driven revenge on the hostess, who is represented by Katherine and the widow in the play proper. Finally, it can be suggested that Sly’s identity is secured (albeit temporarily) at the end of his dream.

### **Katherine and Petruchio**

Coppelia Kahn argued that “*The Taming of the Shrew* depicts the subjection of a willful woman to the will of her husband” (Kahn 1975, 88). Indeed, in Shakespeare’s time, wilfulness in a woman was widely condemned as an unpleasant trait. In Lynda E. Boose’s characterization of early modern gender politics in England “[...] an obsessive energy was invested in exerting control over the unruly woman – the woman who was exercising either her sexuality or her tongue under her own control rather than under the



rule of a man” (Boose 2001, 167). Shakespeare masterfully creates such an unruly woman in *The Taming of the Shrew*. At the opening scene of the play proper, Katherine is depicted a shrewish lady who often gets involved in altercations with others. The most obvious trait of Katherine is her abusive tongue; as when she threatens Hortentio: “[I would] comb your noddle with a three-legged stool and paint your face and use you like a fool” (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.64-5). Valuing a mild disposition in a wife, the suitors Hortentio and Gremio agree that Katherine’s behaviour diverges from the norm and that since she is the elder sister (traditionally meant to be married first) she represents a shared obstacle to their pursuit of the younger and milder Bianca. The suitors convey the conventional Elizabethan view that a woman must sacrifice herself in submission to her husband. Gremio asserts such an aggressive woman must be ‘carted’ not ‘courted’. Tranio, observing the altercation scene, comments “that wench is stark mad or wonderful froward” (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.69). The question here, then, is whether a happy and secure marriage hinges on a woman’s sacrifice of her own will? The opening scenes of the play suggest that Katherine does not welcome such a sacrifice because she vociferously guards her independence: “What, shall I be appointed hours, as though belike I knew not what to take and what to leave? Ha!” (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.102–4). It seems, by her shrewish behavior, Katherine is, unconsciously, contesting the masculine view of her time that considers a mild and submissive woman the perfect choice for marriage.

Katherine’s behaviour causes her to be labelled a shrew only because of her undervalued sex. Kahn remarked that “If Petruchio were female, he would be known as a shrew and shunned accordingly by men. Behaviour desirable in a male automatically prohibits similar behaviour in a female, for woman must mould herself to be complementary to man, not competitive with him” (Kahn 1975, 93). There are ample feminism-based explanations why Katherine behaves in an unconventional manner, but the intention here is to locate the major psychoanalytic causes. Newman suggested that Katherine’s shrewishness has its root in a hysterical symptom, which originates from the daydreams of adolescence. Basing her view on Sigmund Freud’s paper, “Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality” (1908), Newman argued that “[...] Kate’s

ambitious fantasies, which her culture allows to express in erotic directions, motivate her shrewishness” (Newman 2001, 157). Newman argued that although it would not be problematic in a man such a behaviour is interpreted “as ‘hysterical’ and/or diabolic” (Newman 2001, 157). The feminist and psychoanalytic standpoints share this view that a woman will be called the ‘other’ if her speech and attitude arise out of her naturally-motivated female characteristics. It can be suggested that, as Joel Fineman put it, “the language of woman is at odds with the order and authority of man” (Fineman 2001, 123). Katherine is not understood by the others around her, nor does she get positive feedback from them. They are afraid of her and consider her a threat to their way of life. As a result, in the words of Elizabeth Hutcheon, “one might want to argue that the other characters pretend that they do not understand what Katherine is saying because she is dangerous. As an outspoken woman, she poses a threat to the patriarchal structures that enclose” (Hutcheon 2011, 324). A patriarchal society expels such threatening forces from itself. Gremio tells Baptista “she is too harsh for me”, and Hortentio’s advice to Katherine is: “No mates for you, unless you were of gentler, milder mold” (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.59-60).

Joel Fineman called the language of women like Katherine “a different kind of language than that of psychoanalytic man (for example, the preverbal, presymbolic, ‘semiotic’ of Julia Kristeva” (Fineman 2001, 125). Katherine’s language possesses semiotic elements, something that is not regarded as normal in a masculine definition. According to Kristeva’s psychoanalytic standpoint, the female entry to the symbolic stage is different from that of the male. Basing her view on Kristeva’s major psychosexual theories, Kelly Oliver wrote that “Kristeva argues that feminine sexuality is more likely to be depressive sexuality because it is more difficult for women to commit the necessary matricide” (Oliver 1993, 63). The reason behind this is that, as Oliver explained, “a woman’s bodily identification with the maternal body [makes it] difficult for her to kill the maternal body without also killing herself” (Oliver 1993, 63). To further explain this theory, one should say that in order to enter the symbolic phase, the majority of women commit the symbolic act of killing their mothers, which is something that inevitably leads to their killing of their own individual beings. However, women like Katherine are

exceptions because their process of separation from the semiotic is not completed during the mirror-stage. They do not unbind themselves of their semiotic attachments completely and as a result they preserve their individuality and also their willfulness at the price of being shunned in patriarchal societies. Therefore, expanding Fineman's remark above, one can arrive at this understanding that Katherine's language is different from the average Elizabethan women because her psychological background is of a rare nature. In a patriarchal society, such language and behaviour are regarded as nonconformism and are always under the threat of suppression. In other words, to use Kristeva's psychoanalytic terms, women like Katherine are looked upon as 'horror', a threat to the symbolic identity that must be abjected.

Kahn suggested that Shakespeare sketches Katherine as the victim of the marriage market in his time (Kahn 1975, 90). She is indeed a victim for she has to get married to pave the way for her younger sister's marriage. Her father makes his mind clear to Bianca's suitors at the beginning of the play: "Gentlemen, importune me no farther, [...] That is, not bestow my youngest daughter before I have a husband for the elder" (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.48-51). (We may note here that whereas, as we saw above with *As You Like It*, primogeniture gave an elder son a degree of freedom that was denied to a younger one, gender conventions in this play give the elder daughter Katherine an obligation towards her younger sister.) Katherine also falls prey to multiple masculine marriage deals. When Petruchio sets foot in Padua, he immediately makes his main intention clear: "Haply to wive and thrive as best I may" (Shakespeare 2009, 1.2.55). The audience quickly understands that Petruchio sees marriage a kind of business: "If thou know one rich enough to be Petruchio's wife, as wealth is burden of my wooing dance [...]" (Shakespeare 2009, 1.1.66-7). He does not care about beauty, education, temperament and other typical criteria in choosing a wife. In Velvet Pearson's words "[...] he must marry quickly and if money comes along with a wife, then so much the better" (Pearson 1990, 231). Grumio emphasizes Petruchio's greed for money by suggesting: "give him gold enough and marry him to a puppet" (Shakespeare 2009, 1.2.77-8). In his first meeting with Baptista, Petruchio makes it clear that financial matters are of primary importance for him: "Then tell me, if I get your daughter's love,

what dowry shall I have with her to wife?” (Shakespeare 2009, 2.1.119-20). However, during the first meeting he has with Katherine, he begins to view marrying her as an interesting challenge rather than simply a business opportunity. Katherine’s wild and wilful nature is at odds with Petruchio’s overbearing personality; therefore, he embarks on a psychoanalytic process in order to completely subjugate her will.

Petruchio exercises male supremacy at its most effective. His machismo does not let him leave a space for Katherine to express her views. His behaviour with Katherine during and after the marriage ceremony makes it clear that although he has won Katherine’s hand in marriage, his efforts to put her under his control are far from complete. He has a plan to tame her, which is a process that he starts by his crass behaviour during the ceremony in the church. He makes her entreat him in vain to stay for dinner, which leads to her humiliation: “I am content you shall entreat me stay; but yet not stay” (Shakespeare 2009, 3.2.200-1). Although Katherine remarks that “a woman may be made a fool if she had not a spirit to resist” (Shakespeare 2009, 3.2.218-19) she is soon cowed by Petruchio’s unyielding stance. By deliberately misunderstanding her and denying her food, sleep and comfort, Petruchio tries to metaphorically kill her with kindness in a condescending and chauvinistic manner. Kahn remarked that “Shakespeare does not rest with showing that male supremacy in marriage denies woman’s humanity” (Kahn 1975, 96). By the end of act 4, Katherine, who has always used her tongue to get her way, is transformed to a speechless and subjugated wife, subject to her husband’s will.

Petruchio’s treatment of his wife is, to some degree, mixed with sadistic impulses. In *The Mind According to Shakespeare*, Marvin Krims linked Petruchio’s interest in making Katherine suffer to his repressed early childhood desires: “This enjoyment of the pain of others – sadism is its popular and psychoanalytic name – has roots that hark back to the toilet training era of early childhood, or perhaps even to early infancy, according to Kleinian theory” (Krims 2006, 45). Krims argued that such a strong desire to induce pain in others is not completely banished but hovers around our psyche. Indeed, “[...] this guilt-laden pleasure” as Krims continues “readily declares its presence by surfacing into

consciousness whenever given half a chance [...]” (Krimms 2006, 45). Thus, the taming of Katherine gives Petruchio an opportunity to reactivate one of his repressed desires, a devastating force that targets his wife’s individuality.

By the same token, from a Kristevan perspective it can be understood that what is happening in this process is the confrontation of two different modes of significations, two opposing forces that cannot coexist with each other in the same territory. To retain the peace and harmony of their shared life, one of these modes must relent and give way to the stronger, more dominant one. Katherine’s semiotic traits begin to fade after her marriage due to the existence of the more dominating symbolic characteristics of Petruchio, a force powerful enough to make her gradually resign herself to her marriage. In other words, she has no choice but to undergo a complete separation from the semiotic in order to fit into her married life. To express it more precisely, in order to survive in the symbolic world, she has to abject the remains of the semiotic characteristics that are still with her. She will be unable to express her independent views (for they will be immediately suppressed by the symbolic) and accept whatever the symbolic worldview prescribes for her. An example of this occurs in Petruchio’s use of reverse psychology as a part of his taming techniques. On their way back to Padua in daylight, Petruchio remarks, “how bright and goodly shines the moon!” (Shakespeare 2009, 4.5.2), upon which Katherine, in her astonishment, comments: “The moon! the sun: it is not moonlight now” (Shakespeare 2009, 4.5.3). Katherine’s efforts to defend the truth are ineffective because her husband, retaining the upper hand in this interchange, firmly insists that “it shall be moon, or star, or what I list” (Shakespeare 2009, 4.5.7). She is forced to accept whatever the symbolic regards to be true. Katherine at last submits to Petruchio’s signifying system and declares that, for all she cares, he might as well define reality for her. From this point forward, the tamed Katherine puts an end to her own self-assertiveness and fully gives in to the power of the symbolic. Where before we saw perverse signification as a mode of resistance to the symbolic, Petruchio’s use of it subjects Katherine to his signifying system.

The outcome of the taming process shows itself at best in Katherine's final speech at Lucentio's house, which divides critics. Although her final remarks sound abhorrent to feminist critics who object to Katherine's total subservience to the husband, there are others who believe that the whole wager scene is a set up by Katherine and Petruchio, working as a team to cheat the others of their money. John C. Bean explained this using what he called the concepts of 'revisionism' and 'anti-revisionism'. According to Bean, while the revisionists are those who think of Katherine's subservience as pretence and her speech as ironic, the anti-revisionists regard the whole play as a farce, in which Katherine, like an animal, is tamed by an expert trainer (Bean 1983, 65). Approaching the anti-revisionist view of Katherine's final speech by Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories, we see that Katherine undergoes a complete departure from the semiotic and accepts the symbolic rules as her role model. However, the revisionist outlook implies a different viewpoint. If Katherine's demonstration of rhetorical prowess in her final declamation is a pretence, then she has learnt to use the power of the symbolic to help her become assertive in a different sense. What she learned is the technique to cope with the dominant discourse so that the symbolic identity is secured. Joel Fineman wrote that "there is reason to wonder [...] as the last lines of the play suggests – how it happens that a discourse of subversion, explicitly presented as such, manages to resecure, equally explicitly, the very order to which it seems, at both first and second sight, to be opposed" (Fineman 2001, 124). By the end of the play, Katherine's words and behaviour are no longer looked upon as a threat to the symbolic structure of the Elizabethan concept of family. They can be viewed as moral exempla for wives of different classes.

Newman suggested that "[...] what we see [in Katherine's final speech] is not a quiet and submissive Kate, but the same energetic and linguistically powerful Kate with which the play began" (Newman 2001, 159). Her final speech puts a true mark on the view that, in Krim's words, "[...] aggression, when properly deployed, can be highly constructive" (Krim 2006, 40). Katherine's manner shows a great change in her, and it is a change for the better. While she is expressing her assertive remarks at the end of the play, nobody appears to be annoyed by her and from their silence we may infer that everybody is stunned by her charisma. Newman remarked that "even though she gives up

her shrewishness and acquiesces to Petruchio's whims, she persists in her characteristic 'masculine' linguistic exuberance while masquerading as an obedient wife" (Newman 2001, 158). What is obvious is that Katherine's new language is able to help her to express herself freely without being called a shrew. This new language, which is free of revolt and anger, can be called her new strategy to cope with the symbolic. Luce Irigaray called this strategy 'mimeticism', which, she argued, is the only way for women to express themselves in the dominant symbolic discourse. Irigaray, like Kristeva, thought that, upon entering the symbolic, women are denied any means of expressing themselves (like language) and, in their quest for finding an acceptable position in a patriarchal society, they take refuge in mimeticism. Irigaray remarked that "to play with mimesis is [...] for a woman to try to recover the place of her exploitation by language, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it" (Irigaray 1985, 76). By her mimetic technique, Katherine succeeds in establishing her new language, which does not possess the qualities of what Kristeva calls horror.

Whatever the outcome of the taming scenes might be (a cowed and defeated or a symbolically-oriented Katherine), we see that by the end of the play Katherine, who was considered the horror within the symbolic-dominated society, finds a way to escape abjection. During the taming process, she comes to see that her semiotic attachments have caused others look upon her as, and with, horror. She manages to abject the 'other' inside her in order not to be abjected by those around her. By doing so, she puts an end to the horror within herself. Katherine becomes aware that the powers of horror are threatening to her being, so she expels it to secure her identity.

### **Coda on *The Taming of the Shrew***

In *The Taming of the Shrew* Christopher Sly's post-Oedipal return to the semiotic exposes his identity borders to the abject. From one critical perspective, the whole of the play proper occurs within Sly's dream in which, by having Petruchio tame the shrewish Katherine, Sly manages to establish a new, much more acceptable, identity for himself, which is an act he failed to accomplish in his first departure from the semiotic. In other

words, manipulated physically and mentally by the lord and his servants, Sly undergoes a type of metamorphosis in which he finds the opportunity to struggle to become his perfect self, the Other he saw way back during his Lacanian mirror stage of identity formation.

Katherine's shrewish behaviour and her subsequent taming by Petruchio are the most important subject of Sly's dream. Approaching Katherine's character using Kristeva's theories concerning the formation of a subject, it can be concluded that her would-be subject failed to completely detach herself from the semiotic and that is the reason that as an adult she is unable to cope with the symbolic world. There are elements of the semiotic deep in her psyche, making her resist the symbolic by her shrewish behaviour. However, during the process of taming, she is forced to leave the remains of her archaic past in order not to be labelled a horror, a threat to the patriarchal structure of her society. She expels the horror within herself so that she might be able to live in peace and happiness without the fear of being treated like an abject. A Kristevan approach, then, lets us see her behaviour in response to the extraordinary treatment she receives from Petruchio as a plausible human reaction that defends the sense of self, which sense is threatened by much more than Petruchio's domineering personality. She is happier after his 'taming' but Petruchio can take little credit for that as he scarcely understood the psychical processes at work. That Shakespeare seems to understand them is a remarkable aspect of his dramatic characterization.



### Chapter Three. English & Roman History Plays: *Richard II*, *1 & 2 Henry IV* and *Coriolanus*

William Shakespeare's second tetralogy of his history plays, also known as the Henriad, starts with *Richard II*, in which are depicted the last two years of Richard's reign, culminating in his deposition in 1399 and Henry Bolingbroke's accession as King Henry IV. The play starts with Richard, sitting majestically on his throne, busy with an arbitration case regarding two of his cousins, Thomas Mowbray and Henry Bolingbroke, the Dukes of Norfolk and Hereford, respectively. Bolingbroke accuses Mowbray of embezzling money and murdering his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester. Mowbray denies all these charges. Richard fails to reconcile the dukes. The two opponents insult each other using angry heated terms to a degree that Richard says of them "High-stomach'd are they both and full of ire, In rage, deaf as the sea, hasty as fire" (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.1.18-19). Finally, when, in spite of all mediations, they throw down their gages, they leave Richard no choice but to set a date, St. Lambert's Day, for them to fight a trial-by-combat in Coventry.

Richard was the true heir to the English throne; being Edward the Black Prince's son, he ascended the throne by the order of primogeniture. In principle, he has full control over his subjects. Charles R. Forker wrote that "In the opening scene, where he presides as judge over the quarrel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke, Richard seems at least superficially secure in his conception of himself as a divinely sanctioned monarch" (Forker 2001, 2). Although it appears he has treated Mowbray and Bolingbroke fairly and wisely, the audience soon understands there is something wrong with Richard. In her meeting with John of Gaunt, Bolingbroke's father, the Duchess of Gloucester complains about the murder of her husband, Thomas of Woodstock, late Duke of Gloucester. She begs Gaunt to find the murderers. Gaunt's answer, "God's substitute, | His deputy anointed in his sight, has caused his death" (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.2.37-9), reveals to the audience that Richard ordered Gloucester's murder. Gaunt forswears revenge because the God-appointed king is above the law and he will "never lift | An angry arm against

His minster” (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.2.40-1). Gaunt is a firm believer in principle that “he that judgeth the King judgeth God, and he that layeth hands on the King, layeth hands on God, and he that resisteth the King resisteth God (Russell, 1831, I:212). According to this view, which was widely promulgated in official Tudor doctrine, taking action against the king would be considered blasphemy.

### **Richard II’s ‘Two Bodies’**

In an influential book, Ernst H. Kantorowicz wrote that “*The Tragedy of King Richard II* is the tragedy of the King’s Two Bodies” (Kantorowicz 1997, 26). The ‘two bodies’ can be described as “a body natural and a body mystical, in the same body” (Tennenhouse 2002, 52). The mystical body was believed to be sacred and perfect. The anointed body of the monarch was a sign of his rightness and was supposed to guarantee his privilege to rule over the realm. The king’s body had, as it were, a doubled border to protect his throne. Any breach to this border was considered high treason and was punishable by death. At the moment he became the king of England, Richard was supposed to enter the realm of the symbolic, protected by providence, and thereby acquired a unique identity as God’s anointed minister. Richard’s firm stance in providence and the impenetrable border of identity make him believe that he can rule in whatever way he wishes, which antagonizes the nobility. Eschewing the counsel of senior aristocrats, his getting advice from the inexperienced and jealous nobles Bushy, Bagot and Green has put the realm in serious political and economical problems. By the time the play begins, he has shown all the signs of an imprudent dictator who is surrounded by unwise counselors. Influenced by them and making a number of decisive mistakes, Richard puts his symbolic identity under threat.

As we shall see, Richard’s symbolic identity is first threatened and finally shattered by the forces ranged against him. Because Richard fails to protect his symbolic border, his identity (‘I’) is invaded by the abjected (semiotic) elements. We see in Shakespeare’s adaptation of his sources that Richard’s is a fall from the symbolic. In other words, Shakespeare, by challenging and violating the orthodox methods of

narrating historical events, by himself resisting the symbolic, depicts a monarch whose fall from the symbolic happens because of his weakness in protecting his border of identity.

Of the multiple sources Shakespeare frames the whole of the first scene from a single sentence of Holinshed's chronicles: "Henrie duke of Hereford accused Thomas Mowberie duke of Norfolke, of certeine words which he should utter in talke had betwixt them, as they rode together latelie [...] sounding highlie to the kings dishonor." (Holinshed 1978, 3–4). Other historians offer different accounts. Edward Hall in his "*The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancastre and York*" wrote that

Henry erle of Darby [...] began to consider with himself how that Kyng Richard ... nothing regarded the counsaill of his uncles, [...]. Wherefore on a daie being in the comaigny of Thomas Mowbrey first duke of Norfolke and erle Marshall, beganne to breake his mynde to hym more for dolour and lamenracion, then for malice and displeasure, [...]. (Hall 1909, 3)

However, as Hall continued, Mowbray used this matter to his own advantage by telling the King an aggravated account of what Henry told him. Therefore, in Hall's account of what became the arbitration scene in the play, Henry has a defensive position at first. Samuel Daniel in his *The First Fowre Bookes of The Civile Wars Between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* offered a similar account:

The Duke of Herford then of courage bold [...]  
Utters of passion which he could not hold,  
In sad discourse upon his course begun,  
Which he to Mowbray Duke of Norfolke told, [...]  
The faithless Duke that presentlie takes hold  
Of such advantage to insinuate  
Hastes to the King, perverting what was told,  
(Bullough 1960, 437)

*The Mirror for Magistrates* offers a similar account. But why does Shakespeare rely just on Holinshed and ignores the other historians who narrate the scene differently? Perhaps Shakespeare wants to show, as Bullough put it, “Bolingbroke in a good light as initially loyal” (Bullough 1960, 362). Perhaps Shakespeare wanted to enhance Hereford’s status and make him a potential threat to Richard and his symbolic identity. By accusing Mowbray of participating in his uncle’s murder, the loyal Bolingbroke is indirectly charging the King with the murder of an innocent. In order to emphasize the unmachavellian method of Richard’s kingship, Shakespeare introduces Gloucester as an innocent victim of Richard’s dictatorship. Historically Gloucester was a “cruel, self-seeking, unscrupulous and a plotter against the King” (Bullough 1960, 359). He was a threat to Richard’s throne and wanted to depose him in 1388 and possibly plotted against his nephew before he was arrested. Surrounded by powerful uncles and many other nobles and magnates, the historical Richard found it difficult to protect his throne. However, in the play, Richard’s personal inefficiency is emphasized. He is shown to be surrounded by flatterers who have nothing to do with the welfare of the nation. In adapting his sources, Shakespeare tried to highlight Richard’s weakness in character, which makes him an example of a person whose border of subjectivity is vulnerable.

St. Lambert’s Day arrives. The two noble cousins of the king are ready to duel in his presence. Richard and Hereford send mutual signs of respect. Bolingbroke asks the Lord Marshal “let me kiss my sovereign's hand, and bow my knee before his majesty” (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.3.46-7), to which Richard replies: “We will descend and fold him in our arms. | Cousin of Hereford, as thy cause is right, | So be thy fortune in this royal fight!” (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.3.54-6). Bolingbroke has respected Richard’s symbolic border so far in the play. However, shortly before the two nobles start to fight, Richard’s attitude changes abruptly. He interrupts the duel before they use their weapons by throwing down his warder. After talking to his advisors, he comes down and reads his decree:

Therefore, we banish you our territories:

You, cousin Hereford, upon pain of life,  
Till twice five summers have enrich'd our fields  
Shall not regret our fair dominions,  
But tread the stranger paths of banishment.  
(Shakespeare 1961a, 1.3.139-43)

But Mowbray is banished for life. Most historians believe that this is the first flaw, in a series of mistakes, which leads to Richard's downfall. This decision highlights many of his character flaws including unpredictability and abruptness. He even changes his decision regarding Henry and commutes his banishment to six years, which shows that he lacks stability that is a necessary criterion for a fair decision maker.

Here occurs another departure from the sources. Shakespeare adds another reason (in addition to Richard's fear of opening up the possibility of a civil war) to explain why Richard banishes Bolingbroke. He mentions it in the next scene, where the audience finds that Richard is afraid of Bolingbroke's popularity among the common people. Richard has "Observed his courtship to the common people; | How he did seem to dive into their hearts, | With humble and familiar courtesy," (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.4.24-6). Richard fears that Bolingbroke is his "subjects' next degree in hope" (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.4.36). Forker remarked that Richard "seems jealous and even apprehensive of his cousin's popularity" (Forker 2001, 2). Amanda Mabillard noted that "[...] in the Chronicles – Richard desires to end the argument, and no other motive of Richard is implied" (Mabillard 2000, 2). She continued "it is apparent that Richard's motivation in the play for banishing Bolingbroke is jealousy" (Mabillard 2000, 2). Shakespeare apparently wanted to depict Richard as a ruler who lets feelings like jealousy shape his decisions.

