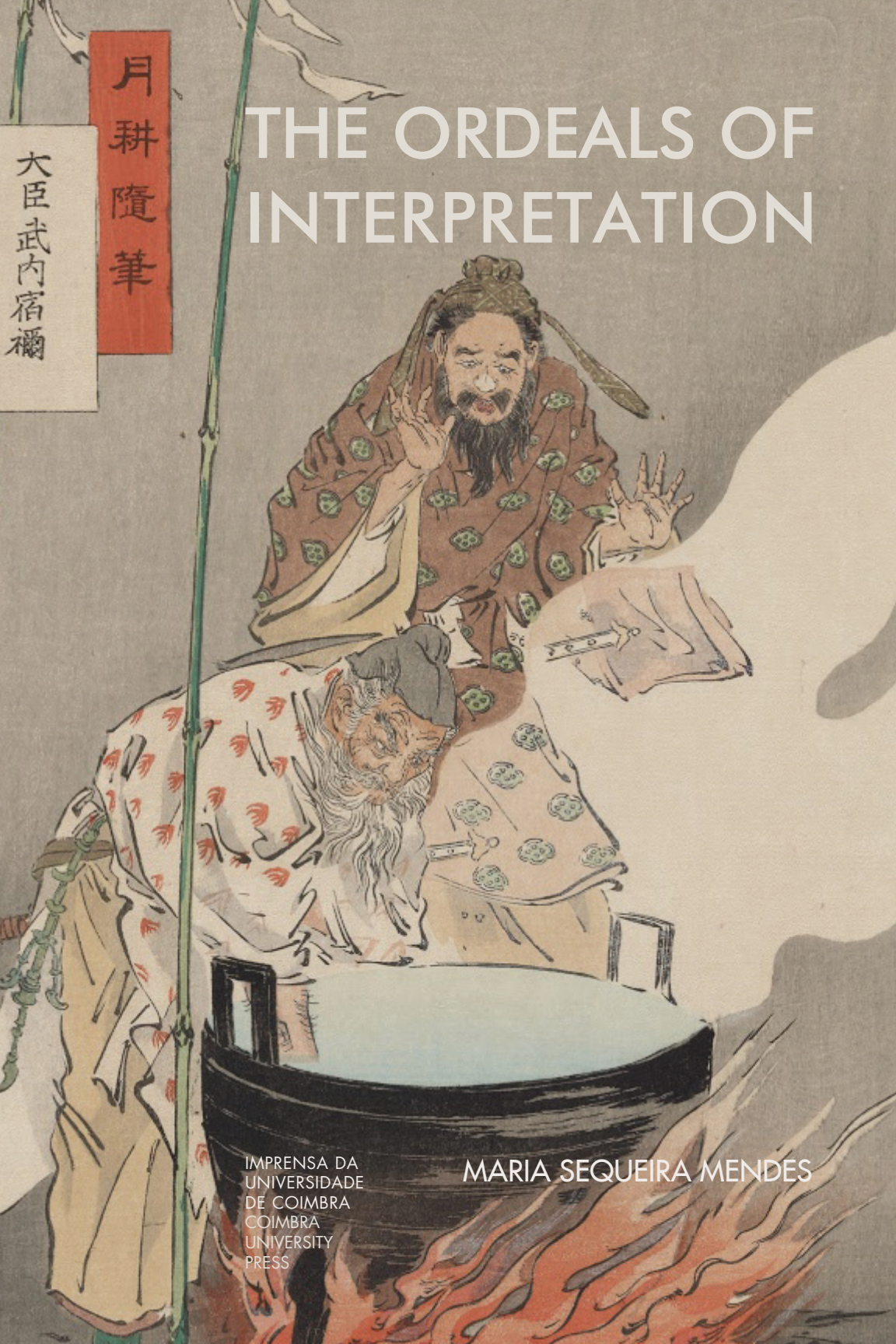

THE ORDEALS OF INTERPRETATION

MARIA SEQUEIRA MENDES

IMPRENSA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA
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Ordálias da Interpretação analisa ordálias medievais, a leitura de dados no polígrafo e alguns métodos de tortura, ao mesmo tempo que lê textos como *Hamlet* e *Macbeth*. Este livro descreve a ambição por uma pedra de toque que demonstre a veracidade, ou autenticidade, de certas entidades. De notar que pedra-de-toque – basanos (Βάσανος) – era um termo usado para denominar a pedra com que se testava em contextos mercantis a qualidade do ouro, mas que designava igualmente a ideia de teste, tortura e torturador. Para os intérpretes mencionados neste livro, a pedra de toque, que pode ser um objecto, uma pessoa ou um teste, teria a capacidade de nos auxiliar a distinguir amigos de inimigos, de identificar a qualidade de alguns versos e de iluminar a verdade. Argumenta-se, todavia, que a capacidade de fazer juízos precisos deriva de um entendimento técnico de interpretação conduzida por indivíduos hábeis, observando-se que a capacidade de descobrir "a verdade" depende da perícia de cada examinador, da sua intuição, da capacidade para aprender um método ou uma técnica específica, de detectar erros e fazer perguntas (qualidades importantes na actividade de um crítico literário).