Richard thinks that his body mystical gives him an eternal symbolic power, that makes him invulnerable to earthly objects. He is not alone in this thought. Bishop of Carlisle reassures him of his heavenly power: "Fear not, my lord; that Power that made you king, | Hath power to keep you king in spite of all" (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.2.27-8). Richard considers the subjective border around him impenetrable. From a Kristevan

perspective, Richard's mind is obsessed with the symbolic stage he entered after leaving the semiotic one. To enter the symbolic phase of signification and establish an identity ('I') for itself, one has to expel the semiotic, which process Kristeva called abjection. During the abjection process, one expels what deems to be other to oneself in order to enter the realm of subjectivity. However, what is abjected does not vanish completely and hovers around the border of secure subjectivity, as if waiting for an opportunity to break into it. The abjected elements can take different forms and are ready to challenge the symbolic in different phases of a subject's life. Unconsciously, Richard considers Bolingbroke a threat to his subjectivity and that is the psychoanalytic reason behind the banishment. But this banishment is not guaranteed to succeed and Kristeva warns of the return of the abject. Any sign of weakness on the subject's part can make it susceptible to the abject. So, Bolingbroke may return if Richard makes enough mistakes.

In *The Unconscious in Shakespeare's Plays*, Martin S. Bergmann suggested that in portraying Richard's character "the psychologist won over the dramatist" (Bergmann 2013, 179). Indeed, "Shakespeare", as Bergmann put it, "has given us what may well be the first description of masochism in western literature" (Bergmann 2013, 176). Richard's masochism and his mistreatment of the nobles reveal his character flaws, something that makes his subject vulnerable. Richard's weakness in character becomes more evident in a series of his actions that lead to his downfall. One terrible mistake of Richard is the way he treats John of Gaunt, shortly before and after his death. Here again Shakespeare departs from his sources. Mabillard reported that "in the *Chronicles*, Gaunt is a disorderly and rapacious magnate. However, in *Richard II*, Gaunt is the voice of reason, wisdom, and, above all, patriotism" (Mabillard 2000, 1). Jean Froissart, in his *Chronicles* (Froissart 1978), used positive adjectives regarding Gaunt, but Shakespeare further expands his patriotism. Shakespeare elevates Gaunt to the level of a prophet: "Methinks I am a prophet new inspired" (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.1.31). On his deathbed, Gaunt describes England as "This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle, | This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars, | This other Eden, demi-paradise," (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.1.40-2). Gaunt accuses Richard of misrule. He believes Richard does not deserve to be called a king: "Landlord of England art thou now, not king" (Shakespeare 1961a,

2.1.113). Gaunt asserts that Richard has spoiled his anointed body: “Commit’st thy anointed body to the cure, of those physicians that first wounded thee” (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.1.98-9). In his view, false flatterers have degraded his symbolic position to a degree that he does not deserve to be called the sovereign lord of England any more. The main reason why Shakespeare adapts his sources is, again, to emphasize Richard’s insufficiency.

The audience already knows that Richard has been waiting for Gaunt’s death to confiscate his estates. When he hears in the previous scene that Gaunt is deadly sick, he says, “now put it, God, in the physician’s mind | To help him to his grave immediately!” (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.4.59-60). No historian records a specific purpose for which Richard needs Gaunt’s estates and revenues. However, in the play he wants to use the money to finance an expedition overseas: “The lining of his coffers shall make coats | To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars” (Shakespeare 1961a, 1.4.61-2). By making this change, Shakespeare has Richard commit another serious fault that puts his symbolic status in danger. The banished Bolingbroke is Gaunt’s eldest son and heir and usurps his wealth, and thereby breaks the law. Shakespeare, in another departure from his sources, has the Duke of York warn Richard of the consequence of this act: “If you do wrongfully seize Hereford’s rights [...] You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts” (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.1.201-6). Richard Erable wrote that Richard “misinterprets who he is, believing himself endowed with divine powers, and based in part on this misinterpretation, he takes possession of property that rightfully belongs to another [...] to which he has no right” (Erable 2003, 2). This alienates the nobles. Richard can be considered a monarch who lacks Machiavellian political sophistication; he wastes his people’s money on his useless foreign expeditions and leaves his subjects in poverty. The more political mistakes Richard makes, the more the nobles and commons believe his anointed subjectivity is falsifiable. Bolingbroke was already much more popular than Richard. Now there are many who call Bolingbroke the saviour of the realm. Richard’s subjectivity border is weaker than ever before. This is the time for the abject to return.

In *Reading Kristeva, Unravelling the Double-bind*, Kelly Oliver pointed out that “the abject threat comes from what has been prohibited by the Symbolic order, what has been prohibited so that the Symbolic order can be” (Oliver 1993, 56). This quotation applies to Bolingbroke’s situation: he has been abjected by Richard to secure his symbolic identity. Jealous of Henry’s popularity with the people, the king considers his cousin a potential threat to his throne. But as Kristeva mentioned in *Powers of Horror*, the abject is “what disturbs identity, system, order” (Kristeva 1982, 4). The abject will not leave the ‘I’ alone and, as Oliver put it the abject “is what is on the border, what doesn’t respect border” (Oliver 1993, 56). Bolingbroke is also waiting at the border, waiting for the proper opportunity to infiltrate.

When Henry Bolingbroke lands on Ravenspurgh he has just one overt goal in his mind, to release his estates and gain his father’s title, the dukedom of Lancaster. Becoming the king of England seems far from his mind. Richard has just departed for Ireland, and taken his army with him. Not only is there no one to stop Bolingbroke, but also many nobles join him, and it does not take long before he finds himself powerful enough to challenge Richard for supreme power. Edmund Langley, Duke of York, appointed by Richard as the protector of the realm, turns out to be the only obstacle. But York fails to obtain the financial aid necessary to gather enough manpower to stop Bolingbroke. Even Greene admits that York is hopeless and frustrated: “Alas, poor Duke! the task he undertakes, | Is numb’ring sands and drinking oceans dry” (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.2.144-5). The symbolic border is about to collapse. It is no longer impenetrable and is losing its defensive power. As a result of Richard’s misrule, many defectors have joined the invading forces. The symbolic is lonelier than ever. Richard’s selfish and cruel decisions plus his untimely expedition to Ireland have left him in the weak position. After confronting Bolingbroke, the Duke of York, in a speech that is not found in any of the sources, reprimands his nephew for rising against the legitimate king and starting a war, but Henry’s reply neutralizes Richard’s trusted protector: “I am a subject, | And I challenge law; attorneys are denied me, | And therefore personally I lay my claim | To my inheritance of free descent” (Shakespeare 1961a, 2.2.144-5).



When Richard lands in Wales he undergoes a dramatic transformation. Having been deserted by the powerful nobles of England, he no longer possesses that symbolically-rooted self-confidence he had before departing for Ireland. He immediately learns that all the defectors have joined Bolingbroke and knows his cousin will out power him. He feels miserable and is hopeless: “Let’s talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs” (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.2.145). Before physically surrendering himself to Bolingbroke, he does so mentally: “Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke’s, and nothing can we call our own but death” (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.2.151-2). He undergoes metamorphosis and his speech increasingly resembles that of a poet. Kristeva considered poetry the language of the semiotic, as we see in her seminal work on semiotic, *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Conducting a thorough study regarding Kristeva’s major theories, John Lechte wrote that “poetry, at least in part, escapes the strictures of the symbolic order, and may in fact disrupt it. This same notion opens up the terrain of Kristeva’s reflection on the semiotic” (Lechte 1990, 74). So, Richard’s poetic language is another sign that he has given in to the semiotic, his archaic origin he expelled a long time ago.

When Richard and Bolingbroke meet at Flint castle the symbolic encounters the semiotic. The semiotic has got too close to Richard and is becoming inevitable. Although Bolingbroke promises compromise (“to lay my arms and power, provided that my banishment repeal’d and lands restored again be freely granted [...]” (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.3.39-41), Richard is almost sure that the semiotic has become powerful enough to overthrow the symbolic. He uses the word ‘king’ for his cousin: “my Lord Northumberland, | What says King Bolingbroke?”. This is the turning point in the balance of the power in the play. By the end of the scene the audience understands that not only will Richard return Bolingbroke’s estate and dukedom, but he will also grant him the whole realm: “Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all” (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.3.197).

The deposition scene, which takes place in the Westminster Hall, provide the climax of the play. Before Richard arrives, the Bishop of Carlisle is the only remaining defender of the symbolic and delivers his famous speech. Carlisle supports the medieval doctrine that “the King is in this world without law, and may at his lust do right or wrong,

and shall give accounts, but to God only” (Russell, 1831, I:213). He angrily calls Bolingbroke a traitor and asks how might the “anointed crowned, planted many years, be judged by subject and inferior breath [...]” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.127-8). But the anointed body will not protect Richard any more, and he knows that no longer is he the king, ironically crying “God save the king! although I be not he” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.174). When Richard says “God save King Harry, unking’d Richard says” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.220) the power of the symbolic is transferred to Bolingbroke, who at that moment becomes King Henry IV. Alexander Leggat held that “in giving away his crown he is giving away his very identity” (Leggat 2002, 70). There is no sense of a border for Richard and a new border is made by Henry within the territory of which there is no room for Richard.

In a scene nowhere mentioned in the sources, Richard asks for a looking glass and, as Scott McMillin put it, in it he “studies his image vainly for signs of the grief and loss which ought to be manifest” (McMillin 1984, 46). According to Forker the glass “allows the fallen King a moment of deeper insight into his own nature” (Forker 2001, 5). Looking into the mirror, he accuses it of deception: “O flattering glass, like to my followers in prosperity” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.279-80). He compares the brittleness of the glass with the brittle glory of his face. Here Kristeva’s theory regarding Lacan’s mirror stage becomes applicable. According to Lacan the little child looks at its own image in the mirror and takes this image to be itself, which helps the child to get to know its own identity. While generally agreeing with Lacan, Kristeva thought that this event occurs at a price since the child has to reject the semiotic (the pre-mirror stage phase) in order to enter the world of the symbolic. She believed the memory of the image seen early in life stays with us for the rest of our life and reminds us of the object that helped us to become a subject. The object, or “The Thing”, as Philip Shaw defined what Lacan means by that, “is the emptiness at the center of the real without which signification would not occur” (Shaw 2008, 135). Kristeva believed that having lost ‘the Thing’, adults try to find appropriate equivalents for that and “most will compensate for this lost object of desire by using language, words, to chase what has been lost” (McAfee 2004, 63). Kristeva, in *Black Sun*, wrote that a person “disinherited of the Thing [...] has the

impression of having been deprived of an unnameable, supreme good” (Kristeva 1989, 13). This is what Richard is looking for in the mirror. Unconsciously, his quest for the Thing has pushed him into the realm of the symbolic, for the protection of which he set a border always being guarded. But the looking glass deceives: “Thou dost beguile me!” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.281). In fact, the brittleness of the mirror signifies Richard’s brittle understanding of his own symbolic identity as the king of England. He considered his identity firm and solid, but was wrong. His border was not protected by God. It was guarded by a weak mortal whose negligence and vulnerability made the abject happen. Richard’s fate teaches that the answer to the question “Is not the king’s name twenty thousand names?” (Shakespeare 1961a, 3.2.85) is, definitely, No!

Being called the new king of the realm, Henry’s first thought is to protect it against any potential harm, and it is Richard who must be sacrificed. When Henry orders his guards to “convey him [Richard] to the Tower” (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.316) he consciously or unconsciously takes the object of threat away from his newly-established identity border. He is not going to repeat Richard’s mistake. He knows that banishment or imprisonment will not eliminate the threat completely. Richard must die or the thought of his abject-like return will be a permanent anxiety for Henry. The symbolic decides to destroy the semiotic. Henry has Richard murdered in prison and thereby secures his throne. Although Henry shows sign of grief when he stands by the late King’s corpse in the last scene, we may surmise that unconsciously he feels relieved for he succeeded to expel the potential object of threat forever. Richard, who once used to abject any potential danger, is abjected himself. Kristeva believed that “the corpse [...] is the utmost of abjection” (Kristeva 1982, 4). She also maintains when someone dies, “it is no longer I who expel, ‘I’ is expelled” (Kristeva 1982, 3–4). Since Richard’s ‘I’ has failed to stay vigilant against the return of the abject, it is itself abjected and a new ‘I’ is established by Henry Bolingbroke as King Henry IV.

E. M. W. Tillyard described Richard II as a king who lacked the necessary criteria for a powerful monarch and, therefore, was “the prince in appearance rather than in reality” (Tillyard 1980, 234). He is weak and providence cannot save him. Because of his

flaws, Richard failed to protect his throne against the potential dangers and that is the main reason for his fall. In Kristeva's terms, Richard is unable to defend his symbolic border against the return of the abject. He thinks banishing Bolingbroke will solve the problem and keeps his identity immune, but he is wrong. Kristeva believed that the abjected semiotic hovers around the identity border and waits for an opportunity to penetrate into the realm of the symbolic. Once the negligence occurs, penetration becomes inevitable. The abject, having entered the symbolic zone, has the potential to shatter the 'I', and this is what happens to Richard and his poorly guarded border. Richard cannot resist the semiotic and gets overthrown by that. His symbolic power, as the king of England, is transferred to Henry, whose abject-like return from exile has shattered Richard's symbolic identity.

Shakespeare's departures from historical fact made Richard a proper example to be examined by Kristeva's psychoanalytic terms. He adapted his sources – even altering the chronological sequence of events – in order to depict an inefficient king whose only hope is a belief in providence. In this sense Shakespeare, to speak in Kristevan terms, acts as someone who resists the symbolic. The real history narrated by historians may be regarded as the symbolic, which is based on facts and rules. Shakespeare, by violating the facts, challenges the symbolic, and in doing so makes Richard a suitable case to be analysed psychoanalytically.

### ***Fear in 1 & 2 Henry IV***

In *1 & 2 Henry IV*, William Shakespeare depicts the major events that occur in the reign of a medieval English ruler who is in charge of an unstable realm, plagued with unrest. Soon after his ascendancy in 1399, the historical Henry IV became the target of dangerous plots and assassination attempts. The first conspiracy against him, the Epiphany Rising, happened less than six months after his coronation. The rebels embarked on a surprise attack aiming for, as Raphael Holinshed maintained in his *Chronicles*, “the destruction of king Henrie, and the restoring of king Richard” (Holinshed 1978, 17). Henry was notified on the eve of the rising and was lucky enough

to gather an army at night, disperse the rebels and capture their ringleaders. The so-called Epiphany Rising was indeed the first attempt in a series of attacks on the king and his crown during his 14-year reign. Owen Glendower instigated the Welsh revolt against Henry's rule less than a year after the latter's ascendency to the throne and, though eventually suppressed by the superior resources of the English, he remained a potential threat throughout all of Henry's reign. The Welsh uprising was followed by Harry Percy's and the Archbishop of York's rebellions in 1403 and 1405, respectively. Henry could not find time to go on his second crusade, nor could he embark on the proposed military campaigns on the Continent, unlike his uncle and grandfather. His time and energy were devoted to maintaining his weakening grip on his own kingdom. Shakespeare's picture of Henry vividly shows the damaging effects of the mental and physical strains on his body. Although the historical Henry IV was in his mid-thirties after the Battle of Shrewsbury, the theatre audiences see that life has already fatigued him noticeably and, by the time *2 Henry IV* begins, his earlier energy has been dissipated. Suffering from insomnia, he starts act three of *2 Henry IV* asking God why he is denied a restful sleep. The historical Henry's body began to deteriorate from an unknown sickness – Holinshed mentions apoplexy (Holinshed 1978, 102) – during the last years of his reign to a degree that he is confined to bed. A question that may occur to the audiences is whether it is because of the physical and mental strains of the rebellions that Henry has become a disabled, sickness-stricken person in his early forties – or whether there is another reason, something powerful enough to crush a once strong jousting and chivalrous crusader.

The dramatic Henry is not just suffering physically. His mental obsession even starts before his physical decline. He suffers from the fear of insecurity throughout his reign, worn down by a sense of guilt and concerns about the legitimacy of his kingship. His usurpation of the crown from Richard II has made him enemies among the nobility, who now think it is lawful to dethrone a usurper. His problems with his eldest son (explored below) add to his fears. Shakespeare's Henry keeps thinking of what the late King Richard told him after the deposition: even water could not wash away Henry Bolingbroke's sin of deposing a lawful king (Shakespeare 1961a, 4.1.242).

Henry's obsession with preserving his kingship is psychoanalytically explicable using Kristeva's ideas about a subject's struggles in protecting its borders. A subject is always under threat by the abject forces that have been expelled before but are now threatening, externally, the subject's identity. The abject has the potential to exert a nightmarish effect on the subject by threatening its identity from time to time. This is what happens to Henry. In this section, we will name and elaborate upon the maladies and fears that afflict Henry IV regarding the preservation of his kingship against the potential, external threats. We will see that Shakespeare's abjective/anti-symbolic approach to history and his adaptation of his sources make Henry's fears and obsessions suitable Kristevan psychoanalytic cases.

Holinshed reported that all the nobles and commoners were happy with Henry's deposition of Richard and considered it necessary for the welfare of the realm. After narrating the accounts of Richard's resignation and deposition, Holinshed wrote:

[...] the archbishop of Canterbury having notice of the minds of the lords, stood and asked the commons if they would assent to the lords, which in their minds thought the claime of the duke [Henry] made, to be rightfull and necessarie for the wealth of the realme and them all: whereto the commons with one voice cried, Yea, yea, yea. (Holinshed 1978, 42)

In *The Fears of Henry IV*, Ian Mortimer wrote that "if it was usurpation – as it is usually described – it was the most popular usurpation in English history" (Mortimer 2008, 192). But, what then caused Henry's later unpopularity? Did not he do what seemed necessary at the time? Richard J. Beck noted that while Richard was still king, deposition seemed necessary and nobody called it a cruel act. But immediately after Henry's ascendancy, a sense of the act's cruelty started to outweigh its necessity (Beck 1980, 28). Henry was elected by expediency, which was at odds with the pre-Tudor concept of a world ordered

in a hierarchical chain of being, as famously described by E. M. W. Tillyard.<sup>5</sup> In *Shakespeare's History Plays*, Tillyard claimed that this doctrine was established during the Middle Ages and was elaborated upon in Elizabethan England (Tillyard 1980, 14). An inefficient monarch being overthrown and replaced by an efficient leader might be welcomed at the time, but such acts violated the concept of divine order and harmony. Tillyard noted that “expediency was the last reason for justifying the laws of England [...]” (Tillyard 1980, 12). In his view, Henry’s Machiavellian method of gaining and sustaining power did not fit with the medieval order-based system of belief. Tillyard argued that in Machiavellian theory “disorder was the natural state of man, and civilization a matter of pure expediency. Such a way of thinking was abhorrent to the Elizabethans [and also people in the middle ages] who preferred to think of order as the norm [...]” (Tillyard 1980, 21). Therefore, Henry’s place in the chain of being was not secure. He tried hard to prove himself the rightful heir to the English throne through his descent from Henry III, but this failed to prevent the rebellions. According to Holinshed, certain monks spread a rumour among his people that Henry’s sickness was caused by God’s punishment (Holinshed 1978, 102). Henry was accused of murdering the Providentially-supported Richard and of usurping his title. Beck took the opinion that “the course of action which fate compelled Henry to take may have established him as a king, but has ruined him as a human being” (Beck 1980, 29). It seems Shakespeare had this view in mind while he was writing the play. His Henry is mentally shattered by the fear of Richard’s shadow. The sense of guilt for Richard’s murder hurts him. In the final scene of *Richard II*, standing by Richard’s dead body, Henry IV says: “I’ll make a voyage to the holy land, | To wash this blood off from my guilty hand” (Shakespeare 1961a, 5.4.49-50). Henry thinks he is able to cleanse himself of the guilt by going on a

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<sup>5</sup> In this chain, which is decreed by God, God sits at the top, beneath whom are angels, demons, man, animals, plants and minerals, respectively. Among men, the king, who is ordained by God, has the highest position. Any violation in the hierarchy would destroy the harmony of the ordered universe and would be punishable by God. Tillyard explains the great chain of being in detail in his *The Elizabethan World Picture* (Tillyard 1943).

Crusade; this ambition is not fulfilled in his lifetime and ironically, he dies in the Jerusalem chamber – rather than the real Jerusalem – within Westminster Abbey.

Holinshed reported that when Richard died Henry's enemies spread a rumour among people that Richard was alive, living in Chester, and waiting to return to London and claim his throne if it was guaranteed that he had enough support to dethrone Henry (Holinshed 1978, 43). Despite the fact that Henry was quite sure such a thing would not happen, this rumour had dangerous consequences for his kingship. The nobility who had an eye to the throne of England used this opportunity to gain the support of the Ricardians. To strengthen the foundations of his throne, Henry had to have the faithful nobility to support him but things did not work out as he wished. The Percys were his main supporters when he returned from exile and played a key role in overthrowing Richard. Henry IV, in return for their help, gave them lands in the north and a share in power. In Shakespeare's play, however, they turn from fighting Henry's enemies to supporting them. They start to conspire with Edmund Mortimer and Owen Glendower against Henry's rule and in favour of Mortimer's claim to the throne, based on the belief that the childless Richard nominated him as his heir. During his meeting with the other Percys in *1 Henry IV* 1.3, Hotspur becomes angry and raises his voice when he hears that the king will not ransom Mortimer, who was captured by Glendower. Hotspur calls Henry "this unthankful king [...] this ingrate and canker'd Bolingbroke" (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.3.134-5). Worcester was among the first supporters of Bolingbroke in his return from banishment, but now he regrets the way they behaved to Richard "for whose death we in the world's wide mouth live scandalized and foully spoken of" (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.3.151-2). For the Percys, Richard's memory and legacy is not dead. Now that Richard has passed away, and cannot be restored to the throne, at least they can support his supposed heir, Edmund Mortimer, who in marrying one of Glendower's daughters becomes an ally of the Welsh rebel.

Henry IV has every reason to be afraid of Richard II's name, which is powerful enough to unite people against him. The Percys believe although Richard had wronged them he did not deserve to be dethroned. Hotspur reminds his father and uncle of their



mistake by saying “as both of you, God pardon it, have done to put down Richard, that sweet lovely rose, and plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke? (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.3.172-4). The Archbishop of York thinks the same way. Like the Percys, he was among those who shouted “yea, yea, yea” (Holinshed 1978, 42). Although he played no role in Henry’s rebellion against Richard, The Archbishop conducted the commission that received the late king’s voluntary abdication and was among those prelates who escorted Henry in the Westminster. He and Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, guided Henry to the vacant throne. Like the northern rebels, the Archbishop now considers Richard the victim of Henry’s plot of usurping the crown. The way he talks of Henry reveals his thought: “thou common dog, didst thou disgorge, | Thy glutton bosom of the royal Richard” (Shakespeare 1966, 1.3.98-9). Richard’s name even has the potential to threaten the southern English borders. The historical Richard had many sympathisers among the French nobility, being Charles VI’s son-in-law, and the news of his murder aroused anger in the French court.

Shakespeare’s Henry is always alert and vigilant, something which gives him the upper hand against his enemies. Though not possessing the support of Providence and the assumed legitimacy of a rightful ruler, he proves to be an efficient, successful commander. The forces against him are united and powerful. However, he beats them all. He crushes Hotspur’s army in the bloody Battle of Shrewsbury, in which Hotspur is slain in the field and Worcester is captured and then executed. The Archbishop is also arrested and then beheaded after his rebellion is nullified. Henry’s forces succeed in ambushing the Earl of Northumberland and killing him. Owen Glendower has the same fate as the other rebels. Henry proves that, in spite of all the strains on him, he is able to defend his throne against the opposing forces, which highlights his abilities and mark him an efficient ruler, in contrast with the previous king. Some critics argue that Shakespeare’s picture of Henry somewhat resists or negates the Elizabethan worldview proposed by Tillyard. As Gabriel Egan pointed out, “Tillyard was accused of homogenising Elizabethan views of historical change” and that he “failed to spot that, like Shakespeare’s plays, the chronicle sources offer multiple explanations and points of view rather than a single providential account of history” (Egan 2007, 59). Graham Holderness

believed the Tudor myth was not the only prevalent doctrine and in fact “not every Elizabethan accepted the state’s official ideology [...]” (Holderness 1985, 19). In fact, there were several competing views at work. In Holderness's view, there were positivist and secular approaches to historiography that resisted the monarchist framework of the Tudor myth and Shakespeare was able to use them in spite of the state’s control (Holderness 1985, 222). Although they mainly advertised the medieval providentialism, Shakespeare’s sources to some extent violated the Tudor myth. The best example is Holinshed, whose “encyclopaedic method of compilation gives a very full representation to diverse and contradictory accounts” (Holderness 1985, 22). For instance, Holinshed rejected those ‘foolish friers’ who thought Henry was “stricken by the hand of God” (Holinshed 1978, 102). Holderness continued:

If, as I am proposing, Shakespeare developed his own understanding of history from his historical sources – rather than simply interpreting the past by the concepts and images of Tudor political and historical philosophy – then he would have known the Middle Ages not as a period dominated by order, legitimacy and the undisputed sovereignty of a monarchy sanctioned by Divine Right, but as a turbulent period dominated by a great and fundamental conflict, fought out again and again and rarely suppressed, between the power of the Crown, and the power of the feudal barons. (Holderness 1985, 42)

The new historicists such as Holderness rejected Tillyard’s belief that Machiavelli’s “day had not yet come” (Tillyard 1980, 23). They argued that the influence of Machiavelli can be seen in Shakespeare’s mode of history telling, in which “the traditional providential ideas are shown giving way to a new political understanding of history: the breakdown of an order reposing on Providence and the emergence of a new regime deploying a flexible political pragmatism” (Holderness 1985, 2). In this view, Henry does not need the support of Providence to rule. As Egan put it “a realist, Machiavellian reading would stress the fact that Bolingbroke achieves the crown because he has the power to take it and that Richard’s anticipated armies of angels (3.2.54-8) never materialize” (Egan 2007, 60). What can be understood from the new historicist account is that although Henry is a

usurper, he is the most qualified person for the position he usurps and the civil unrest that ensues is part of the normal medieval political life and is not caused by Providence.

What both of the old and new historicist's views have in common is the lasting and devastating fear that Henry experiences after deposing Richard. However, while the former introduces Providence and the historical circumstances as the cause of Henry's fear, from the latter it can be understood that the reason behind it is psychoanalytic. In the old view, Henry is struck by the hand of God but from the new approach it can be concluded that Henry is struck by the abject. It is true that he masters all the physical forces against his throne but psychoanalytically Henry fails to get rid of the threatening force of the abject. Shakespeare's Henry is restless and complains about his inability to sleep well: "O sleep, O gentle sleep [...] thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down (Shakespeare 1966, 3.1.5-7). His insomnia can be related to his unconscious fear of lapsing in his vigilance. He knows his uneasiness is an inevitable consequence of the heavy responsibility on his shoulders: "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown" (Shakespeare 1966, 3.1.31). Examining Henry's fears in the context of Kristevan psychoanalytic theory explains some of the complexities of his situation that might otherwise get overlooked. It can be said that Henry's mind is obsessed with defending his symbolic identity. In Kristevan psychoanalysis a subject is always under threat by the forces she calls the abject. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explained that the abject is neither a subject, nor can it be regarded as an object. The abject has the ability to destroy the symbolic identity of the subject (Kristeva 1982, 1). The abject is a combination of the semiotic impulses that hover around the periphery of identity and wait for an opportunity to get through its borders and destroy the symbolic essence of the subject. According to Kristeva, there is no way to get rid of the attacking semiotic forces and the only thing a subject can do is to stay alert and vigilant. Henry is a typical example of a subject always under threat. The memory of Richard's murder hurts him and he fears the curse inflicted on him because he deposed an anointed king. Although he wished for Richard's death, the sense of guilt and the consequences of his ordering the act of murder – or at least making clear to his supporters that he desires it – will not leave him alone. He scolds Sir Piers Exton, Richard's direct murderer: "thou hast wrought a deed of slander with thy

fatal hand upon my head and all this famous land” (Shakespeare 1961a, 5.4.34-6). At the end of *Richard II*, Henry comes to terms with the bitter fact that he will have to live with the fear of infamy for the rest of his life. This infamy makes his identity susceptible to the abject.

Upon hearing Hotspur’s victory in Holmedon, Henry IV at the beginning of *I Henry IV* envies the Earl of Northumberland for having such a brave son and compares Hotspur’s achievements with his own son’s idleness. He sadly continues: “I, by looking on the praise of him, see riot and dishonour stain the brow of my young Harry” (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.1.83-5). He later tells his son “thou has lost thy princely privilege with vile participation” (Shakespeare 1961b, 3.2.86-7). Henry IV is concerned about the Prince of Wales’s carousing with his drinking companions in Eastcheap. Prince Hal prefers the dynamism of the tavern life to the formal atmosphere of the court. In the first half of *I Henry IV*, the audience sees Hal as a reckless madcap who takes part in a highway robbery and takes every opportunity to thumb his nose at authority. Henry IV is also worried about the future of his kingdom after his death and Hal’s ascendancy. His son’s irresponsible behaviour alienates them from one another. On their first encounter in Act 3, Henry rebukes Hal by telling him “I know not whether God will have it so, for some displeasing service I have done, that, in his secret doom, out of my blood, he’ll breed revengement and a scourge for me” (Shakespeare 1961b, 3.2.4-7). Bullough summarized this by writing that Henry “believes that Hal’s misbehaviour may be a divine punishment” (Bullough 1960, 255). Henry cannot help comparing young Harry with the late king for, in his view, Prince Hal will be an irresponsible, inefficient monarch like Richard: “As thou art to this hour was Richard then, when I from France set foot at Ravenspurgh” (Shakespeare 1961b, 3.2.94-5).

As far as Kristevan psychoanalysis is concerned, Prince Hal can be regarded as a subject who is unconsciously obsessed with the chora. The word ‘chora’ is of Greek origin and it means receptacle and nurse. According to Noelle McAfee, “with the term chora, Kristeva describes how an infant’s psychic environment is oriented to its mother’s body [...]” (McAfee 1993, 19). The chora can be used in conjunction with the semiotic,

and Kristeva's term, the 'semiotic chora', means a kind of space in which meaning is semiotic. After a little child abjects the semiotic, it leaves the chora and enters the real world, which is rule-based. Prince Hal is still, unconsciously, stuck in his chora phase, a pre-Oedipal period in which he was associated with the semiotic. Thus, the reason Prince Hal prefers spending his time in Eastcheap and its taverns has its root in a kind of semiotic/chora fixation. Unconsciously, the taverns and the low uneducated people lingering in them remind the Prince of the happy time he experienced before entering the symbolic.

Prince Hal's chief friend in the taverns is the glutton Sir John Falstaff, a fat knight who, in the words of James Bulman, "embodies the spirit of hedonism, and his days are numbered by pleasures of the flesh" (Bulman 2002, 160). The Prince is captivated by Falstaff's character and their exchanging of familiar banter and quick-witted puns amuses the audience. Falstaff is an unusual, unembarrassed coward whose standards seem to run counter to those of the court. The Prince is fascinated by him. It seems there is something in the taverns and Falstaff that the court and its members lack. Although he is a foil to the Prince, Falstaff's zest for life, his drinking to excess, and his wit attract the young man. All the symbolic characteristics of true knights and noblemen are meaningless for Falstaff. According to Holderness, he is a good example of Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival:

Falstaff clearly performs the function, in *Henry IV parts I and II*, of carnival. He constitutes a constant focus of opposition to the official and serious tone of authority and power: his discourse confronts and challenges those of king and state. His attitude to authority is always parodic and satirical: he mocks authority. (Holderness 1985, 88).

Falstaff is an opportunist and to reach his purpose he lies outrageously. Additionally, he is unconcerned about losing his honour when he is caught. He lives a life totally in contrast with the characters of the main plot. He resists the symbolic. He enchants the Prince.

Falstaff unconsciously reminds the Prince of the semiotic stage he sojourned in his early infancy. To take this psychoanalytic relation one step further, we can say that Falstaff's enchantment has a direct unconscious link to the Prince's mother. Valerie Traub argued that "[...] Falstaff represents to Hal [...] a projected fantasy of a pre-Oedipal maternal whose rejection is the basis upon which patriarchal subjectivity is predicated" (Traub 1989, 461). Falstaff's enchantment reaches to a degree that he metonymically acts as Prince Hal's abject mother. The Prince abjected his mother a long time ago and thereby entered the realm of the symbolic. However, the fixation that occurred at some point in his semiotic stage has made his identity borders weak against the return of the abject and that is the main reason he cannot avoid Falstaff. Literally, as Coppelia Kahn put it, "[...] for Hal, Falstaff incarnates his own rebellion against growing up into a problematic adult identity" (qtd. in Holderness 2002, 79). The Prince is struggling against growing up and the responsibilities associated with that. In fact, as Tillyard put it, "his [the Prince's] life with Falstaff is at once an escape from a present he cannot face [...]" (Tillyard 1980, 281). The irresponsible fat knight lets the Prince experience a world different from the one waiting for him at the court, offering a Pre-Oedipal world not burdened by social demands.

Tillyard wrote that "Prince Hal is [...] the Prince in reality whose appearance at first obscures the truth" (Tillyard 1980, 234). Although always a cause of fear and a matter of concern for Henry IV during the king's lifetime, Prince Hal is not going to act recklessly forever. His lack of vigilance is temporary. The audience understands early in the play that he is going to have control over his borders when needed. In an unexpected monologue in *1 Henry IV* (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.2), in a tavern, Hal reveals the complexity of his character. He compares himself to the sun and his low companions to the clouds that hide his beauty from the world. People miss a sun behind the clouds, and they will start to praise its beauty upon its reappearance, and so with him. He then promises the audience "so when this loose behaviour I throw off and pay the debt I never promised, by how much better than my word I am" (Shakespeare 1961b, 1.2.203-5). It can be understood from this speech that Prince Hal wants to make the audience aware

that he aims to be a responsible useful person in the future and, most importantly, is going to abject his bosom friends.

Shakespeare's adaptation of his sources, and his being selective in choosing the incidents to depict, are important in intensifying the psychoanalytic aspects of Henry's fears. The changes Shakespeare makes in the historical accounts make Henry, and also his son, suitable psychoanalytic cases. I mention two major departures from the sources here.

### **Richard II's Death**

Tudor chroniclers, especially Holinshed, held that Richard, in the worst scenario possible, was starved by Henry's agents in Pomfret Castle. Holinshed wrote Richard "died of forced famine" (Holinshed 1978, 24) after the Epiphany Rising. Holinshed added that "some have said, he [Henry] was not privie to that wicked offense" (Holinshed 1978, 24). Edward Hall recounted the same idea. Thomas Walsingham, who was a contemporary of Henry and accompanied him in some of his expeditions, had a milder opinion. According to Walsingham, Richard "was so beaten out of heart that wilfullie he starved himself, and so died in Pomfret" (Holinshed 1978, 25). The question that arises here is where Shakespeare found the murder story. According to Nigel Saul "the more sympathetic treatment in the later Acts was heavily indebted to sources of French origin" (Saul 1997, 4). Holinshed referred to an unknown writer, contemporary to Henry, who believed that Richard was murdered by Henry's indirect order (Saul 1997, 25). This unknown writer might be affected by French chroniclers. Saul continued:

Generally, the line taken by writers unsympathetic to Henry was that the cause was foul play. According to one account, that of the *Traison et Mort*, the former king was set upon and hacked to death by a group of henchmen led by a knight called Sir Piers Exton. The *Traison's* story circulated widely, and it ultimately found its way into Shakespeare; but Sir Piers

Exton is a figure otherwise unknown to history, and the story must be dismissed as an invention. (Saul 1997, 425)

Why did Shakespeare depart from Holinshed and Hall's accounts and rely on French stories which obviously sided with the Ricardians? Probably Shakespeare wanted to change his anti-Ricardian tone of the first acts and, by doing so, elevate Richard's status. But this change in the popular Tudor historical view puts the guilt of murder on Henry's shoulders and denies him what he needs to remain secure: a strong symbolic border.

### **Prince Hal's Youth**

Shakespeare's adaptation of historical texts makes a Kristevan psychoanalytic approach especially applicable to the character of Prince Hal and his relationship with Henry. What Shakespeare shows the audience about the character of the young Hal totally contradicts the historical accounts. Richard Beck reported that "all the chronicles agree that Henry V was a heroic king, but they don't agree in their views of his mis-spent youth [...]" (Beck 1980, 22). The historical Prince Henry was a courageous and able soldier who started serving in his father's army in his early teens. Apart from the Battle of Shrewsbury and his heroism there, he proved himself an efficient officer in fighting the Welsh rebels who were under Glendower's command. He and Hotspur did their best to defend the English-controlled castles and fortifications in Wales, which responsibility fell on Prince Henry's shoulders alone after Hotspur's death in Shrewsbury. It took him nearly a decade before he finally succeeded in putting down the Welsh rebellion. After that he was a permanent member of his father's council and acted as the king's deputy when his father was deadly sick and confined to bed. During this time, as Bullough remarked, "he was so energetic that the poet Hoccleve [...] urged him not to hold business meeting in holy-days" (Bullough 1960, 166). So, how could a person who had spent all of his youth either at war or at the court could find time to indulge himself in carousing at Eastcheap taverns with people like Falstaff? There is no trace of Falstaff or a dissolute Henry in the history record. Sir John Falstaff is likewise an invention of



Shakespeare. In the early performances of the play, as Bulman confirmed, “Falstaff was called Sir John Oldcastle” (Bulman 2002, 160), after the famous Lollard leader,<sup>6</sup> who was burned on the charge of heresy at Henry V’s behest. The historical Oldcastle had been a companion of the Prince during his lieutenancy in Wales and was among his trusted and brave officers. Gary Taylor gave probable reasons why Shakespeare had to change the name. One was the intervention of the Lord Chamberlain,<sup>7</sup> a descendant of Oldcastle (Taylor 1985, 86). Bullough named two Sir John Fastlofs<sup>8</sup> who had had similarities to Shakespeare’s Sir John (Bullough 1960, 171–2), but as Bullough himself put it, “Falstaff cannot be regarded as an amalgam of two Fastolfs and the fictitious Oldcastle. For the greatest humorous character in English literature no source can be offered beyond Shakespeare’s creative genius” (Bullough 1960, 172). But what then was the reason behind this creation?

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<sup>6</sup> Some critics argue that Shakespeare deliberately put the name of a Lollard leader on a cowardly glutton to caricature Protestantism. Gary Taylor in “The Fortunes of Oldcastle” provided evidence that Shakespeare was a Papist (Taylor 1985, 99). Also, Eben Bass, in “Falstaff and the Succession”, maintained that “Shakespeare’s view of Oldcastle [...] owes much to Catholic sources” (Bass 1963, 504). He provided evidence from the play where Falstaff parodies puritan rhetoric (1963, 504).

<sup>7</sup> Sir John Oldcastle became Lord Cobham after his marriage to his third wife, Joan, the heiress of Cobham. In 1596 (the date when *I Henry IV* was written), Lord Cobham was the Lord Chamberlain. Therefore, it is likely that Shakespeare had to change the name because, as Gary Taylor wrote “if the Master of the Revels or the Lord Chamberlain says, ‘Change this character's name’, Shakespeare cannot ignore that advice - or, if he does so, he accepts that the play can no longer be performed, or ever printed” (Taylor 1985, 89).

<sup>8</sup> The first Sir John Fastolf appears in “*I Henry VI*, III.2.104-9, whose cowardice before Rouen resembles Falstaff’s at Shrewsbury [...] (Bullough 1960, 171). The second Sir John Fastolf was famous for his losing a legal case to Lord Cobham (Oldcastle’s father-in-law) in the fourth year of Henry V’s reign (1960, 172).

Bullough wrote that “Shakespeare does not let Prince Henry pursue Glendower into the mountains and bring about his downfall. His Prince is too busy with Falstaff [...]” (Bullough 1960, 165). The reason for the creation of Falstaff was perhaps that Shakespeare did not want to depict the political disagreements that existed between father and son. According to Eben Bass “there are historical differences between the Prince of Wales and Henry IV but Shakespeare revises them” (Bass 1963, 505). It can be inferred from historical records that during Henry IV’s sickness, when he was not able to attend the council meetings, Prince Hal was looking for a way to bring about the king’s abdication. Bullough reported that after the king partially recovered from sickness and heard about his son’s plan, he got angry and dismissed the Prince from the council (Bullough 1960, 251). The historical figures’ father-son relationship underwent many fluctuations before the final reconciliation in the year of the king’s death. It is evident that the political opposition between the king and Prince Hal is something that Shakespeare evades. The cause of their opposition in the play is something other than political disagreements. John Dover Wilson pointed out that “since Henry V is the ideal king of English history, Shakespeare must take great care [...] to guard him from the breath of scandal” (J. D. Wilson 1979, 33). Someone had to be sacrificed to save Prince Hal’s political reputation. A. C. Bradley called Falstaff the most unfortunate among Shakespearean famous characters (Bradley 1970, 57). Shakespeare needed a scapegoat to act as the Prince’s ill angel. Holderness referred to Falstaff as a creation of Shakespeare to “protect the Prince’s tender reputation” (Holderness 1985, 105). Falstaff does most of the wrong attributed to the Prince, and his final banishment, in the last scene, puts the Prince in a good light and on the threshold of his glorious reign.

### **Coda on English History**

*1&2 Henry IV* are plays about the identity of a monarch under threat. Henry IV has scarcely strengthened the foundations of his throne when the rebellions against him start. Being an efficient king and an able military commander, he manages to suppress all the external threats against his throne, but his fears continue to haunt him till the end of his life. His sickness exacerbates his problems. The old historicist reading of the play pushes the readers toward this conclusion that his maladies are a direct result of his

deposing a rightful king who was supported by Providence. His self-made legitimacy is not strong enough and that is the reason the rebels think they are able to supplant the king. He is not even immune against his son, an heir whose actions embarrass him. His time and energy are spent in protecting the poorly guarded borders of his kingship. In Kristevan psychoanalysis, Henry can be considered a good example of a subject always under threat by the forces of the abject. He has to stay vigilant and prepared in order to eliminate the threatening forces, which is a task that will keep him busy till the end of his reign.

While rejecting the Providential ideology advanced by the Tillyadians, the new historicist Shakespeare scholars maintain that medieval England was always under the immediate threat of disorder and the strongest and ablest magnates had the chance to win the shaky throne. From a new historicist view, Providence was something invented by the Tudors to strengthen the foundation of their regime and they used historical figures such as Richard II and Henry IV to support this view. The reality, according to new historicism, is that Henry IV did not need the support of Providence to keep his throne, and his own abilities would suffice. The main cause of the rebellions was the chaotic nature of medieval England and the root of Henry's fear in the play is psychoanalytic, not providential.

In accordance with all chronicles, Shakespeare's Henry IV succeeds in defending his crown against all threats and is reconciled with Prince Hal. The dramatist's departures from the sources highlight Henry's fears of losing his throne. Shakespeare's manipulations of historical facts make Henry IV afraid of the shadow of Richard II till the end of his life. Richard, who was abjected by Henry for the stability and peace of the realm, has an abject-like return to haunt the usurper of his crown. The changes not only expose Henry's fear of the abject, but they also signify Shakespeare's anti-symbolic or abjective approach to history, which distinguishes him from his contemporaries.

## Caius Martius and the Plebians

*Coriolanus* begins amid confusions between the plebeians and the patricians on how the price of grain must be set, which is a controversial issue that has the potential to develop into a full-scale riot. The mob has made up their minds: “You are all resolved rather to die than to famish? Resolved. Resolved” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.3-5). They accuse the patricians of hoarding grain, which malicious act they believe is the reason for their starvation. Among the patricians, they single out Caius Martius as the “chief enemy to the people” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.8), and suggest that his murder would be the best way to even the inequities of hierarchy and “have corn at our own price” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.10-11). Their angry belief that their “sufferance is a gain to them [the patricians]” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.21-2), and that Caius Martius is “a very dog to the commonalty” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.27-8) push them to find their way to the Capitol to confront the patricians, though they say that they “speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.23-4).

To dissuade them from outright rebellion, Menenius attempts to convince the mob that the patricians always perform a belly-like function by sending the city’s food “through the rivers of your blood, even to the court, the heart, to the seat o’ the brain” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.34-5). Menenius’ belly fable is immediately contrasted when Caius Martius enters cursing the plebeians: “What’s the matter, you dissentious rogues, [...] you curs” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.164). In his view, so long as the commoners do not participate in wars they do not deserve to receive grain. His arrogance and snobbery make him the target of the hatred of the people who think that with the “services he has done for his country [...] he pays himself with being proud” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.29-32).

Charles Hofling emphasized the special quality of Coriolanus’ pride, which he believed has a special psychological quality. Hofling suggested that Coriolanus shows signs of a “phallic-narcissistic character” [...] [who] is self-confident, often arrogant, elastic, vigorous and often impressive” (Hofling 1957, 413). He also adds that such a

person shows an “exaggerated display of self-confidence, dignity and superiority” (Hofling 1957, 413). Hofling concluded that “it is not by accident that this type is most frequently found among athletes, aviators, soldiers and engineers. One of their most important traits is aggressive courage” (Hofling 1957, 413–4). Caius Martius aggressively asserts that ordinary people must be kept hungry else “they’ll sit by the fire” (Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.191). All they desire is food in peace and looting in war, while noble Romans like himself fight and get wounded. It can be understood from Caius Martius’ attitude towards the plebeians that he does not consider them worthy Roman citizens and believes that they fall short of the city’s codes of patriotism with their emphasis on gallantry and valour in war.

Though constituting one of the most important forces in the play, the mob of plebeians does not possess its own individual identity. From Caius Martius’ viewpoint, the mob lacks proper subjectivity because, in the words of Joan Fitzpatrick, “for Coriolanus subjectivity is located in the mind, heroism proceeds from the intellect and the body is merely the means by which to achieve it” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 97). Caius Martius’ disgust at the plebeians’ desire to eat forms a major conflict of the play, and a challenge that makes the hero angry to a degree that he reviles the people with verbal attacks. He is obsessed with abstinence and considers eating to be of little value, a distraction from heroic acts and important responsibilities. He gets angry at the commoners because, as Fitzpatrick put it, “the citizens allow themselves to be governed by their bellies and so are contemptible to him; his disgust at their desire to feed indicating a pathological aversion toward the visceral” (Fitzpatrick 2007, 97). In other words, holding that the Roman virtues are advanced by denying bodily needs, Caius Martius considers the rabble base humans with animalistic needs.

Janet Adelman suggested that the plebeians’ uprising has Freudian elements. In her view, “the rising of the people becomes suggestively phallic; and the fear of the levelling becomes ultimately a fear of losing one’s potency in all spheres” (Adelman 1978, 109). Martius had a hand in dethroning King Tarquin, and a reader or playgoer who knows that and is familiar with Freud’s psychoanalytic theories can interpret the play’s

initial situation as an Oedipal moment. Considered in this way, the mob's anger at their unfair share of the grains might be interpreted as a son's hatred of his father who consumes an unfair share of his mother. Thus, as Adelman continued, "the uprising of the crowd is in fact presented in terms that suggest the transformation of hunger into phallic aggression, a transformation that is [...] central to the character of Coriolanus himself" (Adelman 1978, 109). Martius contributed in overthrowing the royal father and is poised to take his place. With the other patricians, he represents the father figure who becomes the subject of their subjects'/sons' fantasy. "In this fantasy", as Adelman put it, "the hitherto docile sons suddenly threaten to rise up against their fathers, the Senators, [...] and it is characteristic of *Coriolanus* that the contested issue in this Oedipal rebellion is food" (Adelman 1978, 109). Setting food as their object of desire, the citizens see Martius a threat to their wish, so they aim to remove him.