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SUMÁRIO

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The Ordeals of Interpretation
As Ordálias da Interpretação

Maria Sequeira Mendes
Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras
maria.sequeiramendes@gmail.com

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

Keywords: Interpretation; *Hamlet; Macbeth;* ordeal; polygraph; torture

Resumo: Este livro descreve a ambição por uma pedra de toque que demonstre a veracidade, ou autenticidade, de certas entidades. Esta pedra de toque, que pode ser um objecto, uma pessoa ou um teste, teria a capacidade de nos auxiliar a distinguir amigos de inimigos, de identificar a qualidade de alguns versos e de iluminar a verdade. Argumenta-se, todavia, que a capacidade de fazer juízos precisos não deriva unicamente do uso da pedra de toque, mas de um entendimen-

to técnico de interpretação conduzida por indivíduos hábeis. Bons juízos sobre terceiros são, assim, o resultado de uma combinação de factores que inclui boa intuição, ou convicção, a capacidade de se aprender um método ou uma técnica específica, de detectar erros e de fazer perguntas.

Palavras-chave: Interpretação; *Hamlet; Macbeth;* Ordália; polígrafo; tortura

INTRODUCTION

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

A seemingly different situation is that of the high school student wishing to understand a literary text that someone – perhaps a boyfriend or a girlfriend – sent to them. They struggle to understand the meaning of the text and, consequently, might describe this quest for interpretation as an 'ordeal'. This word, 'ordeal', derives from the Latin term *ordalium*, or 'judgment', and, as the *OED* suggests, it names "A practice of trial in which an accused person is subjected to a test, usually involving physical pain or danger, the overcoming of which is taken as divine proof of innocence (frequently in ordeal by

fire, etc.)".[1] "Ordeal" corresponds in medieval Latin to the following expressions: *iudicium, Dei iudicium, paribile iudicium, probabile iudicium, purgatio, probatio, examen* and *examination*. After the word was used in the sense of 'divine judgment' it came to be "applied to analogous modes of determining innocence or guilt found in other societies".[2] Even though the high school student probably does not know this, the ordeal as a form of proof existed in different cultures and civilizations, in different moments of History, and the diversity of its practices is extraordinary.[3] When the student refers to the ordeal, they are probably not thinking about it in its judicial context but alluding to its modern sense, that of an unpleasant and prolonged experience.

This book's title, *The Ordeals of Interpretation*, names the aforementioned situations: from the medieval jury to the CIA agent, from the use of the polygraph in a supermarket to the experience of those struggling to find meaning in literary texts and thinking it is necessary to choose a particular method of interpretation. An ordeal is both a form of proof (it is used as a method to discover the truth) and the way an interpreter describes their experience of

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[1] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VI, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[2] See F Patetta, *Le Ordalie: studio di storia del diritto e scienza del diritto comparato* (Fratelli Bocca, 1890) www.archive.org/details/leordaliestudio00pategoog (accessed Feb. 2013).

[3] One may find descriptions of ordeals from Ancient India to Egypt, from Africa to Japan, from Tibet to Polynesia. In the Hammurabi code, the use of the ordeal is mentioned twice (2 and 132), and one may equally find examples of ordeals in the Laws of Manu and the Old Testament (Num. 5: 11-31). In Europe, Robert Bartlett, in *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (1986), divides the history of the ordeal into two periods: the first takes place before 800 a. C. and is characterized by the almost inexistence of documents. The second one, which the author names the 'proto-history of the ordeal,' may be placed from 800 a. C. onward, since from that date on there is a profusion of judicial descriptions on the theme. See F. Patetta, *Le Ordalie: studio di storia del diritto e scienza del diritto comparato* (Fratelli Bocca, 1890) www.archive.org/details/leordaliestudio00pategoog (accessed Feb. 2013). R Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

hermeneutic discomfort and suggests a way to solve it. The modes of proof here described – Hamlet's way of catching the conscience of the King, the bier-right ordeal in *Richard III* and in *Macbeth*, some forms of literary criticism, the polygraph and torture (in its various forms and historical periods[4]) – presume that certain entities contain the key to their comprehension, which may come to light if the appropriate method is employed. These modes of test rely on the idea that if the suitable method is used and properly applied the correct answer to the problem at hand will appear.

Although procedures vary, these interpreters share the ambition for a touchstone that would allow us to ascertain these entities' authenticity. The classical word for it is *basanos* (βάσανος), a term at first exclusively applied in mercantile contexts to name the touchstone through which the purity of gold was tested, a stone which was generally fieldstone, slate or lyddite.[5] The word also refers to *basanite*, i.e., touchstone, as well as expressions such as "put to the test," "question by applying torture," "to be put to torture".[6] The word later came to characterize a procedure intended to determine if someone or something was genuine and acquired the connotations of ordeal and torture.