Martius considers food a base need of the human that can have poisonous effect on his body. Menenius informs others of his grumpiness before eating (5.1.50; 7.2.36-7). He is used to eating less and performing more than other men, which is a habit that might have its root in the process of his identity development in his childhood. It seems he finds food a threat to his identity as a true Roman soldier, and here one can apply Kristeva's theories. In *The Powers of Horror*, Kristeva argued that food can serve as a threat to one's subjectivity and has the potential to make it exposed to the abject. "When food appears as a polluting object", Kristeva suggested, "it does so as oral object only to the extent that orality signifies a boundary of the self's clean and proper body" (Kristeva 1982, 75). Food can either be the horror that a 'clean and proper body' must avoid, or the abject that reminds the subject of its archaic past when it was associated with the maternal body. For Martius, food has an uncanny effect and is a reminder of his untimely separation from the maternal body, as we will see. Thus, food, by its abject like qualities, threatens his symbolic identity. Kristeva remarked that "food becomes abject only if it is a border between two distinct entities or territories. A boundary between nature and culture, between the human and the nonhuman" (Kristeva 1982, 75). By avoiding food, Martius aims to avoid a confrontation with his nature. His nature is associated with harsh memories of his pre-oedipal learning to eat. Kristeva regarded food as the abject that can

make a link between human beings in general and a subject with its mother specifically. By avoiding meals, Martius is unconsciously dealing with the force of the abject, which is to say, his mother.

### **Caius Martius and Rome**

The word 'Rome' appears ninety one times in *Coriolanus*, which is considerably more often than in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. This fact highlights the role that the city plays in the life of the leading character. Raised as a noble Roman, Martius has a firm patriotic outlook according to which he must be ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of his home town. His mind is so obsessed with defending the city against its enemies that he ignores and forgets about his body both at home and at war. By denying his body food, he makes his belly suffer in exchange for a more focused mind in defending Rome. Several times has he exposed himself to the enemy's swords and arrows and his body carries signs of several wounds and scars that can be regarded as sufficient evidence of his valour.

For his endeavours to defend Rome, Martius receives his toponymic cognomen Coriolanus which title distinguishes him in the service of the city state. The love of Rome gives him the courage to fight singlehandedly by the gates of Corioli and bring victory for the Roman army. Some critics take the psychoanalytic view that the act of defeating his enemies in Corioli awards Coriolanus a new symbolic identity and makes him an independent subject. As an example, Burton Hatlen, while comparing the gates of Corioli with the vulva or the gates of life, remarked that after Martius' impetuous plunge into the gates of the city "his victorious emergence becomes a violent re-entry into the womb and a symbolic rebirth as a purely male being" (Hatlen 1997, 405). He enters as Martius in Corioli and exits as Coriolanus with "his sword, death's stamp" and a body framed as "a thing of blood" (Shakespeare 1976, 2.2.107-9). His sword, as Hatlen suggests, is ironically "a phallic sword that disseminates death. And in this guise he becomes a portent, even a kind of god" (Hatlen 1997, 406). Coppelia Kahn remarked that "the city is traditionally a feminine enclosure" (Kahn 1981, 161), and thus Martius' conquest of

Corioli can be interpreted as his victory over his compulsive past, a victory that awards him a new identity: Coriolanus.

His new identity gives Coriolanus the privilege to serve his city as a much higher-ranking official, but the problem starts when as an aspirant to the consulship he needs the vote of the majority of the Romans, the plebeians. His wounds and valor give him an edge in persuading people to vote for him but his contempt for the commoners endangers the popularity that his martial exploits have earned him. This phallic-narcissistic character is uncomfortable presenting himself humbly in the toga of candidacy in the marketplace before the populace. Finding the entire practice demeaning, he asks the senators to exempt him from the act: "I do beseech you," he begs, "let me o'erleap that custom" (Shakespeare 1976, 2.2.134-5). Coriolanus has a feeling of shame to "show them the unaching scars which I should hide, as if I had received them for the hire of their breath only!" (Shakespeare 1976, 2.2.147-9). That Coriolanus does not wish to show his wounds in order to win people's votes might have some unconscious causes over which he has no control.

After elaborating upon the wide gap which exists between Coriolanus' aristocratic hauteur and the ordinariness of the commoners, Andy Mousley mentioned the Roman hero's feeling of vulnerability as a key reason behind his reluctance to appear in the marketplace and show his wounds. "The spurning of emotional vulnerability", Mousley wrote, "is mirrored by Coriolanus's spurning of physical vulnerability" (Mousley 2007, 119). In his view, the reason Coriolanus uses the third person while referring to his wounds is that he treats them as if they are not his: "I have some wounds upon me, and they smart to hear themselves remember'd" (Mousley 2007, 119). Mousley brought supporting evidence from other critics who highlight Coriolanus' fear of showing his scars to the public. For instance Ewan Fernie argued that the main reason for Coriolanus' phobia might be that "revelation of his wounds would [...] expose his fleshly vulnerability, mutability, and mortality" (qtd. in Mousley 2007, 119). It can be understood that Coriolanus is afraid of being stripped of his formal dress and of pretending to be what he is not. Exposing his naked flesh to the public puts his



subjectivity under threat and this is the psychic force that stops him. Mousley also referred to Coriolanus' extraordinariness as opposed to the citizen's ordinariness, and was of the opinion that "the public ritual of showing wounds to the people, [...] [is] testimony to the 'reality' of ordinary human feelings and bodily experiences, which the hero has succeeded in subduing" (Mousley 2007, 119). After years of fighting for Rome, he classifies himself an extraordinary citizen and believes the act of showing his wounds to the public will be humiliating.

In presenting himself to the people in the market place, Coriolanus knows he is betraying some essential parts of himself, but he takes his chance in gaining the citizens' favour. He has no intention of altering his personality to suit the desires of the people, and the plebians notice the veiled contempt with which he pleads for their votes. His arrogance and contempt for the people make him an easy target for the crafty demagogues, the newly appointed tribunes Brutus and Sicinius, who easily bait him into losing his temper. Brutus and Sicinius have got to know Coriolanus' self-destructive trait and use it to their advantage: "then he speaks what's in his heart; and that is there which looks with us to break his neck" (Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.28-30). Similarly, in his second confrontation with the people, instead of being conciliatory, Coriolanus raves at them and denounces his fellow patricians for letting the commoners share in ruling Rome by allowing them tribunes as representatives of their interests. The question, then, is why Coriolanus is so addicted to anger? Andy Mousley remarked that "anger provides the emotional energy which gives the body its seemingly 'more than human' stamina" (Mousley 2007, 119). It seems that Coriolanus feeds on anger and it gives an edge in his verbal attacks on the people. In fact, as Mousley continued, "anger is Coriolanus's chief emotion not only because it energises him, but also because it separates him from others" (Mousley 2007, 120). This separation put an ever-increasing distance between him and the commoners and will ultimately create an untouchable identity for him. Such a distance will not help Coriolanus as a politician in a republic and he is ultimately banished from the city that he longs to serve.

Coriolanus' immediate reaction to his banishment from Rome is to say "I banish you" (Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.123), which in the words of Adelman, is "an infantile fantasy of omnipotent control" (Adelman 1992, 157). This is followed by some hateful sentences ending in: "For you, the city, thus I turn my back: There is a world elsewhere" (Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.134-5). Rome is more than a homeland for Coriolanus and there are some strong emotional ties that have their roots in the Roman hero's childhood. Banishment is inevitable because, as Kahn put it, "Rome was his mother and she has cast him out, so he must cast her out" (Kahn 1981, 167). Looking at Coriolanus' predicament from an Oedipal perspective, one can say that his rebellion against the royal father and his desire to possess the mother Rome, although successful at the beginning, stalls with Rome's many sons' unfavourable appraisal of him. Coriolanus managed to remove the father, but on his way to possession of his archaic mother he is prevented by his ordinary siblings. In short, the extraordinary son is cast away and his prospect of satisfaction remains dim.

Leaving the Oedipal cause aside, it is worth noting that the Romans banish Coriolanus because of his arrogance and fear of his becoming a tyrant. In other words, though Coriolanus is a man of the highest ability, the Romans drive him out of Rome since they believe that upon becoming the consul he will not respect the doctrines of a republic. Kristeva argued that "men of the highest ability have always seized the power and become autocrats. Such men cannot help being autocrats, and they have always done more harm than good; they are either banished or executed" (Kristeva 1982, 19). And Coriolanus is not an exception; he is banished so that the Roman Republic might continue its existence. In Kristeva's viewpoint, such powerful men are likely to become fearful dictators. Thus, it can be concluded from Kristeva's remarks that such men are banished for the sake of the good of a nation.

Ironically, now that Rome's chief enemy is gone, the city becomes vulnerable because the one who was always guarding its borders against all sorts of threats is also gone. Coriolanus' remarks regarding his banishment foreshadow fear and threat:

And here remain with your uncertainty!  
Let every feeble rumour shake your hearts!  
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,  
Fan you into despair! Have the power still  
To banish your defenders;  
(Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.126-9)

After saying the above sentences, Coriolanus embodies horror, the abject. From now on, he can be regarded as an immediate threat to Rome, looking for a way to attack its poorly guarded borders. He is restless and seeking revenge. Kristeva remarked that “from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (Kristeva 1982, 2). Now that Coriolanus is “is banish’d, as enemy to the people and his country” (Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.116-7), the Romans must live with the constant fear of his abject-like return. The abject, as Kristeva put it, “lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter’s rules of the game” (Kristeva 1982, 2). Coriolanus had objections to Rome’s “rules of the game”, that is to say, the way it was governed. He is banished but his threat is not exterminated. He ‘lies outside’, waiting for an opportunity to endanger Rome’s identity.

### **Caius Martius and his Mother**

Robert Stoller remarked that *Coriolanus* “is a play that centres about phalluses and castration” (Stoller 1932, 264). In his view, Volumnia must be blamed for much of Coriolanus’ abnormal psychological traits, “for such a mother”, as Stoller put it, “a son is the literal embodiment of her phallus which from infancy she had wished to attain by one means or another” (Stoller 1932, 266). Coriolanus embodies all Volumnia’s repressed pre-oedipal desires, and he is a potentially strong phallus that, if carefully manipulated, is able to penetrate whoever and whatever she wishes. Her Coriolanus, as Stoller continued, “penetrates everyone he meets either with his explosive words or with his weapons” (Stoller 1932, 264). To escape emasculation, Coriolanus has to act as his mother’s surrogate and fulfil her fantasies; this is an inordinate attachment that will lead him to his

destruction. Looking at Coriolanus' unusual relation with his mother through Kristeva's theories, one can say that he has failed to undergo a normal detachment process from his mother and that is why she manipulates him.

Volumnia can be regarded an unlikely mother due to the way she has brought up her son. The audience first gets a glimpse of her when she is giving Virgilia advice while they are sewing together. She tells her daughter-in-law how she has deliberately inculcated in her son the Roman ideals and that she takes more pleasure in Martius' bravery in war than a husband's embrace. It soon becomes apparent that, with his father out of the picture, Caius Martius is to an inordinate degree influenced by his mother. Like the Roman Republic that lacks a powerful king (or father) absence of a strong father is felt in Martius' life, leaving a power vacuum that gives Volumnia ample room to exert herself through her son. She does not hide her unpleasant delight in spilling blood since she believes "it more becomes a man than gilt his trophy" (Shakespeare 1976, 1.3.39-40). She remarks if she had a dozen sons such as Martius she "had rather had eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action" (Shakespeare 1976, 1.3.24-5). Volumnia has taught Martius how to behave in a brutal fashion in his childhood and he proved to be a fast learner when, on seeing a butterfly, "he did so set his teeth and tear it" (Shakespeare 1976, 1.3.64-5).

Emmett Wilson argued that in spite of the agnomen he received due to his bravery in Corioli, Coriolanus suffers from a "continuous subservience to Volumnia, and his acquiescence in the role that she demands of him" (E. Wilson 1939, 230). Even his bravery at Corioli cannot help Coriolanus to detach his identity from Volumnia's and this is what his mother keeps reminding him of: "My praises made thee first a soldier" (Shakespeare 1976, 3.2.108) and "Thou are my warrior; I help to frame thee" (Shakespeare 1976, 5.3.62-3). It seems that Volumnia regards Coriolanus as her masterpiece and is eager to put him on display in public. Wilson labels Volumnia a 'phallic castrating mother' who takes delight in exposing her son's wounds to the public, which suggests a deep unconscious mother-son relationship existing between the two of them (E. Wilson 1939, 230). Her pleasure in her son's wounds – "O, he is wounded: I

thank the gods for ‘t’ (Shakespeare 1976, 2.1.120) – makes her cajole and threaten Coriolanus to show the populace his scars, which is an act that he finds ignominious and objectionable: “Mother, I am going to the market place: chide me no more [...] look, I am going” (Shakespeare 1976, 3.2.131-4). From a psychoanalytic perspective, the mob of plebeians, as Wilson put it, “has from the first been presented as a cannibalistic threat to Coriolanus”, and “the mob stands for the aggressive and dangerous aspects of the mother” (E. Wilson 1939, 231). Coriolanus’ task in the market place is, thus, pleasing the mob by showing his wounds that symbolically represent his castration by an aggressive mother. These signs of castration, Wilson argued, serve as strong proofs for Coriolanus’ continuous bonds with his mother. During the Oedipal stage a son has to break his ties with his mother in response to the castration threat from a stronger rival, his father. However, in Coriolanus’ case, due to the absence of such a father, the complete detachment from Volumnia does not take place and consequently he undergoes castration and emasculation. The wounds make Volumnia sure of her son’s submission and hence she delights in seeing them and watching him display them.

From a Kristevan perspective, it can be argued that due to lack of a strong father Coriolanus failed to abject the semiotic in his Oedipal phase and this is the reason he is dominated by his mother. Overwhelmed by the semiotic forces, he has to live with the fear of the scar and of being sucked back to his mother, which is a terrifying phobia that threatens his identity. The wounds and scars on his body can be interpreted as the signs of the victory of the feminine on his body. Kristeva put forth the notion of “the wounding exterior turning into an abominable interior” (Kristeva 1982, 135), which viewpoint can be fully applied to Coriolanus’ preoccupations with his physical and mental states. The marks of wounds and scars on his body can be regarded as images of his interior wounds and scars caused by the abject mother. Though seemingly healed on the surface, the wounds continue to burn inside his body where they have also left their scars, always reminding Coriolanus of the castration he has suffered. By forcing her son to expose his wounds to the populace, Volumnia aims to show her power to the male community of Rome and declare her castrating power publicly. Kristeva thought that a mother embodies castration in herself, which might represent “a precocious narcissistic wound”, or as

“expressing a love that only the weak can receive” (Kristeva 1982, 158). So, to receive her mother’s love, Coriolanus must remain weak and vulnerable lest he be sucked back to his maternal origin. Kristeva completed the notion by proposing “the theme of two-faced mother [that is] perhaps the representation of the baleful power of women to bestow mortal life” (Kristeva 1982, 158). The face that Coriolanus unconsciously remembers of his mother is the baleful and menacing side, with its phallic castrating force.

Adelman argued that at the centre of *Coriolanus* one can observe a hungry mouth that is overwhelmed by a mother who withholds food (Adelman 1978, 109). Not only has Volumnia discouraged Coriolanus from eating, but also abstains. Her response to Menenius’ invitation “You’ll sup with me?” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.2.49), is “Anger’s my meat; I sup upon myself, and so shall starve with feeding” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.2.50-1). She has raised her son in such a manner that he believes there is nothing in food that can put him on the path to glory. In other words, in order to perform important deeds for Rome, Coriolanus is made believe that he does not require basic needs such as food. Volumnia fed him only with bravery: “Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck’st it from me” (Shakespeare 1976, 3.2.128). In short, Volumnia thinks Coriolanus has inherited his courage from her because she has breastfed him. But Coriolanus, as Adelman put it, “certainly has not been fed the milk of human kindness” (Adelman 1978, 109). Volumnia boasts of her role in feeding Coriolanus with milk that was transformed into bravery and developed the sense of Roman patriotism in him. Since the early stages of her son’s identity formation, she has planned to bring her son up to become a Roman nobleman. She has done so with the belief that, in Adelman’s words, “to be noble is to die; to live is to be ignoble and to eat too much. If you are Volumnia’s son, the choice is clear” (Adelman 1978, 110).

Victoria Sparey elaborated on popular early modern beliefs regarding breastfeeding and how they can help us to understand the special quality of Coriolanus’ feeding habit in his early childhood. In her view, in Shakespeare’s time it was imagined that “the female production of milk was framed [...] as an extension of the humoral flow that was imagined to occur between mother and infant in the womb” (Sparey 2012, 777).

It was believed that the breasts and womb were joined by a lacteal gland that permitted the flow of blood between the two organs. After the birth of the child, and during the concoction process, the mother's blood turned white on its way to the breasts so the suckling child had access to the contents of her blood (Sparey 2012, 777). Joan Fitzpatrick also noted that during the early modern period in England "mothers were believed to provide food for their infants by converting their blood into breast milk" (Fitzpatrick 2000, 140). Fitzpatrick added mothers (or wet nurses) were thought to be able to transmit infections, diseases, and character traits through their milk and so endanger the recipients' identities in, for example, colonial contexts (Fitzpatrick 2000, 140).

Volumnia imagines that she has injected all necessary stuff to her would-be army commander through her milk since "in Volumnia's fantasy the milk of the mother is essentially the same substance as the blood of the warrior, and shares in the elevated status that is conveyed upon the warrior's spilt blood in battle" (Sparey 2012, 789). She has made Coriolanus dependent on her milk, and since it was contaminated with anger, his body repels ordinary food in his adulthood, affecting his mood and behaviour and making him dependent on his mother forever. Sparey also noted that a little child's constant dependence on his mother's milk and her withholding him from eating any types of milk alternatives was thought to result in certain kinds of physical illnesses in later life (Sparey 2012, 793). Volumnia compares her milk with that of another legendary hero's mother: "The breasts of Hecuba, when she did suckle Hector looked not lovelier than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood" (Shakespeare 1976, 1.3.41-3). "In her image", as Adelman put it, "feeding, incorporating, is transformed into spitting out, an aggressive expelling; the wound in turn becomes the mouth that spits forth blood" (Adelman 1978, 110). In Volumnia's fantasy, blood is more appealing than milk and her son must feed on anger and quench his sense of thirst and anger in the battle field by shedding the blood of the enemies of Rome.

Kristeva remarked that "food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection" (Kristeva 1982, 2). In this type of abjection, an individual

expels something that can be part of itself. Thus, “in other respects”, as Kristeva put it, “food is the oral object (the abject) that sets up archaic relationships between the human being, and its mother, who wields a power that is as vital as it is fierce” (1982, 75-6). Food can unconsciously remind one of the first feeding experiences had from the mother’s breast; the first joy received from the semiotic was the oral pleasure received from drinking milk. Milk can be labeled as the juice and essence of the semiotic, an invaluable substance for which in adult life one fails to find a substitute. Yet food and other orally satisfying substances cannot replace mother’s milk because they lack something: “since food is not an ‘other’ for ‘me’ [...] I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself” (1982, 3). Kristeva stated that “when the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk” (1982, 2), the utmost of abjection occurs. One wants to spit the milk because it is not the ‘other’, in other words, it does not taste like the mother. This situation can get worse when an individual has not undergone a complete breastfeeding process and the thirst for milk has not been quenched during childhood. Such a person, trying in adulthood the different kinds of alternatives to milk, tends to expel any type of food, even milk, because “along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother” (Kristeva 1982, 3). For an individual such as Coriolanus, who has not undergone a complete psychological separation from his mother, the sense of hunger cannot be satisfied by food. He has to feed on anger, which is a horrible and unsatisfying diet.

Kristeva referred to the tradition of food prohibition and its significance in the Bible. Abstaining from eating a particular kind of food, in Kristeva’s viewpoint, “embodies the asserted logic of separation, and in my view it points to the unconscious foundation of such a persistence: ‘Thou shall not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk (Exodus 23:19, 34:26, Deuteronomy 14:21)’” (Kristeva 1982, 105). “Milk”, Kristeva remarked, “mingles two identities and connotes the bond between the one and the other” (Kristeva 1982, 105), so that abstaining from milk or polluting it with extra substances can harm one’s identity formation. Such a dietary prohibition can lead to abomination and disgust. According to Kristeva, the symbolic value of milk has the potential to “set



up an abnormal bond between mother and child” (Kristeva 1982, 105). Milk can be regarded as the royal path to the ‘other’, so when it is prohibited too soon or too late, abomination is a consequence. Kristeva also believed there must be a limit to the length of time a little child is breastfed because if continued there will be the danger of incest. To push the theory a little further, one can say that receiving milk from the ‘other’ cannot be done after the Oedipal period and there must be some restrictions on it because “such a dietary prohibition must be understood as prohibition of incest” (Kristeva 1982, 105).

From these ideas Andy Mousley concluded that “the desire or need to escape is also part of the Oedipus complex, especially for boys, who, according to Freudian psychoanalysis, have to repress the mother in order to establish separate identity” (Mousley 2007, 116). In Kristevan psychoanalysis, there must be a limit to the reciprocal affection between the mother and child or the latter will encounter difficulty in detaching itself from the semiotic. Kristeva thought that “fear of the uncontrollable generative mother repels me from the body” (Kristeva 1982, 78–9), a notion that can have counterproductive effects on a society. Kristeva warned against matrilinealism because a strong and dominant mother can serve as an obstacle on a little child’s path to the symbolic. One must be always afraid of the archaic mother and her generative power, which can be, at the same time, contaminating and suffocating. The absence of a strong father can give rise to the polluting effect of maternal dominance, so “it is [...] not surprising to see pollution rituals proliferating in societies where patrilineal power is poorly secured” (Kristeva 1982, 77). The voluminous and encompassing Volumnia can be regarded as the proper example of a mother who becomes powerful in a fatherless family. She uses her power to get her son under control after his Oedipal phase, which is an interference that obstructs Coriolanus’ process of identity development. In a society in which women are not allowed to play important roles, Volumnia exerts her power through her son. She poses a threat to Coriolanus’ identity and thus, according to Kristeva, is “the masochistic mother who never stops working [and] is repulsive and fascinating, abject” (Kristeva 1982, 158).

## **Caius Martius and Fathers**

After he is formally announced a traitor and banished from Rome, Coriolanus makes a remark that gives psychoanalytic clues to the process of his identity development: “For you, the city, thus I turn my back: There is a world elsewhere” (Shakespeare 1976, 3.3.134-5). In his anger, Coriolanus decides to leave the city that he mistakenly expected to give him the desired identity he was looking for. The symbolic which was supposed to make an individual subject out of him and give him strong identity borders fails to fulfil its promise. Rome poses a danger to him now and he is threatened with annihilation. Psychoanalytically, Rome and his mother are one. Coriolanus decides to banish Rome and by so doing abject the semiotic. He comes to the understanding that he must “never be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand, as if a man were author of himself and knew no other kin” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.3.34-7). Now that there is no room for him in Rome, he must say good-bye to his motherland and seek his symbolic identity in ‘a world elsewhere’ and develop himself free of a Roman identity. According to Jonathan Dollimore “it is the world being left which he needs, because it is there that his identity is located” (Dollimore 2010, 220), but this suggests a static model of identity rather than the evolving one that a Kristevan reading entails.

Adelman held that Coriolanus’ “encounter with Aufidius is an attempt to create this world” (Adelman 1992, 157). His choice of the city of Antium to establish a new identity for himself is paradoxical because “Tis I that made thy widows: many an heir of these fair edifices 'fore my wars” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.4.2-3). Although he has “a name unmusical to the Volscians’ ears” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.5.58), Coriolanus decides to recreate his identity there. In other words, by taking refuge in Aufidius, Coriolanus chooses to claim his desired identity from the sworn enemy of Rome. To that end, he asks Aufidius to “make my misery serve thy turn: so use it that my revengeful services may prove as benefits to thee” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.5.91-3). He has made his decision; he aims to take revenge from what has blocked the development of his identity: “for I will fight against my canker’d country with the spleen of all the under fiends” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.5.93-5). Now that he has abjected the semiotic, he wants to permanently get rid

of its threat with the help of Aufidius, who is eager to supply the means: “Let me commend thee first to those that shall say yea to thy desires. A thousand welcomes! And more a friend than e’er an enemy” (Shakespeare 1976, 4.5.146-8).

As mentioned above, the play gives Coriolanus no biological father, which gives rise to Volumnia’s dominance of him. The lack of a father is the main cause of Coriolanus undergoing, in Wilson’s words, “the passive phase of the Oedipus complex, in which he aspires to be loved by a powerful father, displacing his mother as his father’s primary object” (E. Wilson 1939, 234). In his quest for a surrogate father, Coriolanus comes across the old family friend, Menenius, who apparently has fatherly feelings toward him. As Wilson put it, Menenius “is an apt psychological symbol for the weak and conquered father appropriate to Coriolanus’ wishes in the active phase of the Oedipus complex in which Volumnia is in the ascendancy as Coriolanus’ object” (E. Wilson 1939, 234). During Coriolanus’ Oedipal phase, Menenius was not a powerful rival and thus not considered a castration threat. Everything seemed fine during the active Oedipal phase since Coriolanus was mingled with the source of gratification without the fear of castration. However, the problem begins during the passive phase when it becomes apparent that the weak father is not a match for the stalwart Volumnia. The father represents the world outside the mother, ‘a world elsewhere’ that the little child must enter in order to acquire identity. However, such a weak father representative fails to motivate Coriolanus to abject the semiotic and enter the symbolic. Menenius does his best to protect his ‘son’ against the threats of the mob of the plebeians, but, on leaving Rome, Coriolanus bids farewell to him as well and takes his chance in finding another psychological father representative in ‘a world elsewhere’.