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

[5] For an analysis of the concept see *Torture and Truth*, in which the classicist Page DuBois studies a group of literary, judicial and philosophical texts, in an attempt to delineate the evolution of the word *basanos* and how it relates to the idea that the truth is hidden inside the human body.

[6] *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 1843 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948).

This book examines cases in which the touchstone variously takes the form of a play within a play, as in *Hamlet*, or of an object such as a stone or a painting, or a test or a person, but it also considers Matthew Arnold's use of Shakespearean line as touchstone. In a way, three types of touchstones are portrayed. First, this book discusses examples of when an interpreter makes a specific object a touchstone. Secondly, it presents cases in which a touchstone method is applied, as a way of interpreting literary texts or of using torture as a procedure to discover truth. Finally, instances in which an individual appears to become a touchstone are examined. This interpreter or personified touchstone, whom I will call Arnoldian, appears to represent an integral criterion for the understanding of other persons or entities; as such, I use the OED's entry for 'touch' or 'touchstone' in order to understand how an interpreter may 'touch' or have a 'touch,' how they are able to acknowledge crucial points in a discussion and how they may have genuine touches or are able to touch, as in 'to censure'. Arnoldians are interpreters who seem to be particularly insightful, embodying the touchstone of others, whom they appear to read effortlessly; they are specialized and experienced interpreters who are able to apply a set of techniques with the purpose of understanding, describing, and, in some modes of proof, solving given problems.

In what follows, the literary critics discussed – from Arnold to T.S. Eliot and Franco Moretti and his network theory – employ arguments which seem to be close to the positions of those in favour of using the polygraph (or a *touchstone*) as an interpretative method. At the same time, however, critics such as Stanley Cavell, in his wish to evade more rational (perhaps the apt term here is "scientific") methods of interpretation, seem to have become Arnoldians, favouring the idea that the interpreting individual is the very touchstone for the comprehension of other entities.

Shakespeare is the most quoted author in this book, with discussion of *Hamlet, Macbeth,* and the figure of Touchstone in *As You Like It*, as well as references to *Richard II* and *Othello*. Characters in Shakespeare's plays often show their concern over the need to evaluate others and to know, with a degree of certainty, whether they have been misled. At the same time, exposing Shakespeare's plays to established judicial procedures, in the tradition of critics working in the field of law and literature, such as John Kerrigan, Lorna Hutson, Paul Raffield, and Gary Watt allows us to better understand features in these plays which would otherwise go unnoticed.

The modes of proof discussed in the book share the presumption that the body represents a vessel with hidden contents, a notion that has important implications when applied to ways of determining the truth. When there is a problem requiring a preferably definite solution, and the key to the problem appears to be inside a given person, it seems necessary to find a way to bring the answer to light. It is assumed that the individual's body, for one reason or another, holds the way out of such predicaments and that it is therefore necessary to extract it. However, in most of these cases, such as with Claudius in *Hamlet*, the suspects are unwilling to let their bodies be examined. They claim they are innocent or that they have been falsely accused and refuse to cooperate.

Curiously, literary works often cause us problems similar to those enunciated. Although a book may not be compared to the bomber, the medieval stranger, or the woman with a prior conviction, there is a complexity in many works that make us doubt if the words we read do mean what we firstly assume them to mean. In many situations, intricate passages seem to be doing the same thing to us, the reader, as the person who placed the bomb and does not wish it to be found: withholding the actual meaning of their statements. In these cases, speaking with the author is not much of a help, which puts critics in a comparable position to that of the

CIA: the person who could help them decipher a literary passage, or a state of affairs, cannot, or will not, do it. These are problems where, for any number of reasons, the objects in hand cannot be as cooperative as we would like them to be, which puts us in the position of having to be creative, or even violent, when dealing with them. In the case of literary texts, as with unwilling subjects, it is necessary to discover if they are being purposefully deceitful or not, a determination that may settle the type of conclusions we draw. At the same time, it is difficult to know what special signs could be in need of analysis. Some authors point out the possibility of using certain passages and contrasting them with those requiring interpretation; for others, quoting from a text is a way of illuminating its meaning; while describing also appears to be a form of clarifying analysis.

The abovementioned examples have yet another feature in common: they portray guilty persons and their unwillingness to confess. Nevertheless, an innocent subject would also, in the same circumstances, deny having taken any part in the diverse affairs. From this viewpoint, to be innocent and to claim it is very similar to being guilty and claiming to be above suspicion. Both forms of verbal enunciation are identical. The main presumption of modes of proof such as torture, the ordeal, and the polygraph is that even if the suspect is unwilling to admit his knowledge or his guilt, there are signs of his culpability that may be evaluated.

Thus, inquisitorial torture seemed to be able to make the suspect confess, while simultaneously providing valuable signs of guilt through the observation of their expressions. The medieval ordeal was considered a way of proving the truth in difficult cases, through the evaluation of bodily signs, whereas the polygraph is an instrument frequently used to uncover facts about a person that they do not wish others to know. It is presumed that the truth is discovered through the analysis of unintentional signs, the body's physiological

responses to the guilt of the individual. Although differences between modes of proof will be surveyed later, it is relevant to point out that, for these methods, signs such as perspiration or a burned arm are considered to be more truthful than verbal statements, since they are unintentional and difficult to control. While many individuals lie intentionally without being caught, only experts are considered capable of managing their physiological reactions when put to the test. These procedures share, therefore, the assumption that each entity's interior is veiled by its exterior, which is, paradoxically, also the place where the revelation will occur. Accordingly, it will be shown how this represents a peculiar way to understand the relationship between the body's interior and its signs of exteriority, described as bodily proof.

It will be shown that the ability to obtain results depends on the quality of the touchstone, the use given to the object, and the ability to follow a procedure and to learn from experience. In some cases, the interpreter only needs to look at self-evident proof and to show it (think of Lady Macbeth's reaction to the King's bleeding corpse), something certain observers admire and others fear, whereas in other circumstances it is necessary to complement the results of the test with an adequate description. Those evaluating such modes of proof must, therefore, possess a degree of expertise making them able to either discover or be the touchstone with which to judge others.

This type of intuitive knowledge enhanced by experience also characterizes examiners whose work is influenced by personal relationships and the individual's ability to judge others, even if they rely on the scientific analysis of charts, as is the case with the polygraph test. Throughout this book, it will be shown how some individuals seem to have this type of ability, how they are touchstones to the character of others, which may rely on their judgment (the young Hamlet, or Rosalind in *As You Like It*, exemplify this). Being

such a touchstone may not, however, be beneficial to one's health and it will be shown how some of these interpreters experience the secondary effects of the tasks they perform.

One way to characterize these procedures is to claim that they attempt to diminish the amount of talk in certain situations. The thought that one may be more expedient, present in modes of proof such as the ordeal and torture, is contradicted in literary criticism, which seems to be characterized as an activity that cannot be rushed. These modes of proof consider that the *modus operandi* helps to determine the correct outcome of the test, this being the reason why the procedure has to be thoroughly followed. However, these ways of testing entities also attempt to predict what will happen if the method fails to produce accurate results and try to provide solutions for the problem (results from these tests may appear in the form of a conclusion, a verdict or an essay about a poem).

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

Differences between historical contexts will of necessity be considered. In writing this book, I am interested in the attempt to understand what a touchstone could be and the different forms it has taken throughout history. These forms of test have been used in diverse societies, contexts, and systems of belief. The medieval society in which the ordeal worked as a judicial way of solving conflicts has little to do with the way contemporary methods of truth inquiry deal with the polygraph, or even with torture. Therefore, I will invoke specific ways of producing evidence when particular interpretative problems are brought to light. Examples will be wide-ranging – and vary from doll's houses to judicial modes of proof or therapeutic methods used to cure people. These examples allow to illustrate different types of touchstones and show how this is a fundamental topic ranging across historical times and narratives. This wide-ranging approach attempts to show how this search for a touchstone of interpretation crosses literary texts and is present in a variety of methods for obtaining the truth: from medieval modes of proof to contemporary torture, from the polygraph to certain literary critics' way of dealing with interpretation. This is the reason why the book jumps from medieval England to nineteenth-century methods of interpretation and from there to the use of the polygraph test during the twentieth century.

When one speaks of torture, medieval ordeals, and polygraph tests two possibilities emerge. Those who argue against these modes of proof consider that the result is previously determined and that the purpose of the mode of proof is but to confirm it. On the other hand, those in favour of such truth tests assume the result depends entirely on the ability of those involved in the process to follow the proper procedures. To ascertain which of these two possibilities is correct is cause for wonder, but it is not the aim of this book; rather, the purpose of this study is to reflect on their particularities, their ways of functioning, their common presuppositions and dissimilarities,

as well as to include them in a group of other methods sharing, in Dewey's terms, the quest for certainty.

What Follows:

Knowing how to identify someone's murderer, how to distinguish a credible witness, whether one is being betrayed, or try to avoid being exposed, are questions that compel the main characters in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. In what follows, the first chapter analyses Lady Macbeth's line "If he do bleed" and opposes it to Hamlet's "If a do blench" in order to demonstrate that, although different from one another, both plays are "Tragedies by Ordeal." Reconfiguring the role of the ordeal in these plays allows us to devise a path from law to emotion and to reconsider the way in which two legal systems – the medieval and early modern – coexist in the minds of the audience.

The second chapter, "Truth in a Nutshell," discusses the idea that certain entities enclose the key that allows us to understand difficult objects, texts or situations. Interpreters – *e.g.* police investigators, literary critics, or medieval judges – assume, and sometimes fear, the idea that we may comprehend these beings through observation and the skill of pointing to their main features. It will be seen how the ability to ostensively redefine these entities gives the (erroneous) impression that interpretation is not being used as a tool for their comprehension, which a discussion of Frances Glessner Lee's dollhouses will help to illustrate.