Wilson suggested that “the awesome figure of Aufidius, a marked contrast to Menenius, provides the second father symbol in the play” (E. Wilson 1939, 235–6). Aufidius serves as a foil to the defeated and castrated Menenius; he is the symbol of the virile and assertive father who is able to make Coriolanus abject Volumnia for the new father’s sake. Even while they were feuding, Coriolanus admired Aufidius: “I sin in envying his nobility; and were I anything but what I am, I would wish me only he”

(Shakespeare 1976, 1.1.229-31). In this second Oedipal scene, Coriolanus denounces Volumnia in favour of a loving strong father with whom he can start a new fantasy. By accepting Aufidius' offer with "Let me twine mine arms about that body" (Shakespeare 1976, 4.5.109-10) Coriolanus gives consent to a new filial love fantasy that, although containing passive homosexual yearnings, seems to be necessary for his identity formation. "The embrace with Aufidius", as Wilson put it, "involves, on the unconscious level, the necessity for undergoing castration as a precondition of the father's love" (E. Wilson 1939, 237). To enter the symbolic, Coriolanus bids farewell to Volumnia and Rome, his semiotic attachments, because in order to attain the love of the father, he must abject such feminine belongings.

Why then does Coriolanus abort his attack on Rome near the end of the play and make his strong father angry? The majority of the critics are of the opinion that because Volumnia equates Rome with her own body she succeeds in dissuading him from looting Rome. Volumnia warns Coriolanus:

Thou shalt no sooner  
March to assault thy country than to tread –  
Trust to 't, thou shalt not – on thy mother's womb  
That brought thee to this world  
(Shakespeare 1976, 4.3.121-4).

Adelman remarked that "the ruin on which Coriolanus will tread will be his mother's womb" (Adelman 1978, 118). Wilson offered a more subtle psychoanalytic reason: "Coriolanus' plan to take Rome by force and destroy it is rendered less necessary once he has brought his mother to her knees" (E. Wilson 1939, 428). His plan to sack Rome, as Hofling stated, "would have the unconscious significance of (a regression to) sadism directed against the mother" (Hofling 1957, 425). With Volumnia on her knees, Coriolanus seems to have accomplished his revenge on the semiotic and has managed to tame its destructive influence on himself, so there is no point in sacking Rome. Wilson also highlighted the role of Virgilia in making Coriolanus milder in his encounter with his

mother. Wilson put Virgilia's influence on Coriolanus in psychoanalytic terminology: "one might say that through his marriage to the emotionally healthy and feminine Virgilia, Coriolanus has had a corrective emotional experience" (Wilson 1939, 427). The long-term effect of his marriage with Virgilia has brought Coriolanus to a kind of emotional maturation that was of some effect in his relenting in the final scene. Thus, that Rome is spared could also be because of the passive intervention of Virgilia and not merely Volumnia's active interference.

Although successful in bringing the suffocating mother to her knees at the end, Coriolanus seems to be weak in her presence. Volumnia manages to change his mind and as a result Rome is spared. Though Coriolanus has taken refuge in his symbolic father, he is not yet immune against the return of the abject. While unconsciously reminding him of his strong emotional bond with his mother, the abject infiltrates his borders and takes his subject under control. In saying "Though I cannot make true wars, I'll frame convenient peace" (Shakespeare 1976, 5.3.190-1) his newly established identity shatters and he gives in to the semiotic. His weeping on his mother's embrace is interpreted by Aufidius as childish: "thou boy of tears!" (Shakespeare 1976, 5.6.101). Coriolanus' reply can highlight the extent of the destructive power that a boy, manipulated by a suffocating mother, can have: "'tis there that, like an eagle in a dovecote, I fluttered your Volscians in Corioli. Alone I did it. Boy" (Shakespeare 1976, 5.6.114-7).

### **Coda on Roman History**

*Coriolanus* can be regarded as the story of an individual whose process of identity development is obstructed by a strong, suffocating mother. Volumnia uses the absence of a virile and powerful father to her own advantage and overwhelms her son with her masochistic approach. Coriolanus is a child not fed properly by his mother; he considers eating a base need and is raised to feed on his anger. It seems his malnutrition and self-harm contribute to his valour and bravery in war, and also his harsh treatment of the plebeians whose main preoccupation, he believes, is eating and resting. To become Coriolanus, his fighting singlehandedly by the gates of Corioli would suffice; however, to

become a consul he cannot act alone. For that he needs the vote of the plebeians and that is where the tragedy starts. His confrontation with the commoners can be interpreted as an Oedipal scene in which he is prevented by his siblings to get closer to Rome, their mother. He succeeded in removing the royal father on his way but having a sole access to the mother would not be easy in a republic.

In Kristevan psychoanalysis, Coriolanus might be considered an individual whose incomplete and untimely separation from his mother blocks his process of identity formation. Due to a lack of a strong father, he does not abject his mother in his preoedipal phase and then finds it difficult to establish an independent identity for himself in the symbolic world. He is overwhelmed by the semiotic for the most part of his adult life and thus his character is moulded on Volumnia's wishes. Coriolanus serves as an example of an individual with a vulnerable identity in what Kristeva calls the social stage. All his motives for acquiring an identity – his fights for Rome, his candidacy for consulship – are masterminded by his mother as a kind of subservience that ultimately leads to his humiliation and banishment from Rome. It is not until his banishment that he decides to disobey his mother by banishing Rome and also all his semiotic attachments. To do so, he abjects Rome and his mother and chooses to form an identity for himself in 'a world elsewhere'.

Coriolanus asking Aufidius to help him take revenge on Rome can be interpreted as his unconscious intention to get rid of the semiotic. Aufidius might serve as the strong and virile father that Coriolanus had never had back in Rome, as opposed to mild Menenius whose weakness gives Volumnia enough room to extend her semiotic power. In other words, taking refuge in the strong symbolic order enables Coriolanus to abject what he thinks has prevented him from protecting his identity. However, he is wrong because his untimely separation from the semiotic has left his subjectivity vulnerable against the return of the abject, the horror. Volumnia does not have a difficult job to dissuade her son from looting Rome for she uses Coriolanus' unconscious susceptibility to the semiotic. The virile father Aufidius, though strong, is not a match for the son's deeply rooted semiotic attachments and that is the reason Coriolanus surrenders to his

archaic past again. Rome is spared but this happens at a price: Coriolanus' being sucked back to the semiotic and the annihilation of his identity.

## Chapter Four. Tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*

### The Case of Juliet

In her essay entitled “*Romeo and Juliet: Love Hatred in the Couple*”, Kristeva argued that “breaking the law is the initial condition of amatory exaltation: even though the Capulets and the Montagues hate one another” (White 2001, 70). This could be fully applied to the predicament in which Juliet is involved; she finds herself in a dilemma of choosing between two suitors, the lawful one and the one who is not. Juliet has a difficult decision to make, a predicament that unconsciously makes her experience a sense of abjection. Although her initial reflection after getting to know the identity of the masked dancer who kissed her is a mixture of fear and despair – “My only love sprung from my only hate” (Shakespeare 1980, 1.5.137) – it is not long before she decides to ignore the law of her family and marry a Montague. Kristeva advanced the theory that the little child abjects the imaginary, unconscious union with its mother to cleanse itself of the semiotic world and enter the symbolic one. In other words, as Kelly Oliver remarked, “abjection is a way of denying the primal narcissistic identification with the mother [...]” (Oliver 1993, 60). Juliet expelled her mother a long time ago but the symbolic world she has entered so far is not as promising as she unconsciously supposed. The symbolic world that was supposed to put her in the realm of subjectivity and give her a distinct identity is forcing her to marry Paris, whom she does not love. As a young adult, she is observing the unpleasant side of the symbolic, a cruel feature that she does not like. Her decision to reject Paris and marry Romeo marks the second abjection Juliet commits. In other words, by starting to love Romeo, Juliet also abjects the law of her family which she considers wrong and cruel. She also invites Romeo to think like her:

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art though Romeo?  
Deny thy father and refuse thy name  
Or if though will not, be but sworn my love



And I'll be no longer a Capulet. [...]  
'This but thy name that is my enemy:  
though art thyself, though not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is nor hand nor foot  
Nor arm nor face nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O be some other name.  
What's in a name? the which we call a rose  
By any other word would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.  
(Shakespeare 1980, 2.2.33-49)

Juliet recommends to Romeo that he cast off his name so that they can love each other free of the fear of their families. Juliet abjects her family symbolically to enter the realm of subjectivity she desires, which is a reverse process of individuation that she invites Romeo to join.

In addition, the concept of desire and its implications in western culture can justify Juliet's decision to reject not only her family but also social norms and standards. Juliet's growing desire toward Romeo has the potential in itself to free her from familial ties. R. S. White remarked that "in the Renaissance sexual desire is attributed equally to men and women" (White 2001, 65), which notion that can shed light on Juliet's strong passion for Romeo. Lloyd Davis observed that "Desire is defined by lack or loss, even when it is apparently fulfilled [...]" (Davis 2001, 43), so the nature of desire itself becomes transgressive. Juliet's desire leaves her no choice but to consummate her secret marriage with Romeo without her family's consent. It constantly carries the essence of rebellion in itself, a particular feature that always puts it against the socially established rules. In other words, as Catherine Belsey noted, "[...] desire is also the location of the

resistances to the norms, proprieties and taxonomies of the cultural order” (Belsey 1994, 6). Belsey continued: “desire, even when it is profoundly conventional, is at the same time the location of a resistance to convention” (Belsey 1994, 7). The feud between the Capulets and Montagues does not let a conventional marriage happen and leaves the couple with no choice but to subvert the authority of their families. Arthur Brooke in his poem *Romeus and Juliet*, a source for the play, considers the lovers as lawbreakers who surrender to their “unhonest desire, of the neglect of authority and parental advice, the shame of the stolen contracts, the moral to be drawn by the pious readers [...]” (qtd. in Shakespeare 1980, 36). Thus, the nature of the couple’s transgressive desire is at odds with the social norms of their time. Belsey was of the opinion that “desire in Western culture thus demonstrates the inability of the cultural order to fulfill its own ordering project and reveals the difficulty with which societies control the energies desire liberates” (Belsey 1994, 7).

As a result, we arrive at the notion that desire serves as a major force that pushes Juliet to undergo abjection. Kristeva considered law breaking a prerequisite to reach ‘amatory exaltation’, thus, although Juliet is described as a “holy shrine” (Shakespeare 1980, 1.5.93) by Romeo when they first meet, she does not consider it a sin to give in to Romeo.

### **The Case of Romeo**

O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!  
It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear; [...]  
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!  
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.  
(Shakespeare 1980, 1.5.43-52)

Romeo says these lines at Capulet's feast, when his eyes for the first time catch sight of Juliet. While his eyes are fixed on her, he is experiencing a peculiar, uncanny sensation that is comparable to an epiphany. Robert Lanier Reid argued that in the first act Romeo and Juliet experience a kind of "matching epiphany-series" in "their initial encounter when they immediately pledge love in a mutually-devised sonnet ending in kisses" (Reid 2000, 79–80). The above soliloquy makes the readers and playgoers aware of the young Montague's going through a kind of sudden and striking realization, an epiphany, that serves as the starting point of his burning desire for Juliet. What occurs at the same time is the rapid fading of his love for Rosaline, with whom Romeo was desperately in love before seeing Juliet. The question then is whether it is just the beauty of Juliet that enchants him or there may be another reason, and perhaps one of which Romeo has no conscious knowledge.

The moment Romeo sees Juliet his subjectivity fails to be vigilant against the semiotic drives that threaten his selfhood. The love-at-first-sight experience enchants Romeo and is an experience that paves the way for archaic memories to emerge. The recollections of his semiotic stage have continued to exist on the other side of his subjectivity border and do not leave the adult Romeo alone. Now that Romeo is in love, the border is not well guarded and inevitably he gives in to the semiotic. What happens to Romeo is an unconscious remembrance of his pre-Oedipal stage when he was associated with his mother. The moment Romeo sees Juliet is the moment he experiences the reminiscences of his abject mother, approaching this time to enchant him and to make him experience all the consequences that Juliet's love would bear.

The nature of Romeo's desire – its being a social transgression – has an important role in drawing him toward abjection. Their love is a violent, ecstatic, and overwhelming force that supplants all other values. This transgressive love/desire is strong enough to make Romeo ignore the law and convention of his family. The views of George Bataille regarding desire in western culture inspired Kristeva to write *The Powers of Horror*, the main subject of which is abjection. R. S. White held that "the writing of Georges Bataille lie behind some of the psychoanalytic readings of *Romeo and Juliet*. He provides an

extreme example of the thesis that desire is inherently transgressive and linked with violence” (White 2001, 13–14). According to Bataille, a lover loves his beloved so desirously that for him the proximity of love and death reaches a critical point. This point Romeo reaches in the play. Although White believed that Bataille went too far in defining desire and considered it inextricably associated with taboos and death, some aspects of the latter’s views are quite relevant to Romeo’s desire. In *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*, Bataille wrote:

Possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but the idea of death is linked with the urge to possess. If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her. Or else he may wish to die himself [...]. If the union of the two lovers comes about through love, it involves the idea of death, murder or suicide. This aura of death is what denotes passion [...]. (Bataille 1986, 20)

While some thinkers (especially the cultural materialists) rejected the above psychoanalytic approach and held that Romeo does not chase death and is just unlucky, it is worth bearing in mind that Romeo’s desire to possess Juliet is plagued with death from the moment of its inception. Juliet’s love seems to push him to love and violence. Upon entering the Capulet feast, while watching Juliet, Romeo narrowly escapes being murdered by Tybalt. The lovers are plagued with thoughts of suicide; in act 3 in Friar Lawrence’s cell Romeo threatens to stab himself with a knife after he is banished from Verona and hence from his love. Romeo’s behaviour confirms Bataille’s belief that in western culture and in moments of despair and hopelessness lovers often think of death and suicide and their desire becomes transgressive.

Noëlle McAfee took the view that guarding the borders of its subjectivity is the most important concern of a subject and stated that “to keep hold of oneself, a subject has to remain vigilant against what may undermine its borders” (McAfee 2004, 57). An individual subject must always take care of its territory so that it remains immune against the possible threat of what was abjected before. However, in particular moments, such as

when a person falls in love, the abjective penetration sometimes becomes inevitable. In his moment of epiphany at the end of act 1, Romeo plays the role of a Kristevan subject who encounters the abject.

## Metamorphosis

Although not as extensively as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* influenced *Romeo and Juliet* too. The Ovidian influence can be seen and felt on different aspects of the Veronese lovers' love. Some famous stories from *Metamorphoses* deeply affect the incidents of *Romeo and Juliet*, the most important of which is the story of Phaethon and his fall in book 2.

At the beginning of 2.2, Juliet is waiting restlessly for the night to come so that she can have another nocturnal meeting with her lover, now her husband. She blames the sun for being too slow in setting. Here she refers to the story of Phaethon, who was granted the permission to drive the chariot of the sun for one day. In an apostrophe, she expresses her wish:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,  
Towards Phoebus' lodging. Such a wagoner  
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,  
And bring in cloudy night immediately  
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night.  
(Shakespeare 1980, 3.2.1-5)

The faster the sun is whipped westward, the sooner she can join her Romeo. She is waiting for the night and another balcony scene:

Come night, come Romeo, come though day in night;  
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night  
Whiter than new snow upon a raven's back.

Come gentle night, come loving black-browed night,  
Give me my Romeo; [...].  
(Shakespeare 1980, 3.2.17-21)

Thinking of the night makes her track the movement of the sun. She is restless and impatient when she says “now is the sun upon the highmost hill; Of this day’s journey, and from nine till twelve; Is three long hours” (Shakespeare 1980, 2.4.9-11). By invoking Phaethon, she thinks the chariot of the sun needs an excited driver to force the classical horses to run faster and bring closer the night when she can join her lover. However, as Jonathan Bate suggested, she is wrong. What Juliet thinks in this scene is a good example of dramatic irony, in that she is unaware of the connotative meaning of her allusion to Phaethon’s story. She wrongly considers Phaethon the bringer of happiness and joy. Phaethon failed to control the wild chariot horses and was about to burn the whole earth before he was struck dead by Zeus to stop further damage. As Bate notes “the audience sees, as the character [Juliet] does not, that to put Phaethon in charge is to precipitate the catastrophe” (Bate 1993, 177). It seems her desire to join Romeo is unconsciously pushing her toward catastrophe. Juliet is unaware of “the irony [...] that in willing on the night, she is willing on the tragedy, the moment of separation, Romeo’s exile, and ultimately the confusion and mistiming which bring the death of both lovers (Bate 1993, 177). The irony becomes complete when the readers or audience realizes that Phaethon was burned and smoldered while falling off the sky and nothing remained of him but an incinerated body and an epitaph inscribed on a stone. However, Shakespeare adjusts Ovid’s story so that the Veronese lovers are awarded the kind of metamorphic release that most of Ovidian heroes, but not Phaethon, undergo. Romeo and Juliet are going to “be immortalized in the form of golden statues” (Bate 1993, 178).

We can say that Juliet’s mind is obsessed with Romeo’s greatness. Her obsession with Romeo reaches to a degree that she imagines a place in the sky for him when she says “give me my Romeo, and when I shall die; Take him and cut him out in little stars” (Shakespeare 1980, 3.2.21-2). Her description of Romeo does not fit a mortal or terrestrial being, but an immortal one. As with her allusion to Phaethon, Juliet is

unconsciously comparing Romeo with this semi-god. She considers Romeo the one who has the power to tame the wild horses of the chariot of the sun and bring an end to the day when they can stay the night together. However, again, she is wrong. Let us imagine Romeo as Phaethon and the wild horses as his desires. He is about to control his desires, but he fails to do so. It is evident in the play that, like Phaethon who fails to take hold of the excited horses, Romeo is unable to control his own desire and this is when his subjectivity becomes exposed to abjection. In another sense, the horses could be thought of as the semiotic drives get out of control and overthrow him. This is what happens to Romeo: he fails to stay vigilant and his overexcitedness brings about chaos and disaster.

Shakespeare's lovers are clearly somewhat like Ovid's Pyramus and Thisbe. In both stories, there are two lovers from families that are at feud, living in a patriarchal society in which the law of the father prevails. Pyramus and Thisbe have their chink-in-the-wall scenes as the Veronese lovers have their balcony scenes. Pyramus, by mistake, thinks that Thisbe is dead and takes his own life, and so does Romeo when he hears the news of Juliet's death. Both Thisbe and Juliet commit suicide as they find their heroes dead. In both stories, the metamorphoses happen at the end: in Ovid the reader sees the transformation of the mulberry tree and in Shakespeare the audience witnesses the lovers' metamorphosis to golden statues. One can say that both stories at the end try to imply the theme of the immortality of love.

Based on Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories, it can be deduced that Romeo and Juliet's star-crossed love story, like its Ovidian origin, has its root in a mental transformation in the lovers' unconscious minds. It is indeed the mental transformation of love that paves the way for the physical metamorphosis, a strong force that puts the identities of the lovers under a fatal threat. The unlucky lovers, in both stories, die because they face the abject, the ugly side of the semiotic, the archaic force that overwhelms their subjects. In other words, unlike the Athenian lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the four tragic lovers mentioned above experience horror, the annihilating force that pushes them toward death at the end of the stories.

## The Case of Mercutio

Mercutio's character is anti-romantic and serves as a foil to Romeo. In 1.4 the audience can see that his views regarding love are totally in contrast with Romeo's Petrarchan love toward Rosaline. When Romeo tells him that love is "too rude, too boist'rous, and it pricks like thorn" (Shakespeare 1980, 1.4.24), Mercutio's immediate response is that "if love be rough with you, be rough with love; prick love for pricking, and you beat love down" (Shakespeare 1980, 1.4.25-6). Marjorie Garber suggested that two contrasting doctrines of dream are expounded by Romeo and Mercutio in the play; "that of Romeo looks backward to the old tradition of omen and portent; that of Mercutio looks forward to dream as fantasy, the significant product of the shaping imagination" (Garber 2013, 35). Mercutio considers his friend an immature dreamer and makes fun of Romeo when the latter tells of his dream in which he learned going to the Capulet feast was a bad idea. Mercutio replies:

O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you.  
She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes  
In shape no longer than an agate stone  
On the forefinger of an alderman,  
Drawn with a team of little atomi  
Over men's noses as they lie asleep.  
Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs; [...].  
(Shakespeare 1980, 1.4.51-7)

This vivid description makes clear that, unlike Romeo, Mercutio does not believe in plain dreams leading to straightforward meanings. In his view, the dream world is full of fairies, the queen of whom is Mab. She visits people from different walks of life and brings them their favorite dreams. It can be concluded from the whole speech that in Mercutio's view everybody sees a reflection of his obsessions in his dream. Mercutio says that everyone is given what they long for by Queen Mab. There are similarities between Queen Mab and Phaethon. She has a wagon (or chariot, like Phaethon), but



instead of horses it is drawn by creatures as tiny as atoms, who unlike Phaethon's horses, gallop at night. Like mythological gods in *Metamorphoses*, Queen Mab has the power of metamorphosis, by the help of which she is able to reward and also punish people in their dreams.

Mercutio's language is full of semiotic elements that resist the symbolic definitions. He has the power to inject the peculiarity of what Kristeva calls the poetic language in his speech. Samuel Taylor Coleridge called Mercutio "a man possessing all the elements of a poet", his whole world "subject to his law of association" and having the power to impress anything (Coleridge 1930, 35). Mercutio's law of association – his poetic language – gives him the potential to move beyond the border of meaning. "Mercutio's language, in short", as Garber put it "is in the finest sense poetical", using its patterns of association – with their focus on puns and serious wit – to enter the impossible world of dream (Garber 2013, 36). Freud believed such characteristics were present in the language of dream, in which "the extraordinarily important part [is] played by puns and verbal quibbles" (Freud 2010, 131). Queen Mab dwells in the world of the semiotic, a world created by Mercutio's patterns of association in poetic language. She gives a dreamer what she wants regardless of any preconception. This dream world could be described as a place in which a lover can linger freely and stay with his beloved as long as he likes. Mercutio mocks Romeo's view of love and laughs at him when he wants to avoid the masque because of a dream. He then gets incensed at Romeo when the latter decides not to fight Tybalt, considering it 'vile submission' and a dishonorable act. He invites Romeo to fight the symbolic, but when he sees his friend's hesitation, he decides to fight Tybalt himself. His death under Romeo's arms marks a dramatic change in Romeo's attitude, a force strong enough to undergo abjection.

### **Coda on *Romeo and Juliet***

In *Romeo & Juliet*, the Veronese lovers fail to tame their desire and, consequently, face the abject. To face the abject, they take their desire's lead and thus begin to resist the social norms of their time. Kristeva uses the term 'the symbolic'

instead of words like ‘society’ or ‘culture’, and one can say that both couples manage to resist the symbolic and surrender to the abject forces of the semiotic. They try to break the rule and, although they fail at the end, by their deaths they prove that the patriarchal society cannot force everybody to surrender to the symbolic law. Controlled by their desire, the couples escape from the symbolic society and take refuge in the semiotic where their subjectivities become exposed to the abject. Falling desperately in love, Romeo and Juliet fail to stay vigilant and expose their subjects to the annihilating forces of the semiotic. Their identity borders get weak and penetrable, which provides the opportunity for the abject forces to put an end to their identities. Needless to say that Mercutio’s poetic language makes Romeo experience the excess, the unreachable in the symbolic sense.

The moments of metamorphoses in *Romeo and Juliet* have the same psychoanalytic effects as the time when individuals face the abject. Ovidian references explicate physical transformation, something that attacks different creatures’ identities. The Ovidian characters are at the mercy of gods who impose such transformations, but the mental metamorphosis of the Veronese lovers has its roots in their unconscious minds which have become the target of the forces of the abject. In other words, what changes them are not the actions of the gods but the archaic memories of the time they were associated with the semiotic.

### **The Powers of Horror: *Macbeth***

Sigmund Freud wrote that “Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is a *piece d'occasion*, written for the accession of James [...]” (Freud 1981f, 3107). This might take the readers already familiar with the Tudor-Stuart concept of kingship to Providence and its supposed role in protecting the divinely appointed monarch. James I himself played an important role in developing and disseminating the doctrine of the divine right of kings in his books *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599). Read via these doctrines of monarchy, the play depicts the land of Scotland itself being infected when Macbeth perverts nature and seizes the throne. Without God’s assistance, Macbeth is

unable to fight against nature forever and his sick deeds, manifested in the land, come back to haunt him and push him to a demise that constitutes divine retribution. Macbeth's murder of Duncan and his usurpation of the throne of Scotland is interpreted as a rebellion against God and, therefore, as a perversion of the natural order. Macbeth's defeat and death are necessary to restore the order and peace of the realm.

The father of modern psychoanalysis, however, suggested a different reason behind Macbeth's and his wife's tyrannical deeds. Although Freud's first impression of the couple is that the "[...] childlessness of Macbeth and the barrenness of his Lady were the punishment for their crimes against the sanctity of generation" (Freud 1981f, 3108), he decided that the sterility has its root in a complex psychoanalytic disorder. However, before arriving at a clear-cut diagnosis, as Victor Calef put it, "Freud felt that his brief was not convincing and he gave up his attempt to understand the *Macbeth* story as inconclusive" (Calef 1969, 530). The reason Freud left his psychoanalytic approach to *Macbeth* unfinished lies in Shakespeare's treatment of history. Freud found Shakespeare's manipulation of his main historical source an obstacle to his psychoanalytic approach to *Macbeth*. He thought Holinshed's account more approachable because in the *Chronicles*:

[...] *ten years* pass between the murder of Duncan, through which Macbeth becomes king [...]. It is not until after this lapse of time that the change begins in him, under the influence of the tormenting fear that the prophecy to Banquo may be fulfilled [...]. Only then does he contrive the murder of Banquo, and, as in Shakespeare, is driven from one crime to another. It is not expressly stated in Holinshed that it was his childlessness which urged him to these courses, but enough time and room is given for that plausible motive. (Freud 1981f, 3109)

This ten-year interval provided Lady Macbeth enough time to arrive at the bitter truth that she will not be able to bring Macbeth an heir. Thus, as Nicolas Tredell put it, Lady Macbeth's later illness "could be better explained in terms of a 'deeper motivation' that would make this collapse more humanly intelligible to us" (Tredell 2006, 48). This

deeper motivation, according to Freud, is, very likely, Lady Macbeth's childlessness that can make her believe "[...] she is powerless against the forces of nature and prevents her from providing Macbeth with the children who would help to ensure that his line, rather than Banquo's, succeeded the throne" (Tredell 2006, 48-9). The tyranny, and all the ensuing psychological consequences starts from this focal, psychoanalytic point in the play when the Macbeths, having been sure of their sterility, preclude the continuity of generations.

Although, according to Victor Calef, "[...] Freud admitted his failure to understand Lady Macbeth's illness" (Calef 1969, 531), it is evident that he aimed to "show that a specific though disastrous success precipitated an internal prohibition against the oedipal wishes and caused Lady Macbeth's illness" (Calef 1969, 532). Duncan reminds Lady Macbeth of her own father, an Oedipal figure associated with the incestuous feelings she experienced during her early infancy. To avoid committing incest, she begs her husband to rid her of this father figure and take his place. Calef suggests that "the killing of Duncan (a father figure) was a necessary crime; its motive might be conceived as an oedipal crime, an effort to rid oneself of the oedipal figure who stands in the way of having children and a dynasty of one's own" (Calef 1969, 538). But Lady Macbeth fails to sublimate her penis envy into wanting a baby, as she goes for power instead. She is willing to sacrifice her desired child in order to reach power and erect her own dynasty free of the Oedipal guilt, the psychoanalytic reason behind her later childlessness.<sup>9</sup>

The story would have been a fine Freudian case study had Shakespeare not telescoped the time. However, the Macbeths' maladies do not need the ten-year Freudian

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<sup>9</sup> Critics are divided on this view and have their own interpretations of Freud. For instance, Norman Holland, in *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* argued that Lady Macbeth becomes disappointed by her husband's impotence, and thus decides to focus all of her energies on his ambitious plans (Holland 1966, 65).

interval in order to be psychoanalytically applicable if we apply Kristeva's theories, especially those related to the notions of the abject and the horror associated with it. Here we will first focus on the character of Macbeth as an unfinished subject with a weak identity, vulnerable to the abject. Then we may examine the psychoanalytic forces that motivate Lady Macbeth to push her husband into committing murders. Finally, we will take Macbeth as the proper example of horror itself that must be expelled for the sake of the peace and safety of the realm.

### **Macbeth as an Unfinished Subject**

Upon meeting a trio of witches, Macbeth is apparently horrified by the sight of them and asks: "Speak, if you can: what are you?" (Shakespeare 1965, 1.3.47). Even Banquo wonders why a fearless warrior is so startled: "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear, things that do sound so fair?" (Shakespeare 1965, 1.3.51-2). The audience's first impression of Macbeth is immediately complicated when they see him fixated upon the witches' prophecy. After hearing that he will become a monarch, Macbeth talks himself into a thoughtful stupor. What the witches uncover about Macbeth's future seems to be enough to activate a deeply ingrained wish in his mind. Theodore Spencer suggested that this situation leaves the audience perplexed because "we never know [...] whether the weird sisters control Macbeth's fate, or whether their prophecies are a reflection of Macbeth's own character" (Spencer 1961, 157). Of whatever nature it might be, the witches' prophecy promises him a new identity as a means to gain it. The witches succeed in upsetting what Stephen Orgel called "that sense of the deference Macbeth feels he owes to Duncan" (Orgel 1999, 146). Although it is obvious that he cannot quell his desire for power, Macbeth is hesitant and afraid of the act of murder: "Why do I yield to that suggestion, whose horrid image doth unfix my hair, and make my seated heart knock at my ribs, against the use of nature?" (Shakespeare, 1.3.134-5). G. Wilson Knight, referring to the above quotation in *The Wheel of Fire*, suggested that "this is the moment of the birth of evil in *Macbeth* – he may have had ambitious thoughts before, may even have intended the murder, but now for the first time he feels its oncoming reality" (Knight 1972, 153). The witches provide Macbeth's hesitant will with a new direction,

making him mentally ready to receive further temptations later in the play, by Lady Macbeth.

In *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare*, Coppélia Kahn highlighted Macbeth's failure to establish a secure, fully individuated masculine identity. She believed that Macbeth depends on women to acquire his desired identity because of "his unfinished, not fully individuated identity" (Kahn 1981, 184). However, she did not provide the main psychoanalytic reason behind Macbeth's incomplete identity, and nor did she scrutinize Macbeth's childhood unconscious memories in order to explore why he depends on women to such a great degree. In *Suffocating Mothers* Janet Adelman argued that "the fears of female coercion [...]" finding their ways from the witches to Lady Macbeth might be regarded as the source of Macbeth's vulnerable identity, a source having the power to "make him imagine himself as an infant vulnerable to her" (Adelman 1992, 138). Although Adelman suggested that Macbeth's vulnerability has its root in the quality of his separation from his mother during his early childhood (explored below), Kristeva's psychoanalytic ideas shed light on pre-oedipal aspects of Macbeth's personality that would otherwise remain unknown. The initial signs of weakness in Macbeth's character that emerge after he meets the witches make him a suitable case study in terms of Kristeva's views relating to a subject's vulnerability against the forces of the abject.

According to Kristeva, in order to establish a secure and independent identity, a child must undergo an unconscious separation during which the "instinctual dyad of the mother and the child [must] be cut" (Guberman 1996, 118). However, in some cases, the process of separation remains incomplete and the subject carries the memories of its archaic past with itself during different stages of its life cycle. These archaic memories take the form of abject forces and they remain threatening at the other side of the subject's identity borders, looking for an opportunity to attack. An individual who has undergone a complete unconscious separation process is likely to have secure borders but in a subject whose individuation is not secure the abject forces find its identity an easy target. In the first act of the play Macbeth shows signs of possessing such a shaky

subject, with open borders, ready to surrender. The witches' prophesy sparks a trauma deep in his unconscious and promises him the firm identity that he failed to form for himself way back in his childhood. Though most critics agree that the witches' tempting words encourage Macbeth's ambition, from a Kristevan psychoanalytic view this notion can be better explained by saying that it is Macbeth's weakness and his inability to protect his subjectivity that cause the ensuing tragic events. He is not aware of his unconscious identity flaws and, as a result, fails to explore his unconscious and discover his true identity. Because his process of individuation has remained far from complete, he can be moulded and assigned identities and actions that others project onto him.

### **Lady Macbeth as the Abject Mother**

Janet Adelman remarked that "Lady Macbeth's power as a female temptress allies her in a general way with the witches as soon as we see her" (Adelman 1992, 134). She also suggested that, as the play develops, Lady Macbeth even becomes the more frightening figure (Adelman 1992, 136). In her view, Lady Macbeth brings the witches' power home; while the latter are embedded with cosmic forces, she is full of psychic momentum. The similarities between the two and "the specifics of that implied alliance begin to emerge as she attempts to harden herself in preparation for hardening her husband [...]" (Adelman 1992, 134). Adelman held that the gender confusion expressed by Banquo upon seeing the witches is analogous to Lady Macbeth's denial of her own gender (Adelman 1992, 134). The audience's first glimpse of her is when she, in a violent and blistering soliloquy, pours out the content of her heart:

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood; [...]  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers.  
(Shakespeare 1965, 1.5.40-8)

Lady Macbeth wishes to take on masculine qualities that she thinks will enable her to perform the bloody deeds necessary to quench her thirst for power. By crying out ‘unsex me here’ she spurns her female characteristics and wishes to have gall in exchange for milk in her breasts so that she might be able to murder Duncan herself. In an act of subverting the natural order, she calls upon the spirits to strip her of all her feminine qualities and thus prepare herself to do the deed. Kahn called Lady Macbeth the representative of “women, seeking to transform themselves into men through the power they have to mold men (the only power their cultures allow them), root out of themselves and out of their men those human qualities”(Kahn 1981, 151). Kahn suggested that at the heart of *Macbeth* lies a paradox of sexual confusion that has an unfinished man as the central character (Kahn 1981, 151). While Macbeth is deeply sunk in his hesitation whether to accept and apply for the prophesied identity, embodying the firmly domestic and psychological base of the play, his wife tries to establish a new identity for her husband. Her figurative remark “that I may pour my spirits in thine ear” (Shakespeare 1965, 1.5.26) was interpreted by Stephen Greenblatt as “an uncanny sense that she has done so literally; the influence she has gained over Macbeth can look as if her ‘spirits’ have invaded him” (Tredell 2006, 145). Thus, Lady Macbeth does what a typical power-seeking wife in such a situation would do: she injects her husband with murderous thought and pushes him to perform what is needed in order to gain absolute power.

Lady Macbeth may be regarded as the return of what Kristeva referred to as the threatening, repressed, abject mother to Macbeth. Kristeva gave as a reason for this abjection the little male child's fear of “its mother and the scar, a relation that gives rise to sexual difference” (Oliver 1993, 55). It is not the scar, which symbolizes the mother’s ‘lack’, that is the cause of horror, but rather in “Kristeva’s analysis, the child sees the mother’s sex as threatening because it is the canal out of which it came” (Oliver 1993, 55). The little child senses the threat of the canal, and is always afraid of “being sucked back into the mother through her sex” (Oliver 1993, 55). Kristeva suggested the fear of the canal facilitates the process of separation for the little child; however, its memory continues to haunt an individual throughout its life. One is always in danger of being sucked back to the horror that was abjected a long time ago. Lady Macbeth



unconsciously reminds her husband of the canal and its power to suck him in, which is something that gives her an edge in putting him under her control.

Lady Macbeth is thus the Other's dark side, the threatening abject mother that has found its way across her husband's border and is now threatening his identity. In order to propel Macbeth to murder Duncan, she goads him by questioning his manhood and threatens to call him "the poor cat i' th' adage" (Shakespeare 1965, 1.7.44) if he should retreat from the agreed conspiracy. She questions his masculine qualities by saying "what beast was 't, then, that made you break this enterprise to me?" (Shakespeare 1965, 1.7.48). By inviting Macbeth to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth is testing her husband's virility so that, as Adelman pronounced, "if he cannot perform the murder, he is in effect reduced to the helplessness of an infant subject to her rage" (Adelman 1992, 138). Macbeth's weak subject, in Adelman's view, gives his wife the chance to "articulate a fantasy in which to be less than a man is to become interchangeably a woman or a baby, terribly subject to the wife/mother's destructive rage"(Adelman 1992, 138). Combining Kristeva and Adelman's ideas can lead us toward this understanding that a probable psychoanalytic reason behind Macbeth's submission to his wife is his fear of being treated like an infant. This situation unconsciously reminds him of his archaic past when he was under the immediate danger of destruction. He had thought that by leaving the semiotic and entering the symbolic, he would establish a secure identity for himself. But the threatening mother has chased him throughout his life, waiting for a chance to push him toward horror. Macbeth has encountered a predicament and has to make his choice: whether murder Duncan and accept the consequences or to get sucked in. He chooses murder because he is terribly vulnerable to the forces of the abject and must "release himself from the image of this vulnerability by sharing in the murder of this innocent [Duncan]" (Adelman 1992, 139). By murdering Duncan, in a Kristevan perspective, Macbeth surrenders himself to the powers of horror.

Duncan's murder, however, makes the situation even worse since he is the main father figure in the play and his absence adds to the maternal threat. Duncan can be regarded the representative of Kristeva's symbolic since, as Adelman remarked, "he is

the center of authority, the source of lineage and honor, the giver of name and gift [...]” (Adelman 1992, 132). Duncan is the opposite of the sort of masculinity presented by the witches and Lady Macbeth. His essence is totally in contrast with the former’s poisonous cauldron and the latter’s gall-filled breasts. Adelman held that Duncan can be called an androgynous parent who is capable of embodying both fatherly and motherly characteristics and whose presence bestows peace and order to the realm. Duncan’s absence brings about catastrophic effects: “[...] male and female break apart, the female becoming merely helpless or merely poisonous and the male merely blood thirsty” (Adelman 1992, 132). No longer will there be the gender unity since its symbolic cause fades away after Duncan’s murder. Adelman called Duncan’s ineffectuality as a ruler the main or even the only flaw in this ideally protective parent’s character. His being over-reliant on Macbeth, himself dominated by a suffocating mother, facilitates Duncan’s final destruction. Duncan’s androgynous personality, foreshadowed by the witches’ sexual ambiguity at the beginning scene, pushes him to rely on Macbeth, who can compensate for the king’s failure to maintain a protective masculine authority. What Duncan fails to understand is that his saviour is going to be his destroyer because Macbeth carries an overload of the semiotic in himself, which is totally at odds with the symbolic and aims to destroy it. After Duncan’s murder, the realm falls into the hands of an unfinished individual whose compromised and manipulated identity will bring about national disorder and cruelty. Lady Macbeth succeeds in reaching what she has longed for in replacing the father figure with her loved one. Now that the symbolic has faded away, she will be able to have her own version, her own dynasty.

Lady Macbeth’s frustration and sickness start when she comes to this bitter understanding of her inability to give birth to a child. Failure to found a dynasty is a punishment for the couple and brings about their mental disorders and fall. Freud thought he was not able to make a psychoanalytically convincing view out of this theory because Shakespeare altered the historical facts. Later French and Anglo-American critics and psychoanalysts used Freud’s lead to devise creative and more flexible approaches to this matter. Coppélia Kahn credited Freud’s view that childlessness is a major concern for the Macbeths but rejected his idea that the couple longed to start a dynasty in the first place.

Kahn argued that “If Macbeth in fact had a son, his existence could not guarantee the security of his father’s throne, for it could still ‘be wrenched with an unlineal hand’” (Kahn 1981, 183). The couple are so busy fulfilling their ambitious goal that, as Kahn put it, “Lady Macbeth would deny her baby if it impeded her will and would drain out of her husband” (Kahn 1981, 176). What worries them most is the threat prophesied by the witches about someone who is “lesser than Macbeth, and greater, not so happy, yet much happier [...] [and] shalt get kings” (Shakespeare 1965, 1.3.65-7). In fact, as Kahn pronounced, they are afraid of a potential dynasty already in place, threatening their throne: “[...] Macbeth envies Banquo’s dynasty primarily because it is Banquo’s and not his, and additionally because it constitutes “all that may become a man” – the fulfillment of extending one’s manly identity beyond one’s own lifetime” (Kahn 1981, 184). This sense of envy does not need a ten-year lapse from the historical record and starts immediately after Macbeth acquires the throne of Scotland. It sets off the anxiety in Macbeth’s uneasy mind, initiating his pell-mell course of bloody action and makes his wife mortally sick.

Lady Macbeth’s mental breakdown, which starts some time after her husband’s accession to the throne, may be psychoanalytically explainable using Kristeva’s theories regarding the semiotic and its being free of any rule, law or structure. The semiotic can influence the symbolic and/or the subject but cannot replace them. These archaic elements, even when expelled, are able to chase down the subject and invade its borders. While they may have positive effects on the subject and solve some irreconcilable problems of the symbolic world, by the same token they have the potential to destroy the subject and expose the symbolic world to catastrophic events. But they cannot sit in the place of the subject, nor are they able to assume responsibilities assigned to it. As the abject mother, Lady Macbeth was able to promote a new identity for Macbeth but she is no longer as influential and assertive as she used to be. The last time she appears surefooted and stronger than her husband is when she tried to explain away her husband’s hallucination upon seeing Banquo’s spectre at the feast. She then disappears and is not seen except in the sleepwalking scene.

Lady Macbeth's mental collapse, with somnambulism as its major symptom, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. A common and sensible explanation is that she is under the pressure of a heavy guilt of conscience since her attempt to strip herself of her gender has now failed. She can no longer be unsexed without remorse, which is a condition that gradually denies her a restful sleep. From a Freudian perspective, we see that Lady Macbeth, by participating in Duncan's assassination, has partly fulfilled an Oedipal desire that precipitates the onset of madness. Freud took some time to diagnose the cause of her sleepwalking but, as Calef pronounced, "it is an infrequently noted fact that Freud admitted his failure to understand Lady Macbeth's illness [...]" (Calef 1969, 531). Her illness is not named in the play and its nature has remained a mystery so far. Whatever it might be, one can say for sure that it is an abnormal mental state. To give Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking a Kristevan psychoanalytic interpretation, we may say that Lady Macbeth has fallen back to the confusion of the pre-oedipal stage, which was a time when there was no meaning and every utterance was a mixture of babble and delirium. Such an experience, occurring in such an archaic time, is stored deep in the unconscious and resurfaces in such trance-like moments. After his visiting Lady Macbeth, the doctor, obviously not having any knowledge of psychoanalysis in its modern sense, remarks it is "a great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching" (Shakespeare 1965, 5.1.9-10). When the contents of her unconscious become live, the audience is able to see what bothers her: Duncan's blood on her hands. That the blood on her hands will not be washed away is in fact an ironic reversal of her earlier claim to Macbeth that "[a] little water clears us of this deed" (Shakespeare 1965, 2.2.66). She keeps sensing "the smell of the blood still" and fears that "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (Shakespeare 1965, 5.1.48-9). Her helplessness in removing the imaginary red spot is similar to a subject's hopeless struggle to defend its imaginary borders against the forces of the abject. Whatever the reason behind Lady Macbeth's sickness – guilt of the conscience, childlessness, or the return to her semiotic territory – she fades away and leaves Macbeth, with his new identity, alone. With Lady Macbeth gone, Macbeth enters a new phase in his life, in which he has to protect his new identity unaided.

## Abject Horror

Lady Macbeth dies but her manipulations of Macbeth's personality stay with him till the end of his life. Eugene M. Waith argued that because of Lady Macbeth's influence Macbeth undergoes the antitheses of valour and effeminacy on the one hand, and man and beast on the other hand. In fact, as Waith put it, "Macbeth's mental torment grows out of the conflict between the narrow concept of man as the courageous male and the more inclusive concept of man as being whose moral nature distinguishes him from the beasts [...]" (Waith 1950, 266). Nicolas Tredell, explaining Waith's view, suggested that these opposing concepts keep Macbeth's mind busy till the end of the play. Because of Lady Macbeth's manipulations, he has to act with the narrow concept of a man, but at the same time he is agonizingly aware of a larger concept which is embodied in Macduff (Tredell 2006, 74). Waith considered Macduff a foil to Macbeth as a complete man whose possession of a higher standard of manly qualities is shown in his reaction to his wife and child's murder: "I shall do so; but I must do feel it as a man" (Shakespeare 1965, 4.3.221). Macduff has both humane feelings and moral responsibilities, unlike Macbeth who by "embracing the narrow concept of manhood urged on him by Lady Macbeth, becomes more and more narrowed in character (Tredell 2006, 74). Towards the end of the play we see more tyrannical deeds and murders done by Macbeth. The more deeply Macbeth steps in sin, the less effeminate he seems to be. As a result of the horror applied to him by his suffocating mother, Macbeth is "tortured by the conscience she despised" and "is so perfectly hardened, so completely the soldier that she wanted him to be" (Waith 1950, 268). Even before hearing the news of the queen's death, Macbeth observes that he had "almost forgot the taste of fears" and "the time has been, my senses would have cool'd, to hear a night-shriek" (Shakespeare 1965, 5.5.8-11). He is no longer afraid of horror and thinks of himself as a man fully associated with it: "I have supp'd full with horrors; direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts cannot once start me" (Shakespeare 1965, 5.5.13-15). Macbeth even does not mourn the suicide of the suffocating mother since the sorrow of hearing the news of her death is nothing compared with the unconscious horror that has chased him throughout his life. He is becoming increasingly desensitized with fear and his wife's death arouses scarcely any emotion in

him: “she should have died hereafter; there would have been a time for such a word” (Shakespeare 1965, 5.5.16-17). Macbeth’s grim look at the future events is clear in his “To-morrow and to-morrow ...” soliloquy, between the lines of which can be sensed his agony of his inevitable death, in accordance with the narrow definition of manhood.

To save his throne from the opposing forces, Macbeth has to commit murders. He becomes the symbol of horror in Scotland. Malcolm and Macduff, his main opponents, have fled to England and are waiting for a proper opportunity to attack him. Scotland’s fearful ruler has caused disorder and unrest in the realm. Lennox prays, “May [Macduff] soon return to this our suffering country under a hand accurs’d!” (Shakespeare 1965, 3.6.48). They hope that the exiled Scottish nobles with the help of the English forces will overthrow Macbeth and bring peace to their land again. Adelman suggested that the play’s “shift from Scotland to England is strikingly the shift from the mother’s to the father’s terrain” (Adelman 1992, 146). Ross’ view that Scotland “cannot be call’d our mother, but our grave” (Shakespeare 1965, 4.3.165-6) aligns with the psychoanalytic view since Scotland is the land plagued and cursed by the witches and Lady Macbeth and is “appropriately ruled by their bad son Macbeth” (Adelman 1992, 146). England, however, does have fatherly concern toward Scotland, so “the escape to England is an escape from their power into the realm of the good father-king and his surrogate son Malcolm, “unknown to woman” (Adelman 1992, 146). The magical father has the ability to diffuse the dark power of the witches and Lady Macbeth. To give Adelman’s interpretation a Kristevan twist, we may say that Malcolm’s final return to Scotland is mantled in the symbolic power given to him by England, the father figure. Malcolm’s separation from women has made him invincible against their ills and horror and he finally succeeds in expelling the abject forces and restoring the symbolic power in Scotland.