Sometimes, the interpreter is the touchstone for the interpretation of others. The third chapter, "Touchstone," portrays the interpreter's role and describes a category of interpreters which I refer to as Arnoldians. Qualities for being an Arnoldian in interpretation, such as intuition, insight or conviction, education, and certain knowledge

of technique will be considered. Hamlet will once again be called upon to illustrate this matter, as will the figure of Touchstone, in *As You Like It*, and Henry James' Isabel Archer (*The Portrait of a Lady*). Being a touchstone, however, may affect its agents, who have to deal with the physical and psychological consequences of the tasks they choose to undertake, or are made to perform, as is the case in certain torture procedures, therapies, and with Lady Macbeth.

"Final remarks" reconsiders what the act of "mousetrapping" could be. In order to do so, *Hamlet's* lines "Let the galled jade wince, / our withers are / unwrung" are analyzed and related with the different modes of proof invoked in this book.

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Tragedy by Ordeal

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"If he do bleed, / I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, / For it must seem their guilt." (II, ii, 54-56),[7] claims Lady Macbeth when she sees her husband bringing the daggers back with him. Lady Macbeth realizes she will need to return to the crime scene, where Macbeth has killed the King, and place the murder instruments near the grooms, so that they may be indicted. The line "If he do bleed" alludes to a judicial mode of proof, that of the bier-right ordeal, in which it is assumed that God will intervene on the body, spilling blood out of the corpse's nose or wounds, so that the guilty party can be identified and formally accused.[8]

Lady Macbeth's "If he do bleed" neatly echoes, both in its syntax and meaning, Hamlet's "If a do blench / I know my course," (III, I, 550-551).[9] Hamlet's thoughts indicate his wish to devise the mousetrap with which he will attempt to sound out Claudius'

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[7] Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2015). Quotations follow this edition.

[8] In Shakespeare, the bier-right ordeal is alluded to in *Julius Caesar* and described in detail in *Richard III.* In *Richard III*, Lady Anne, whose husband and father-in-law have been cruelly murdered by Richard of Gloucester, is seen accompanying the corpse of King Henry the Sixth. A group of men is carrying the body when Richard instructs the guards to put it down. While they tremble in fear, Lady Anne defends the corpse, which bleeds in accusation of Richard's deeds: "O, gentlemen, see, see dead Henry's wounds / Open their congealead mouths, and bleed afresh" (*Richard III*, I, ii, 50-67). The idea of a body pouring blood will reappear in Antony's description of Caesar's body: "Over thy wounds now do I prophesy – / Which like dumb mouths do open their ruby lips / To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue – A curse shall light upon the limbs of men." (3, 1, 259-262). Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, ed. David Daniell (London: Bloosmbury, 2014). Shakespeare, *Richard III,* ed. James R. Siemon (London: The Arden Edition, 2009).

[9] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins (ed) 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990).

conscience. In the third act, the Prince of Denmark searches for a solution to end his suspicions about the presumed murder of his father. He thus stages a play in which the crime supposedly committed by his stepfather, Claudius, is represented. *The Murder of Gonzago* has the purpose of catching the conscience of the King through the observation of Claudius's reactions to the performance. Hamlet's test assumes that a criminal, when confronted with his deeds, confesses his guilt through visible physical responses. Consequently, the way that Claudius behaves, rising in the middle of the play and calling for the lights to be lit, seems to provide the proof that Hamlet needs to be sure the Ghost's accusations are true. "If a do blench," seems to reveal Hamlet's wish to create his own form of proof, the ordeal which would allow him to reveal Claudius' guilt.

The first part of this chapter rethinks the importance of the ordeal in *Macbeth,* showing how feelings such as guilt and fear of Divine Judgment play a considerable role in what is taken to be an objective mode of proof. The Macbeths appear to possess legal knowledge which other characters do not, or which they do not care to mention (knowing already, perhaps, that the couple is guilty). Be that as it may, and even though no one else appears to want to read the signs on Duncan's body, both Macbeth and his wife seem to be concerned that they will be exposed through the use of a proof so unyielding as the ordeal, a knowledge which, as it will become apparent, undoes them. Shakespeare appears to be claiming that, legal procedures aside, those who perpetrate the crime will end up punishing themselves: the Macbeths know they are guilty, and this knowledge will leave them overexposed to the emotional consequences of murder.

The second part of the chapter shows how, unlike *Macbeth*, Shakespeare chooses to situate *Hamlet* in a humanist intellectual culture, thus portraying what could be considered a metaphoric

ordeal in the early modern world. Accordingly, this rereading of both plays will demonstrate how the ordeal maintained its relevance as an emotional or customary jurisdiction after it ceased to be an accepted legal practice. Indeed, these assumptions enable us to observe a transition from a procedural idea of rational law to an emotional one and to reconsider how two legal systems – the medieval and early modern – coexisted in the minds of early modern audiences, in order to show that the power of the ordeal in *Macbeth* is more affective than legal, and to characterize Hamlet's ordeal as a modern, pre-Freudian way of finding the truth in one's physical reactions.

Macbeth and "The secret'st man of blood"

Lady Macbeth's lines – "If he do bleed, / I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, / For it must seem their guilt." (II, ii, 54-56) – have been considered a sign of her dainty femininity. In the scene, Lady Macbeth witnesses her husband bringing the daggers back with him after murdering the King, and realizes she will have to return to the crime scene and place the instrument of murder near the grooms, so that they may be accused. "He" refers to Duncan and one might ask if it would not be natural for a man who was just murdered to bleed. This could, perhaps, be the reason why Lady Macbeth's lines have been read as indication of her unfamiliarity with blood. Albert Tolman, for example, suggests that:

> the woman's heart of Lady Macbeth was all unprepared to behold the streaming life-blood of the kindly old king, pleading
> "trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off".[10]

[10] Albert H. Tolman, "Notes on Macbeth," *PMLA*, 11, n. 2 (1896), 218.

In a more recent reading of the scene, Alison Hobgood contends that "Lady Macbeth's transparent attempt to steel herself for the bloody task she must perform – 'I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal' – becomes no more than tough-talk in the face of her husband's already symptomatic response, a haunting hallucination, to fear".[11] Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason's analysis of the same line considers how "The Lady's euphemism here perhaps makes her horror at the sight of the bloody and incriminating daggers more evident".[12] These readings sometimes mention but often overlook the reference to an unusual way of shedding blood, namely to the corpse that, as will be explained, endows wounds with meaning in order to expose his slaughterer. Tolman, for example, does allude to the way that the body of the King pleads, which tacitly presents a consideration of how the wounded body is capable of making an emotional or legal plea, even if the verb is not directly employed in its judicial sense of advocating a cause.[13]

As in the case with recent editions of the play, critics acknowledge the existence of the ordeal but do not read the play taking it into account. In contrast, this chapter argues that Lady Macbeth could be

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[11] Allison Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014) 47.

[12] Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 182. For a recent analysis of the passage see also Sophie Read, "Puns, Serious Wordplay," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) loc. 2055 [Kindle books]: "Consider, for example, the peculiarly loaded quality of Lady Macbeth's grim punning as she frames the servants at the scene of her husband's crime. (...) The verb, 'guild,' activates the secondary sense of 'Guilt' – it's homophone 'gilt' the thin layer of gold, or a substance that looks like it, used to decorate or disguise a surface. What might seem like antanaclasis, if 'guild' and 'Guilt' sound close enough, or paronomasia if they don't, resolves itself as syllepsis. The two senses of 'Guilt' are operated in the instant that word is heard to generate a macabre joke: the royal blood with which the innocent grooms are gilded will mark them out as guilty of the crime".

[13] See Albert H. Tolman, "Notes on Macbeth," *PMLA*, 11, n. 2 (1896), 218. Allison Hobgood, *Passionate Playgoing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014) 47.

contemplating the possibility that the corpse will hold its murderer responsible, and that she attempts to find a solution, by gilding the faces of the grooms, to their predicament.

The ordeal was a popular narrative prop in Shakespeare's time and "a powerful stage-device"[14] that could propel the action forward, lead to the discovery of the guilty party or the punishment of whoever dared to defy the innocent in duel or battle. In the bier-right ordeal, the bier is "the movable stand on which a corpse, whether in a coffin or not, is placed before burial; that on which it is carried to the grave".[15] In this ancient mode of proof, it was assumed that the corpse would hold its murderer responsible, so the victim's body was put to the test. Thus, several suspects would take an oath testifying their innocence and then take turns visiting the body. When blood ran out of the victim's nose or wounds, the judges knew they faced the guilty party and they would formally accuse them. In this mode of proof, the idea that the human body is the place where the truth is hidden seems to be explicit, for it was thought that the guilty party's identity was encrypted in the victim's corpse, which would denounce him.[16] It was assumed, as in other

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[14] Malcolm Gaskill, "Reporting Murder in the Archives in Early Modern England," *Social History* (1999), 8. Popular interest in the judicial detection of the truth has been thoroughly documented by authors like Gaskill, who notes that crime stories were a popular source of entertainment under many forms (murder pamphlets and public reporting, among others).

[15] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. I, 1933 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961).

[16] Robert P. Brittain describes it as follows: "Cruentation (*cruentare*: to make bloody, to spot with blood), or the Ordeal of the Bier, was a test used to find a murderer. Of Germanic Origin, dating from the period after the overthrow of the Roman Empire, it continued until at least as late as the seventeenth century. (...). The usual procedure was as follows: the suspect was placed at a certain distance from the victim who had been laid naked on his back. He approached the body, repeatedly calling on it by name, then walked round it two or three times. He next lightly stroked the wounds with his hand. If during this time fresh bleeding occurred, or if the body moved, or if foam appeared at the mouth, the suspect was considered to be guilty of murder; if not, further evidence was sought. Sometimes, the whole local population was made to pass in front of the corpse. A positive result was

medieval ordeals, that God, who knew all, would interfere in the test and blame the guilty individual.[17] Keith Thomas, in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, notices how "contemporary scientists who believed in doctrines of sympathy and antipathy had no difficulty in accepting the validity of this procedure, and it is known to have been formally employed by judges and coroners on a number of occasions during the sixteenth and seventeenth century".[18] Descriptions of cruentation were, as Malcolm Gaskill clarifies, popular at the time and "a powerful stage-device".[19] In Shakespeare, the bier-right ordeal is alluded to, for example, in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *Julius Caesar*. Plays such as *Arden of Faversham* also mention it,[20] as do a number of popular pamphlets detailing murders and witness' testimonies. As in other ordeals, "Its main role seems to have been to deter potential murderer from committing the otherwise