Macbeth’s final battle, however, is not with Malcolm; he has to fight with a man who comes from an entirely different psychoanalytic background. The second apparition’s prophecy that “none of woman born shall harm Macbeth” (Shakespeare 1965, 4.1.80-1) has convinced Macbeth that he is invincible: “then live, Macduff: what

need I fear of thee?” (Shakespeare 1965, 4.1.82). Macbeth is unaware that “Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd” (Shakespeare 1965, 5.9.15-16). The source of Macduff's strength and what gives him an edge over Macbeth is his premature deprivation of his nurturing maternal origin. Macduff's being more powerful than Macbeth, as Adelman put it, “sustains the sense that violent separation from the mother is the mark of the successful male” (Adelman 1992, 144). A relevant point here might be Stephen Orgel's suggestion that Macbeth, by taking the key word to be ‘woman’, apparently misunderstood the second apparition's prophecy. Orgel noted that “a Caesarean section does not constitute birth” and “a vaginal birth would have been handled by women [...] with no men present”. Surgery was a male prerogative, so Macduff's “surgical birth [...] thus means, in Renaissance terms, that Macduff was brought to life by men, not women: carried by a woman, but made viable only through masculine intervention. Such a birth, all but invariably, involved the mother's death” (Orgel 1999, 150). His violent and bloody separation from his mother, which was probably done at the cost of his mother's life, has made Macduff immune against the return of the abject. Macduff was not born through the vaginal scar, so there is no reason for him to be afraid of getting sucked back. Because his separation was quick and complete, Macduff, unlike Macbeth, has not been threatened by horror throughout his life.

Garry Waller remarked that

*Macbeth* [...] becomes a model of how we might experience what Kristeva terms abjection, an enacted defilement rite in which terror ultimately functions to preserve the symbolic order and patriarchal society by bringing about a confrontation with the abject in order to finally eject it and redraw the boundaries that separate the human from the nonhuman, the subject from the ‘other’, life from death. (Waller 2014, 103)

Macbeth himself can be regarded as an example of the abject since he embodies the main features that are associated with this concept. He overreaches himself after murdering Duncan, and gets afflicted by a kind of paranoia that makes a bloodthirsty ruler of him.

Everybody fears him and people flee Scotland. He becomes a monarch associated with horror, and is himself a horrifying figure who threatens the peace and order of the realm. The land is plagued as a result of his tyrannical deeds; therefore, he must be abjected for the sake of Scotland. When Malcolm's army, backed by the English forces, attack the Scottish borders, Macbeth with his weak identity proves to be too vulnerable. The termination of the horror that is symbolized by Macbeth paves the way for the establishment of a new and healthier identity for the land of Scotland.

### **Coda on *Macbeth***

*Macbeth* is a play in which Kristeva's conception of horror plays a key role. Having been subjected to the maternal threat imposed on him by Lady Macbeth and in order not to be destroyed by the suffocating mother, Macbeth performs hideous crimes and is wracked with guilt. From a psychoanalytic perspective, he murders the father figure – the giver of life, meaning and order – only to discover that his unfinished individuality, weakened by the mother figure, will not be able to assume the father's duties. Thus, he cannot enjoy being a monarch, which is a bitter truth that imposes nightmarish effects on him. Near the end of the play, after lady Macbeth's suicide, he tries to defend his title, encouraged by the witches' prophecy that man born of woman will be able to kill him; this conviction gives his final deeds a compulsive quality that pall his last stand in the besieged castle. Macbeth himself takes on the form of a horror that must be expelled; he must be abjected and his threat be terminated.

Many scholars now credit Thomas Middleton with adapting *Macbeth* before it was first published. Among several arguments for these interpolations and omissions, the one that fits the scope of this section is Gary Taylor's reasoning that Middleton managed to add some flexibility to *Macbeth*, in order "to adapt the play to changing theatre conditions or popular taste" (Taylor 2007, 1165). There is a parallel between the dyads Shakespeare/Middleton and Freud/Kristeva. What Middleton did for Shakespeare's work might be somehow comparable with Kristeva completing Freud's unfinished theory, as shown above. In short, Middleton completes Shakespeare, making it more flexible and approachable, and so does Kristeva for Freud.



## ***King Lear: Second Childishness and the Time of Oblivion and Thunder***

After enumerating the six stages of an individual's life, melancholy Jaques, in one of the most famous Shakespearean speeches, calls the seventh stage the "last scene of all", which he believes "is second childishness and mere oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.7.167-8). This outlook, however, is immediately challenged when Orlando returns with Adam, his loyal servant, who in spite of old age is still capable of giving service to his lord. Some few hours before, the exhausted and starving Adam, unable to walk any further, asked Orlando to leave him to die, but as a sign of gratitude Orlando takes the old man to the company of Duke Senior, who looks after them both. The old man, though a servant, receives a respectful reception: "Welcome. Set down your venerable burthen, and let him feed" (Shakespeare 1975, 2.7.169-70). Risking his life in saving Orlando and warning the latter of the immediate danger, Adam showed fatherly concern toward Orlando, which is a favour that Orlando returns in the Forest of Arden.

Although Jaques's negative outlook regarding the seventh stage cannot be applied to *As You Like It*, Janet Adelman suggested that in *King Lear* "[...] Shakespeare psychologizes Jaques's familiar trope of old age as second childishness" (Adelman 1992, 116). From Adelman's perspective, "[...] in giving his daughters control over the extended body that is his kingdom, Lear would make them his mothers, deliberately putting himself in the position of infantile need from which he will experience the rest of the play" (Adelman 1992, 116). By second childishness, I mean when an adult becomes the target of the repressed maternal desires that have been with them since early childhood. Here I will first elaborate on the psychoanalytic impulses behind Lear's relation with his daughters and then explore Julia Kristeva's theories that can shed light on Lear's obsession with the mother inside him.

*King Lear* is a motherless play. The first act starts with Gloucester telling Kent that Edmund's "breeding, sir, has been my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it" (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.8-9). Gloucester

considers the illegitimate Edmund his mother's son, but Edgar, he remarks, is "a son by the order of law" (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.18), which means the licit son has its root in his father. Edmund's mother is absent but her influence is a key part in the play. She can be regarded as the force behind the bastard's evil doings. It is worth noting that the concept of the suffocating aspect of femininity in general and the mother specifically was widely accepted in the early seventeenth century, when Shakespeare was composing his great tragedies. Patriarchal law governed aristocratic families; thus, as Kahn put it, "the aristocratic patriarchal families headed by Gloucester and Lear have, actually and effectively, no mothers" (Kahn 1981, 242). What can be seen in such families is the presence of powerful men who are in charge of important positions and leave no space for the feminine. "In this patriarchal world", Kahn continued, "masculine identity depends on repressing the vulnerability, dependency, and capacity for feeling that are called feminine" (Kahn 1981, 243). However, at times such a presence gets dominated by a much stronger force that is apparently repressed but powerful enough to put the masculine identity at risk.

Edmund's mother is not the only influential absent mother in the play; the second one proves to be even stronger. Although the anonymous source play *King Leir* (Bullough 1973, 337-40) starts with the king lamenting the death of the mother to his daughters, there is no reference to Queen Lear in *King Lear*'s opening scene. She is mentioned in *King Lear* once (2.2.320) but her psychoanalytic impact can be tracked in Lear's interactions with his daughters. Her absence gives room to Lear's strong presence, and is central to a psychoanalytic interpretation of the complexes inherent in the title character. With his wife absent, Lear is evidently assigned both parental roles, but the events of the play reveal the fact that he fails in performing them. Throughout his life, Lear has done his best to suppress and repress this apparently absent force and he did not let it express itself. However, the force of the feminine has always remained a threat, looking for an opportunity to attack Lear's subjectivity. Having waited for a chance to assert its influence on Lear, the conspicuous absent feminine finds Lear's love test in the opening scene the perfect time to express its presence. The way Lear treats his daughters has some consequences for him, all brought about by the absent mother.

## Lear and His Daughters

The events of the plot proper starts when Lear makes it clear that he is going to “express [his] darker purpose” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.35). He will “shake all cares and business [...] conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburthen'd crawl toward death” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.38-40). Lear’s retirement from the duties of the monarchy comes with a condition that sets the tone for the play; he invites his three daughters to engage in a love contest: “Which of you shall we say doth love us most?” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.51). “Lear”, as Stephen Greenblatt put it, “who has, as he thinks, given all to his children, demands all from them” (Greenblatt 1982, 113). He asks them to express, “not only the formal marks of deference that publicly acknowledge his value, but also the inward and absolute tribute of the heart” (Greenblatt 1982, 113). His condition, then, is the unconditional love of his daughters, which Goneril and Regan in a banal and insincere manner tender him. What psychoanalytic reason lies behind Lear the narcissistic father making unnatural demands upon his daughters? This question makes more sense when the audience witnesses Lear’s uncontrolled rage upon hearing Cordelia’s answer. He gets furious when it becomes clear to him that he will not have the absolute love of all three of his daughters after his retirement from his political duties. Why is the thought of securing his daughter’s full love and affection so important to Lear?

In his psychoanalytic approach to *King Lear*, Arpad Pauncz suggested that the root of Lear’s implied sexual demand is a specifically erotic affection, similar to Freud’s Oedipus Complex theory, but with the important difference that, in Lear’s case, it is reversed (Pauncz 1952, 58). In Pauncz’s view, “this reverse erotic fixation will be called the adult libido and more specifically, the *Lear Complex*”, his own coined term for any “specific attachment of the father for his daughter” (Pauncz 1952, 58). Lear’s tendency toward his daughters is an adult libido, a specifically erotic affection that has surfaced in the most unlikely time and place. His rage after Cordelia’s rejection of the unconditional love, as Pauncz suggested, makes him behave like a “temperamental, fiery, and imperious

suitors" (Pauncz 1952, 60). Maccoby and Jacklin's research supported Pauncz' viewpoint by putting stress on the notion that fathers, in their treatment of their daughters, often cross the border between filial love and sexual desires. In their psychoanalytic clinical reports regarding father-daughter relationships, Maccoby and Jacklin arrived at the understanding "that the fathers appeared to enjoy being flirted with by their daughters" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 25), and encouraged this feminine behavior. In their view, "fathers appear to want their daughters to fit their image of a sexually attractive female person [...]" (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974, 26).

According to Kahn, the reason behind Lear's unusual demand from his daughters might have its root in the patriarchal structure of the English aristocracy that did not let Lear express his emotions freely when he was king. In her account, "as man, father, and ruler, Lear has habitually suppressed any needs for love, which in his patriarchal world would normally be satisfied by a mother or mothering woman" (Kahn 1981, 248). When he was busy with the affairs of his country, he suppressed any free and explicit expression of emotion in himself, which resulted in its resurfacing in an improper time. Now that Lear has unburdened himself of the state responsibilities, he wants to make sure that he will receive what he has been denied for a long time.

Approaching Lear's strange attitude toward his daughters in the opening scene via Kristeva's theories can provide insightful psychoanalytic understanding. Lear's asking for love and affection from his daughters has a more complicated reason than Freud's Oedipus Complex or what Pauncz called the Lear complex. Using Kristeva's ideas, it can be suggested that now that Lear aims to retire from his social responsibilities having been assigned to him by the symbolic structure of the society during adulthood, he unconsciously feels an urgent need to take refuge in the semiotic, where he will be able to experience his second childishness. By dividing his realm and giving his title away, Lear says farewell to his symbolic identity and the restrictions associated with it. No longer does he aim to protect his borders but rather he leaves them open and his identity exposed, giving an easy target for the abject. He wishes to travel back to the time he was associated with the semiotic, a time he was loved unconditionally. Considering himself

free of the duties imposed on him by the symbolic, Lear demands that his daughters express their deepest affections to him.

Lear's three daughters' responses and reactions to their father's request for a public expression of affection might refer to some complex psychoanalytic theories. Psychoanalysts have written extensively on the nature of the daughter-father relationship in general, and the three sisters of this play and Lear in particular. For instance, Freud, in "Female Sexuality", while casting doubt on the notion of Elektra Complex – Carl Jung's term for the girl's version of the Oedipal Complex – argued that the love ties between a daughter and her father have been exaggerated. As Freud put it, "[...] the duration of [the daughter's] attachment to the mother had been greatly underestimated" (Freud 2010a, 4591). Freud considered the preoedipal phase in females far more important than that in males and aimed to prove "[...] that many a woman may remain arrested at the original mother-attachment and never properly achieve the change-over to men" (Freud 2010a, 4590). More importantly, unlike boys, girls do not have to untie themselves from their mothers to enter the social stage; they can keep the connection and resist their sexual tendency to their fathers. In some cases, as Freud put it, for a daughter, "[...] her father is not very different from a troublesome rival even though her hostility towards him never reaches such a pitch as does the boy's" (Freud 2010a, 4591). Although having the potential to perform the role of a love object in different phases of his daughter's life, a father cannot be as dominating as a mother in filial love.

In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Nancy Chodorow elaborates on the main psychoanalytic reasons why, after the initial intimacy, the daughter decides to turn to her father as part of her heterosexual development process. After reviewing Freud's and Melanie Klein's view, Chodorow argued that a daughter's absencing herself from her mother in order to approach her father does not necessarily result in the former being pushed back to absolute isolation. Unlike a male child, the girl does not have to break the ties, which is a fact that, as Chodorow put it, testifies "to the strength of a girl's ongoing relationship to her mother as much as to the importance of her relationship to her father" (Chodorow 1979, 115). Chodorow also stressed the father's important part in directing

his daughter's affection to a proper and healthy heterosexual route, through which she will be able to find a non-father partner to satisfy her sexual needs. Marjorie Leonard, emphasizing the heterosexual love-object role of the father, articulated a similar viewpoint to that of Chodorow. She argued that a father must be very careful in giving affection to, and receiving affection from, his daughter, because fathers "must be able to make themselves available as a heterosexual love object and to offer affection without being seduced by their daughters' fantasies or seducing them with their own. Otherwise a girl will not develop proper heterosexuality" (Chodorow 1979, 118). In a normal condition, a daughter's "attachment to her father", as Chodorow wrote, is "never so threatening to her future commitment to other men" (Chodorow 1979, 133), and that she will be able to start healthy heterosexual relationships through marriage, a process in which her father plays an important role.

Thus, by asking his daughters to offer unconditional love to him, Lear obstructs their progress toward a proper heterosexual development. Goneril and Regan easily surrender to their father's wish and flatter him with the most exaggerated affectionate phrases. In return for the intense filial love, Lear gives them parts of his symbolic identity. It is, however, the third daughter who resists and tries to keep the distance. Her response to her father is: "I love your majesty according to my bond; nor more nor less" (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.92-3). Cordelia is surprised at her sisters' remarks: "Why have my sisters husbands, if they say they love you all?" (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.99-100). In her standpoint, devoting all her love and affection would endanger her normal heterosexual tendencies and thus ruin her relation with her future husband. Cordelia is not even able to pretend that Lear is the only love object in her life and shies away from mentioning it. She believes her future husband must have his share too: "Haply, when I shall wed, that lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry half my love with him, half my care and duty: Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters, to love my father all" (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.100-4). She does not credit her sisters' (pretended) intense emotional attachment to Lear, and insists on her emotional detachedness and independence. Some scholars are of the opinion that Cordelia's refusal to love Lear more than a father might be interpreted as a resistance to incest. Pauncz asked "Did not

Cordelia prove herself to be loving daughter? Yes!” (Pauncz 1952, 63). Obviously, as it is proved to be true throughout the play, she is the most grateful among the other two. She is aware of what her father has done for her – “begot me, bred me, loved me” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.96) – and is ready to “return those duties back as are right fit” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.97). “But”, as Pauncz continued, “this does not satisfy the old man at all. He wants more, much more, and the vehemence and enormity of his wishes and desires are clearly indicated by the boundlessness of his reaction after resistance is encountered” (Pauncz 1952, 63). What Lear really wants is the absolute possession of her daughters’ mind and body, which is a terrible desire that Cordelia resists.

Kristeva’s theories regarding the quality of a daughter’s separation from the mother and her subsequent entry into the social stage throw further light on the play’s action. Contrary to a son, Kristeva suggested, a daughter is of a similar female identity to her mother and so in Kelly Oliver’s words “because of [...] [her] bodily identification with the maternal body, it is difficult for her to kill the maternal body without also killing herself [...]” (Oliver 1993, 63). To the little daughter, her mother equals the Thing, which is “the real that does not lend itself to signification, the centre of attraction and repulsion, seat of sexuality from which the object of desire will become separated” (Kristeva 1989, 13). While a little daughter’s sexual identity gets formed during her initial preoedipal interactions with her mother, Kristeva argued, the nature of a daughter’s sexual identity demands that she abandon her mother as love object for the father (Baruch and Serrano 1988, 137). However, she emphasized that unlike the little son, the little daughter does not have to undergo a complete departure from her mother because, as Oliver’s put it, “[...] if the daughter splits the mother, she splits herself” (Oliver 1993, 61). The mother, then, becomes an inseparable part of a daughter’s body, and “Kristeva woefully claims that she carries the maternal Thing with her locked like a corpse in the crypt of her psyche” (Oliver 1993, 63). This is the main reason that, unlike a son, a daughter will not be able to abject her mother for, by so doing, she will abject herself. For Kristeva, a daughter never abjects her mother unless she has “to please a man, perhaps a pervert turned on by abjection” (Oliver 1993, 62).

In asking his daughters to please him verbally, Lear is in effect forcing them to abject their mother. They are put in a dilemma: whether to surrender to what their father orders them to do, or to be denied their share of the kingdom. By doing the former, they have to abject the living corpse in them and undergo the consequences of doing so, and the latter leads them to lose their symbolic identity. Declaring their love for Lear in fulsome terms, Goneril and Regan respond to his test with flattery and trick him into believing that he has full emotional control over them. What Lear fails to understand in the love test is that Cordelia, who does not seem to know how to flatter her father, is in fact the only loyal daughter, and her response to the test is an immediate reflection of her honesty and true devotion to him. Cordelia falls out of favour simply because she is not a fortune hunter. She does not have “that glib and oily art to speak and purpose not” (Shakespeare 2014, I. i.226-7). Freud, in *Theme of the Three Caskets*, compared Cordelia, with her obstinate refusal, to lead: she “makes herself unrecognizable, inconspicuous like lead, she remains dumb, she ‘loves and is silent” (Freud 2010d, 2607). Cordelia is the only daughter who does not give in to the abject and decides to secure her identity as a healthy heterosexual subject, even if it costs Lear’s love: “A still-soliciting eye and such a tongue, as I am glad I have not, though not to have it hath lost me in your liking” (Shakespeare 2014, 1.1.232-4).

### **The Choking Mother in Lear**

Upon reaching Gloucester’s house, Lear finds Kent in the stocks. This is “a humiliation that”, in the words of Kahn, “he rightly takes as directed at him personally” (Kahn 1981, 329). On realizing that Regan is of the same mettle as Goneril, in an experience of mixed feelings of rage, shame and loss, Lear woefully remarks: “O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow, thy element's below!” (Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.246-8). Lear thinks of himself as having the disease of the hyster, or the womb. This sickness, according to R. A. Foakes, was “mainly of women [...] and arose from the womb and took them ‘with choaking [sic] in the throat’. It was called ‘Passio Hysterica’, or, in English, the mother, or the suffocation of the mother” (Shakespeare 2014, 241-2). Kahn recorded that the disease was thought to



be caused by the misplaced and wandering womb and that marriage was the best remedy to “entice the recalcitrant womb to its proper location” (Shakespeare 2014, 240). Whatever its cause, the disease was thought to bring the danger of suffocation and death. Why does Lear in such a state of humiliation think that he is afflicted by a typically feminine disease?

‘The mother’ was another, common name for the disease of the womb. The term carried the connotative meaning of suffocation with itself. Kahn remarked that Shakespeare might have already been familiar with the term through Edward Jordan’s *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (Jordan 1603) (Shakespeare 2014, 240), while Foakes suggested that he found the term in Samuel Harsnett’s *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (Harsnett 1603). Hysteria betokened the physically ambivalent nature of a woman who was associated with “flesh rather than the mind or spirit” (Kahn 1981, 240). Hysteria carried with itself a long history of feminine associations with infirmity and skittishness. The only remedy to put this ambivalent and recalcitrant force under control was marriage and regular sexual intercourse. This prescription aimed to put the wandering womb under male control; however, in the event of any sign of weakness in male authority, the fear of the return of the suffocating mother was always anticipated.

In sixteenth century family life, the role of the father as the protector and stabilizer was of primary importance and was likened to a pillar to which the balance of the family depended. As a microcosm of the whole society, the family was ruled by the law of the patriarch, and, in Stone’s account, “[...] the husband and father lorded it over his wife and children with the quasi-absolute authority of a despot [...]” (Stone 1967, 271). The mother was absent and, accordingly, she had no part in making important decisions for the family. In this sense, most of the families in that time were to some extent effectively motherless. The males represent the ruling class families in the play because, as Kahn put it, “the aristocratic patriarchal families headed by Gloucester and Lear have, actually and effectively, no mothers” (Kahn 1981, 242). In addition to his fatherly duties, Lear is also supposed to undergo feminine functions due to the accepted

fact that he is “the only source of love, and authority [...], an awesome, demanding presence” (Kahn 1981, 242).

“But”, as Kahn continued, “what the play depicts, of course, is the failure of that presence” (Kahn 1981, 242). In Greenblatt’s words, “there can be no division for Lear between authority and love”, and as a result, “[...] Lear cannot have both the public deference and the inward love of his children” (Greenblatt 1982, 113). He fails to perform the maternal function and is not able to act as the source of love in the family. Ironically, his presence is affected by the absence of the mother whose hidden presence threatens Lear’s authority. Lear is unable to perform both parental roles; he is unable to preserve his authority and, at the same time, to give love and affection. Instead of being a source of such emotions, he decides to receive them in an unlikely manner. His miserable condition, caused by his daughters’ mistreatment of him, makes him vulnerable to the disease of hysteria, or 'the mother'. For the first time in his life, Lear starts to feel weak against what he has repressed for a long time. Lear was used to ignoring the power and impact of the feminine, an unknown strength that is, unbelievably, going to haunt him now. After seeing Kent in the stocks, which is an obvious sign of Regan and Goneril’s ingratitude and power over him, Lear has a peculiar sense, a feeling of suffocation. “At this moment”, Adelman remarked, “Shakespeare shows us the place of the repressed mother [...] who refuses to stay in her proper place, she turns up the very centre of masculine identity, in the king’s own body [...]” (Adelman 1992, 114). With his symbolic power in the hands of his daughters, no longer is Lear able to put the recalcitrant womb in its place. It is going to overwhelm him with its suffocating power.

From a Kristevan perspective, what Lear feels after seeing his daughters’ mistreatment is the bitter truth of his first encounter with the horror of the abject mother. He ignored horror during the zenith of his royal power, for he was equipped with a symbolic identity that made him immune against any such threats. It can be said that, like Macbeth, Lear did not undergo a normal separation from his mother and the imprint of the semiotic has stayed with him during his adult life. Like Macbeth, Lear had to leave his mother because of the fear of being sucked back to her womb through the ‘canal’ or

the 'scar', Kristeva's terms for the mother's sexual organ. The fear of being sucked back to the womb acts as a permanent threat and continues to haunt an individual in his adulthood. Lear managed to escape the threats of the suffocating mother and by establishing strong symbolic borders succeeded in keeping it away from his adult subject. But now that he is stripped of his symbolic identity he becomes vulnerable to it. Saying "O me, my heart, my rising heart! but, down!" (Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.310) Lear begins to feel the choking effect of the woman inside him. What is hurting him within is the return of the abject, the repressed and suppressed semiotic, which like a recalcitrant womb is finding its way to his chest and aiming to suffocate him.

When Lear encounters Regan in Gloucester's castle he is treated like an ill-behaved child who must be disciplined and be put under control. He is called an old man, difficult to control: "O, sir, you are old. Nature in you stands on the very verge, of her confine: you should be ruled and led by some discretion that discerns your state better than yourself" (Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.335-9). Regan asks him to dismiss his men, which request Lear resists. Goneril joins the conversation and insisting on reducing the number of their father's guards they aim at weakening his borders. Lear's hopeless struggles are of no use; with his borders gone, his identity is exposed. The two elder daughters shame him by awakening the woman in him, in an incident that causes Lear to yield completely to his rage. Lear comes into terms with the truth that "'twas this flesh begot those pelican daughters" (Shakespeare 2014, 3.4.73-4). Although Lear addresses Goneril as the 'degenerate bastard', he cannot deny his part in the making of her. In an intense feat of anger, as Adelman put it, and "[...] attempting to separate himself from her corrupt femaleness, he finds himself pregnant with her" (Adelman 1992, 113). If Goneril is of his blood and flesh, she is an unwanted sickness that has plagued his body. Goneril is the female corruption inside his body, a cancerous organ that Lear is not able to disown:

We'll no more meet, no more see one another:  
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;  
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,  
Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,

A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
In my corrupted blood.  
(Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.409-14)

Lear's addressing nature as the cause of his plight can be interpreted as his blaming the semiotic: "If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts against their father, fool me not so much to bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger" (Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.463-5). With his symbolic borders gone, Lear is showing the last signs of resistance. Marvin Bennett Krims suggested that Lear decides, albeit desperately, to defy his abject circumstances in order to evade absolute sadness or horror (Krims 2006, 142). One step away from being sucked back by the suffocating mother, he takes his last chance to push the feminine away from his exposed subject: "You think I'll weep, no, I'll not weep: I have full cause of weeping; but this heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws, Or ere I'll weep" (Shakespeare 2014, 2.2.471-5).