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considered evidence of divine intervention". See Robert P. Brittain, "Cruentation in Legal Medicine and in Literature". *Medical History*, 1965, 82.

[17] The Catholic Church formally forbade the ordeal in 1215, following the deliberations of the Fourth Lateran Council (in which canon 18 dealt with the ordeal), enacted by Pope Innocent III. Nevertheless, this way of judging persisted, and modes of proof such as the cold, hot water and bier-right ordeal, were known in Shakespeare's time. Cf. John W. Baldwin, "The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 against Ordeals," *Speculum*, vol. 36, n.º 4, Oct. 1961, 613-636. Also, for a detailed discussion of the subject, *vide* Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986. Although, as George Lyman Kittredge notices, the importance of James I's *Demonology* has been exaggerated, use of the ordeal as a way of judging witches is proof of a way of thinking that, even if not legally applied as often as one would think, echoes common opinions of the period. Cf. George Lyman Kittredge, "English Witchcraft and James I," *Studies in the History of Religions*, ed. D. G. Lyon, George Foot, Moore. N.p.: BiblioBazaar, 2009, 1-66.

[18] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971) loc. 4423.

[19] Malcolm Gaskill, "Reporting Murder in the Archives in Early Modern England," *Social History*, 1999: 8.

[20] See *Arden of Faversham's* lines "The more I sound his name, the more he bleedes. / This bloode condemnes me, and in guishing foorth / Speakes as it falles, and asks me why I did it". For a description of cruentation in *Arden of Faversham* and *A Warning for Fair Woman* read Mary Floyd Wilson, *Occult Knowledge, Science and Gender in the Shakespearean Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chp. 2.

perfect crime for fear of being detected. The suspect's reluctance to undergo the ordeal might also be taken as proof of his guilt".[21]

Shakespeare's references to the ordeal in *Macbeth* differ from his use of other legal sources, as examined by Lorna Hutson in *The Invention of Suspicion*, a work which shows how dramatists like Shakespeare, who were raised in a humanist tradition, realized the importance of using "rhetorical techniques for evaluating probabilities and likelihoods in legal narratives".[22] In *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, Hutson focuses on *Macbeth*, explaining how "Shakespeare has structured the scene of Duncan's murder around a preoccupation with the possibility of being witnessed, and the anticipation of suspicions being aroused"[23], showing the influence of Latin comedy and forensic rhetoric in the play. Shakespeare's allusions to the ordeal in *Macbeth* also evoke his knowledge of medieval modes of proof and his willingness to use them dramaturgically.

The way in which critical commentaries on *Macbeth* acknowledge the ordeal in the play but do not read it with this judicial procedure in mind is perhaps due to the fact that neither Holinshed nor Shakespeare employ it in order to allow the narrative to unfold. Still, early modern belief in the efficacy of the ordeal and its depiction in *Macbeth* helps us to see how this mode of proof persisted as an affective mode haunting those who committed a crime, even at a time when its judicial value had lapsed. There would be no need to explain Lady Macbeth's allusion to the bier-right ordeal and to how it illustrates Duncan's accusation. Mentioning the ordeal would suffice for an audience familiar with the procedure to suspect,

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[21] Keith Thomas, *Ibid*, loc. 4423.

[22] Lorna Hutson, *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford University Press, 2007) 3.

[23] Lorna Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2015) 149.

rather than claim, what in fact has taken place.[24] Though *Macbeth* appears to be – and up to a point is – a play about passions such as fear and guilt,[25] there is a possibility that these are a consequence of divine punishment, and that the text wishes to confront the audience with the implications of murder (a reminder of the costs of the Gunpowder plot[26]).

Lady Macbeth's line "If he do bleed" echoes the way that Holinshed's *The Scottish Chronicle* leisurely provides an account of the usurper's actions to avoid being the incriminated by the bier-right ordeal, detailing Donwalde's decision to hide the body away from the castle, covering it with stones and gravel:

> (...) and immediatlie by a posterne gate they caried foorth the dead bodie into the fields, and throwing it upon a horsse there provided readie for that purpose, they convey it unto a place,

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[24] Critics have recently written on the question of proof in Shakespeare, but seem to ignore the ordeal. See Lorna Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2015). Subha Mukherji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt*, eds Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, J Schramm (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). John Kerrigan describes the importance of the ordeal in *Hamlet*, but does not refer to it in his chapter on *Macbeth,* which focuses on the knots and riddles of the play. John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2016) chp 12. Richard Strier's chapter on *Macbeth* considers "What is focused upon is the inability of the Macbeths to enjoy happy hierarchical sociability. Unlike Duncan, who seemed to enjoy life's pleasures," "The rest of the play concerns Macbeth's lack of all pleasures." In fact, their inability to enjoy life could be considered Duncan's curse, a revenge enacted by Duncan's ordeal. Richard Strier, *The Unrepentant Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011) 143-145.