Adelman thought that the darkest version of the suffocating mother reveals itself to Lear in the storm, "the realm of Hecate, in which masculine identity and the civilization that upheld it are dissolved in a terrifying female moisture" (Adelman 1992, 112). Lear's rushing out to the storm is an attempt to flee his feminizing emotions, but gets stuck in the feminine rage. His naked body is vulnerable to the punitive mother, and so is his masculine power, which is no match for the raging storm. Taking refuge in the storm, Adelman remarked, "Lear rushes out to confront what is inside him [...] a female force that shakes his manhood" (Adelman 1992, 114). He is figuratively surrounded by the enemy within and is lowered to the state of a primitive infant when smelling becomes his main means of recognizing things around him. This way he is able to smell out the foul words his elder daughters used in flattering him: "there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie" (Shakespeare 2014, 4.4.102-4). He smells the stench of a sulphurous vaginal pit: "There's hell, there's darkness, there's the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!" (Shakespeare 2014, 4.6.123-5). He does not let Gloucester kiss his hands for "it smells of mortality" (Shakespeare 2014, 4.6.129). Trying to wipe the stench off his

hand is his last attempt to suppress the feminine in himself, but it is of no use. He seems to come into terms with the bitter truth that, as Adelman put it, “despite his attempts to suppress its presence in himself, he has always known that that pit was within him; his rush out into the storm was in part one more attempt to avoid that knowledge” (Adelman 1992, 113).

In *The Powers of Horror*, Kristeva considered filth and defilement as proper examples of the abject (Kristeva 1982, 2). They exist, she argued, on the margin of any symbolic structures:

Because it is excluded as a possible object [...] filth becomes defilement and founds on the henceforth released side of the self and clean [...]. Defilement is what is jettisoned from the symbolic system. It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based. (Kristeva 1982, 65)

Filth and defilement, Kristeva argued, exist around us but are kept at a distance because they threaten our being. The abject is not limited to tangible objects like filth or waste: it can be applied to circumstances such as “The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery” (Kristeva 1982, 2). This fits Lear’s situation. His elder daughters flaunt his miserable condition before the world and make him encounter the abject, which is a confrontation that threatens his identity and leads to his death. By the same token, the feminine inside him, which is symbolically shown in the form of filth in his hands, can be regarded as an inevitable occurrence of the abject, which is close and bothering him to a degree that takes him to the verge of madness. Lear is overwhelmed by the abject and there is no way to escape. The abject is everywhere, both inside and outside of his body.

Lear’s staying the night out in the storm provides the ground for him to coexist with the abject. Kristeva remarked that “the time of abjection is double: a time of oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation bursts forth” (Kristeva 1982, 8). In the time of storm and thunder, Lear, facing the inseparable and

unhealthy part of himself, comes into terms with the truth that, to put it in Kristevan terms, “the abject from which he does not cease separating is for him, in short, a land of oblivion [...]” (Kristeva 1982, 8). During the storm, Lear’s psychosis takes another turn for the worse; he loses all contact with reality and regresses into a psychotic version of the same wishful phantasy world he was associated with in his semiotic stage. The thunder is the outcome of two opposite charges, the symbolic and the semiotic. The clash between the symbolic and the semiotic “would involve bringing together the two opposite terms but, on account of that flash, is discharged like thunder” (Kristeva 1982, 9).

### **'One' Against the 'Twain': The Final Stage**

Caught up in the storm, Lear realizes that under each man’s garment there is “a poor, bare, forked animal” (Shakespeare 2014, 3.4.105-6), too weak to resist the forces of nature. He cannot make the thunder stop and, like other mortal beings, he is vulnerable against natural phenomena. Remembering his two flattering daughters, he rages that “they are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof” (Shakespeare 2014, 4.6.103-4). The ‘pelican daughters’, he thinks, are responsible for his calamities. Goneril and Regan remind Lear of his folly since their professions of love beguiled and tricked him into believing that they were the nurturant, affectionate mothers. In the storm Lear arrives at this understanding that the elder daughters are in fact annihilating mothers seeking his death.

With the news of Cordelia’s return, however, the storm fades. The Gentleman tells Lear: “Thou hast one daughter, who redeems nature from the general curse which twain have brought her to” (Shakespeare 2014, 4.6.210-12). A safe path is opened for Lear to free himself from the inside that put him under attack during the storm – a near psychotic experience that pushed him to the verge of madness. The twain that aimed to annihilate him now seems to retreat due to the return of the one who truly loves him and is ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of her father-child. On Cordelia’s return, the wandering womb shows signs of conformity and no longer threatens to suffocate Lear.

Cordelia's reflection that she has "no cause, no cause" (Shakespeare 2014, 4.7.75) to hate Lear seals their reconciliation. In his second childishness, Lear finds the opportunity to be united with the nurturing maternal body, which is the source of love and affection. The situation is different from the first scene; Lear does not arrogantly ask for unconditional love, but like a little child he is in desperate need of care and affection. The sacrificial maternal body is there to secure him against the symbolic forces from which he has just fled. As melancholy Jaques remarks in the company of Duke senior, near the end of his life Lear has entered the last phase, the "second childishness and mere oblivion" (Shakespeare 2014, 2.7.167). He must be looked after, which means Cordelia has to change her daughter-father relationship with Lear to the mother-son bond. She chooses to sacrifice her individual subjectivity, which is the only remaining way for her to offer Lear her unconditional love.

Adelman was of the opinion that, throughout the developmental history of male identity, mothers have always played the role of sacrificial figures. In other words, for the sake of males' identity formation, "[...] the source of femaleness itself, the mother and her surrogates will be forced to pay the price of this history [...]" (Adelman 1992, 128). By the same token, by choosing to play the role of the mother to her father, Cordelia is going to shower him with the intensity of emotions invested in her, which is an act that will eventually end her life. Cordelia's death by choking reminds one of her voice that is silenced; it is the voice of a loyal daughter who could not see her father in such a miserable condition, begging for care and love. Cordelia's suffocation can be read as the efforts of a nurturing mother who paid with her life for her male child's identity formation. To put it in other way, as Adelman remarked, "this is the crime that Cordelia must pay for, and pay for with her breath: at the end, she – not he – "has no breath at all" (5.3.304) (Adelman 1992, 128). In the seventh stage of his life, 'sans everything' (including Cordelia), Lear is not able to survive. The rising heart starts to beat him down with its choking power. What one half hears in Cordelia's name (cor), is the choking heart that, as Adelman put it, "Lear would attempt to beat down, the heart that suffocates him in the end ('Pray you, undo this button') (5.3.308)" (Adelman 1992, 127). Her 'cor' puts his 'cor' in motion causing the recalcitrant womb choking Lear's heart.

Lear's final reunion with Cordelia is the time when, in his second childishness state, he has a return to the semiotic. Fleeing the two sisters with their abjective qualities and caught up in the storm, Lear finds Cordelia a safe haven in which he seeks shelter. Being with Cordelia gives him again the chance to experience again the unconditional and unlimited love and affection associated with his preoedipal stage. He feels at home in this safe haven and does not want to leave it since all that is waiting for him in the symbolic world is fear and threat. He does not want to return to "this great stage of fools" (Shakespeare 2014, 4.6.179). The joy of the maternal body's company promises Lear a blissful experience, even in prison: "Come, let's away to prison: we two alone will sing like birds I' the cage" (Shakespeare 2014, 5.3.8-9). A little child has a preoedipal time limit and must, sooner or later, leave the site of original being and enter the symbolic. In his second childishness stage, Lear has another choice in order to avoid the symbolic: to die. As the final stage of the process of his individuation, his death marks the abjection of his being. His abjection promises peace for the realm, a promising future achieved at the price of the maternal body.

### **Coda on *King Lear***

*King Lear* tells the story of the process of the individuation of a king whose second childishness brings loss and trouble for his realm. His character shows signs of a flaw when he transfers his symbolic identity to his elder daughters who act as suffocating mothers and aim to terminate his identity. Stripped of his power, he begins to suffer from the annihilating force of the feminine, inside and outside of his body, to a degree that brings on madness. During the storm Lear is ironically inside what is inside him and he comes to understand his grave mistake in abjecting what in all truth was his nurturing mother. Cordelia's return puts an end to the threats of the choking mother; however, her offering Lear the unconditional love he longed for comes at a price.

Cordelia is sacrificed to make Lear's individuation cycle complete, with second childishness as its last stage. In his seventh stage of his life, Lear is given the chance to



enjoy living in the semiotic phase again. The old Lear decides to stay in this safe haven and will not return to the real world, even if it costs him his own life and also the life of his beloved mother figure. As we have seen throughout this study, a Kristevan approach helps us to see just what it is that Shakespeare has put into his dramatic characterizations that has enabled playgoers and readers over the centuries to recognize his characters as especially plausible in their human reactions to extraordinary events. This is a greater achievement than it might at first seem – it is considerably more impressive than the usual notions of realistic portrayal of human personality – because the circumstances into which Shakespeare puts his characters are, for the most part, outside the realm of normal human experiences by which playgoers and readers might judge how they themselves would react. This is a dramatic plausibility borne of a deep insight into the human psyche, using ideas about trauma and its effects on the mind that were not formally articulated (outside of artistic creation) until the twentieth century.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has demonstrated that William Shakespeare anticipated later developments in psychoanalytical theories whereby the human psyche experiences and acts upon heightened psychological phenomena. He was, at least implicitly, familiar with the way human psyche responds in different situations, especially those associated with heightened psychological experiences. Shakespeare was in truth the first early modern dramatist to identify and explore in full the role of the mind in the cause of human maladies rather than looking for supernatural causes. Shakespearean characters are at the mercy of the unconscious forces that push them to go through different dramatic experiences in the plays. The concept of the human mind as we understand it today is, then, a Shakespearean invention, a novel and revolutionary notion that initiated new ways of making sense of our experiences. The famous dramatic characters that Shakespeare created – Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth and Othello, and others identified in this thesis – are, to a great extent, controlled by agencies that govern their minds, which are devastating forces that manipulate their thoughts and actions. Seeing their plays through a Kristevan lens makes sense of Shakespeare's use of non-linear plotting and reveals newly visibly subtleties in his creation of character.

To illustrate Shakespeare's anticipation and exploration of psychoanalytic theories that dominate twentieth and twenty-first century understandings of the mind, this thesis has shown the links between his early modern concept of the mind and the way the human psyche is approached by twentieth-century psychoanalysis, a subject that was first established by Freud. Although usually considered the father of modern psychoanalysis, Freud himself acknowledged that he owed a debt to Shakespeare on account of the dramatist's remarkably accurate depictions of the processes of the human mind. Freud considered the unconscious and the repressed desires that reside in the mind to be the causes of abnormal experiences like feelings of anxieties, stress or, in other extreme cases, hysteria and madness. Shakespearean characters provide the best case studies for such mental states and the workings of the mind and its unconscious impulses are

presented and explored in many of his works. The madness of Hamlet and Lear, Othello's jealousy, and the mental struggles of Coriolanus and Macbeth all give proof to this notion that they are governed by their unconscious minds, its impulses and fears.

As has been discussed in this thesis, much has been written about the influence of Shakespeare and his concepts of the mind on Freud. The extant psychoanalytic works on Shakespeare are to a great extent derived from Freud's theories and that line of thought has been extensively explored. However, much remains to be said about the important works done by other theorists in their use of and application of Freudian ideas and how these ideas can help us explicate Shakespeare's engagement with psychoanalysis. Julia Kristeva's concepts of the mind, indebted to Freud (and other critical thinkers such as Georges Bataille, traced in Chapter One), are an important but relatively neglected way to throw new light on important key moments where Shakespeare might be said to be anticipating a Kristevan understanding of the psyche.

In order to provide a firm grounding for the exploration of Shakespeare's anticipation of Kristeva, and how her theories help explicate crucial moments in the life of the psyche in the plays, the first chapter of this thesis considered in detail Kristeva's contribution to psychoanalysis. Kristeva's theories regarding semanalysis, especially those concerning the semiotic stage of a little child's life, mark her departure from Freud and highlight those aspects of the psychosexual existence of an individual that Freud either overlooked or left under-explored. Her elaboration on the oscillating and ambivalent relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic forms a substantial part of this thesis's theoretical approach to Shakespeare's plays. The thesis's contribution to knowledge is to suggest that the minds of the Shakespearean heroes in these plays become battlefields for the opposing forces of the semiotic and the symbolic. The semiotic, with its abject like return, serves as a threat to the symbolic identity of an individual, enabling a key Kristevan psychoanalytic approach relevant to the discussion in subsequent chapters. To make the key Kristevan psychoanalytic terms understandable, I elaborated upon the philosophical and the psychoanalytic background of Kristeva's thought, and brought to bear useful examples in this regard. The ideas and theories of

Freud are key to the development of Kristeva's ideas but so too are those of other writers and these were explored also in Chapter One. Not only Freud but also Jacques Lacan was a seminal influence upon Kristeva and so too the philosophical ideas of Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Bataille are crucial to fully explicating the concepts to which Kristeva is indebted and from which her theories of the mind emerge. To appreciate the abject and its key role among other Kristevan terms, it is important to explore Heidegger's views regarding the concept of Dasein ('being there' or 'presence') and Bataille's notions regarding heterogeneity, meaning the agencies that have anti-symbolic features inherent in them and oppose any sense of order. Shakespeare's method of story telling and his treatment of the historical sources in his plays contain elements of the abject, resisting the dominant Tudor/Stuart doctrines regarding power and kingship in early modern England. The trace of the abject can be seen between the lines of Shakespeare's discursive method of writing, revealing important aspects of his thought that reflect contesting and radical ideas surrounding the so-called 'Tudor Myth' as we saw in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two considered three comedies – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Taming of the Shrew* – and elaborated upon the moments when the main characters experience the return of the semiotic and their identities are threatened by the abject. Starting with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the intention was twofold: first to explore the abjective moments the main characters experience and, secondly, by bringing examples from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to explore the idea that the young Athenian lovers and Bottom undergo an overnight mental transformation and face the abject. In *As You Like It*, the main characters experience a similar situation to that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: in escaping the harsh symbolic and taking refuge in the semiotic. The Forest of Arden, with its semiotic characteristics, provides a safe haven for those who were either expelled from or threatened by the symbolic world. By the same token, the young lovers and Duke Senior and his company remain a potential threat to the symbolic world outside and wait for an opportunity to return. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the initial focus was on Shakespeare's anti-symbolic approach in portraying a woman who was considered a threat to the male-dominated society. Katherine has to be tamed and the

unpleasant aspects of her behaviour expelled. The second focus was on Petruchio's reverse psychological approach in taming the harsh Katherine. What happens in Petruchio's wordplay is that plain meaning stops and the symbolic definitions are resisted. In such anti-symbolic moments, the human mind becomes vulnerable to the forces of the abject and, subsequently, loses its identity. Overall, my contribution to knowledge in Chapter Two lies in its account of the return of the semiotic and its ambivalent effects on the human mind.

In Chapter Three I explored three plays from the Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy – *Richard II* and *1 & 2 Henry IV* – and *Coriolanus* from the Roman history plays. In the English history plays the rulers struggle to secure their identities against outside threats and dangers. In order to protect his kingship, Richard II banishes Henry Bolingbroke from his kingdom. However, he fails to remain vigilant and his expedition to Ireland provides the opportunity for Henry to embark on an abject-like return and overthrow the legitimate king. Richard naively trusts that providence will protect him against any earthly danger, but at the end he has to abdicate and give the throne of England to Bolingbroke, who thereby becomes Henry IV. It should be noticed that Richard's symbolic identity is weak and fails to protect its borders against the overwhelming forces of the abject. Shakespeare's method of story telling and his adaptation of his historical sources undermine the dominant Tudor doctrine of kingship and contains anti-symbolic elements in it. Here, Shakespeare's method of depicting Richard and his weakness can be regarded as the voice of a considerable bulk of the population who, it seems likely, did not implicitly believe in the dominant Tudor doctrine in the early modern England. In short, I suggest that Shakespeare's writing had some abjective elements in itself that threatened the dominant ideology.

In *1 & 2 Henry IV* the aim was to prove that psychoanalytic causes (and not God's punishment) lie behind Henry IV's feeling of insecurity that lasts until the end of his reign. Throughout the play we see evidence that he is unconsciously afraid of the return of the abject; there were rumours that Richard was alive and the Ricardians were being prepared to help him to dethrone Henry. Richard was abjected for the sake of

strengthening Henry's legitimacy over the throne of England, but remains a threatening force by haunting Henry and denying him sleep. Unlike Richard, Henry always remains vigilant and thus does not let the abject forces penetrate into his identity borders. He is concerned about Prince Hal's misbehaviour and believes his son will become another Richard, failing to protect the crown. However, as the play draws to the end, Shakespeare's adaptation of the historical sources and his letting the young prince slay the fierce Hotspur make the audience sure that the future King Henry V will be as efficient and vigilant as his father.

My picture of Coriolanus in Chapter Three is of a poorly-fed child of a dominant mother who has her son perform heroic acts that as a woman she is not able to do. He is an unfinished subject whose identity has not been formed due to his overdependence on his mother. What I highlight in Coriolanus' character is his struggle to attain a symbolic identity, something he fails to reach in Rome. He is called an enemy of the people and is thus abjected, which is an act that makes him abject Rome in retaliation. Coriolanus' taking refuge with his former enemy Aufidius can be psychoanalytically interpreted as his choosing to stay with a virile father rather than the impotent one represented by Menenius. His process of acquiring a true symbolic identity requires that he destroy his semiotic past, which is something that drives him to embark on destroying Rome. His decision to attack Rome can most fruitfully be viewed via a psychoanalytic lens: he takes revenge on the forces that denied him the symbolic identity that he deserved. Coriolanus' encounter with his mother before his proposed attack on Rome puts him in the dilemma of choosing between the symbolic and the semiotic, which is a decision that sheds light on the strong ties that exist between him and his semiotic origin. Coriolanus' unfinished subject cannot survive in the symbolic world for it lacks the elements needed for survival.

Chapter Four dealt with three major tragedies: *Romeo & Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. The focus here was on considering the moments the main heroes face the abject. From analysis of allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is clear that the relationship between Romeo and Juliet engages with key aspects of the abject. Their love ignores the boundary that has existed for a long time between the Capulets and

Montagues as families, which is something that highlights the transgressive nature of their love and justifies its abject qualities. The desire that pushes them to pursue their star-crossed love has its roots in their unconscious tendency toward their maternal origin, the semiotic. Their desire is of a transgressive nature and has the potential to resist the symbolic and push it to its limit. Romeo and Juliet's final suicides give proof to the idea that in tragic situations the semiotic can have an annihilating power. It is an unconscious force that is able to bring about horror in the life of its beholder and thus the play engages with Kristeva's important treatise on the subject of abjection as detailed in her seminal book *Powers of Horror*.

The analysis of *Macbeth* in this chapter sheds light on the maternal threat and its annihilating power for Macbeth's personality. Macbeth's identity borders are attacked by the abject forces imposed on him by his queen, who like a suffocating mother, threatens to suck him back to the horror. Mentally manipulated by Lady Macbeth, and aiming to escape the horror chasing his identity, Macbeth murders the father figure Duncan and is then wracked with guilt. It becomes clear in the analysis of Macbeth's character that the horror must be expelled for the sake of maintaining a sound subjectivity, which is a path that Macbeth follows to complete his unfinished individuality. However, in doing so he commits hideous acts and thereby he himself becomes the horror. By the end of the play, Macbeth has to be abjected for the sake of the national peace and the continuity of his land. My contribution to knowledge in this section is to finish the task that Freud left unfinished. Freud began his analysis of *Macbeth* with the assumption that Lady Macbeth's barrenness and Macbeth's feeling of guilt are punishments for Duncan's murder, but Freud abandoned his consideration of this because he believed that Shakespeare's departure from his main historical source – Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* – had made it impossible for him to diagnose the couple's psychoanalytic problem. In Freud's view, by eliminating the ten-year span in the *Chronicles*, Shakespeare left insufficient time for the psychoanalytic-based symptoms to appear in the couple's behaviour. However, by applying Kristeva's theories regarding the abject, I have shown that a psychoanalytic reading of the Macbeths' case is viable without this ten-year span.

In *King Lear* the focus was on the recalcitrant womb inside Lear's body that causes his maladies. By asking his daughters to offer their unconditional love, Lear arrives at a second childishness, a time of oblivion and madness. The demon inside his body takes the form of a horror and does not leave him alone; its force is comparable to the force of the abject when attacking an individual's identity border. In this stage of his life, Lear is looking for a caring mother-figure and mistakenly attempts to find it among his daughters. In the opening scene, he sees that Cordelia is reluctant to give him his desired identity as the loved son of a caring mother, and so he turns to the elder daughters who flatter him extravagantly. By leaving his symbolic identity behind, Lear exposes his subject to the annihilating forces of the semiotic. His elder daughters can be considered to be what Janet Adelman famously called 'suffocating mothers' who threaten to destroy him; thus, he turns to Cordelia who embodies the nurturing aspect of the semiotic. By the end of the play, Lear decides to stay in the semiotic, which decision costs him his life and hers.

As this thesis demonstrates, Shakespeare was a master at making his characters experience the psychoanalytic horror, which is a power that has the potential to push them to their limits and make them experience rare and extraordinary feelings. In all the plays studied in this thesis, the main characters experience the powers of horror, and we need a Kristevan approach to fully understand them. The abject, with its enchanting features, reminds one of a nostalgic past; it chooses an individual's identity as its target and manages to make it experience an indefinable moment when time stops and symbolic meanings will not do. In such moments, individuals lose their symbolic identities and consequently experience heightened feelings of love (either comic or catastrophic, as in Chapter Two), insecurity (as in the first three plays of Chapter Three), or ambition, desire and madness (as in Chapter Four and in *Coriolanus*). The moment of abjection is a time for the individual to forget about its subjectivity and float on the currents of the semiotic toward an archaic past when there was no distinction between self and other. In this harmonious stage of one's life, there was no sense of the outside symbolic power and everything was governed by the rule of the mother. Shakespearean characters are exposed



to the abject, and end up in tragic or comic situations. Some of them, like those discussed in Chapter Two, see the beautiful and charming face of the semiotic and choose to escape from the symbolic world with its rigidity and harshness. However, the others, especially those analysed in Chapter Four, experience it like a suffocating mother, as an annihilating force that threatens to destroy their identities and pushes them toward total destruction.

To conclude, we can see here that Kristeva's theories – her poststructuralist-inflected psychoanalytic analyses – were anticipated in the early modern era and specifically in the writings of Shakespeare. Post-war France and its modernist/structuralist atmosphere that gave birth to Kristeva's thought is centuries apart from the early modern period in which Shakespeare was writing for the open-air theatres of London, but there are important connections that can be forged between the two. By applying Kristevan theories to the work of Shakespeare, we can better explicate his complex understandings of human motivation. What makes the approach fruitful is Shakespeare's extraordinary knowledge of the human mind and its effect on the main characters' actions throughout the plays. Shakespeare was familiar with the demons residing in human minds and made them responsible for the characters' flaws. This is a significant point that makes Kristeva's psychoanalytic theories regarding the abject and the horror associated with it applicable to his plays. Using Kristeva's theories, we can see that any weakness or flaw in one's mind makes its identity borders weak and can lead the individual to experience abjection, which is a feature that can be observed in many Shakespearean characters in some heightened emotional moments like love, loss, jealousy and madness. We may return to, and fruitfully answer, the question of how Shakespeare created his dramatic characters – an approach that was unfashionable for much of the twentieth century – with a newly enhanced admiration for his dramaturgical skill if we consider these characters in the light of that century's most sophisticated understanding of the operations of the human mind.

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