[25] For context on early modern passions see Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body – Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004). See also the introduction to *Reading the Early Modern Passions – Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2006).

[26] Marjorie Garber argues that Macbeth is "a warning against tyranny". See Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers, Literature as Uncanny Causality* (NY: Routledge, 1987).

> about two miles distant from the castell, where they staied, and gat certeine labourers to helpe them to turne the course of a little river running through the fields there, and digging a deepe hole in the chanell, they burie the body in the same, ramming it up with stones and gravell so closelie, that setting the water in the right course againe, no man could perceive that anie thing had beene newlie digged there. This they did by order appointed them by Donwald as is reported, for that the bodie should not be found, & by bleeding (when Donwald should be present) declare him to be guiltie of the murther. For such an opinion men have, that the dead corps of anie man being slaine, will bleed abundantlie if the murtherer be present.[27]

This passage depicts the ordeal as a superstition, as Holinshed's comment "For such an opinion men have" cannot easily be understood as the description of a *bona fide* judicial procedure. Given the bier-right ordeal's claim that the corpse would hold its murderer responsible, it was considered that the body clearly enunciated a non-verbal accusation and that the corpse's proffered meaning was construed as unequivocal proof. The body, already altered by death, was transformed during the ordeal, and its blood would once more be spilt through its wounds. With no tongue, the murdered body's voice was silenced, but its blood language was endlessly stronger. While, for some, the medieval ordeal was a miracle, similar to that of the liquefaction of blood, for others it revealed a soul refusing to leaving its body until justice had been secured.[28] The corpse was devoid of cognitive abilities: God would have given the corpse the ability to bleed, making it the most accurate testimony one could find,

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[27] Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. VII, 1973 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 482-483.

[28] Cf. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (White Fish: Kessinger Publishing, vol. 18, 2003), 511.

for a body without cognition, and thus choice or ruse, was unable to lie. The meaning of the bodily signs was deemed incontrovertible. The criteria for the application of the ordeal assumed that it was willed by divine intervention, that there was no role for human interpretation in it. There was no uncertainty; the ordeal as a way of judging presumes that all involved understood it, "that it was a way of obtaining a verdict in particularly intractable cases",[29] not requiring further justification.

Holinshed's portrayal of the ordeal, however, shows that even though people seemed to assume that this mode of proof was objective and devoid of emotion, it often relied on the guilty party's fear, which led him to try and conceal his actions and, at times, to accuse himself in the process. In *The Chronicle*, the ordeal is presented as a proof that all would recognise, which explains why Donwalde fears it and tries to prevent it, ordering the four servants he sent to murder the King, Duffe, to conceal the body outside the castle so that it may not bleed. Donwalde's fear of the ordeal was not unusual. According to Theodore Plucknett, the incorporation of the medieval ordeal in Christian ceremonies heightened the moral efficacy of the test and its practical value as a psychological truth test.[30] One of the purposes of the ordeal ritual was to appeal to the conscience of the guilty person, eliciting from him a confession before the trial took place.[31] A significant part of the examination relied, therefore, on the fact that the suspect knew that he or she could be put to the test, as it seems to be the case in Holinshed.

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[29] Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 37.

[30] Cf. Theodore Plucknett, *A Concise History of the Common Law,* 1929 (London: Butterworth & Co., 1948).

[31] For a discussion of the medieval ordeal, the role of the jury and reasonable doubt see: James Q. Whitman, *The Origins of Reasonable Doubt: Theological Roots of the Criminal Trial* (New Hands: Yale Univ. Press, 2008).

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare expands Holinshed's reference to the ordeal into a series of subtle allusions which an early modern audience would understand and fear. Mentioning a cadaver which bleeds excessively would, for those familiar with the procedure, be enough to make them anticipate the play's tragic ending. Shakespeare's two substantial alterations to Holinshed's passage ensure such knowledge. These revisions include, first, the removal of the servants' scene and of their efforts to hide the body, so that Macbeth does not ask for help, murdering the King himself and leaving the body for all to see. And, secondly, Shakespeare erases all explanatory references to the ordeal and mutes them, as will be seen, into mere allusions. As it would happen in a classical tragedy, Duncan's body is left off-stage, out of the audience's sight, but the Macbeths repeatedly allude to it.

The figure of Lady Macbeth appears, in Shakespeare's play, to share her husband's blame and sense of guilt. Moreover, Lady Macbeth seems to share Donwalde's contradictory beliefs about the ordeal. They both assume that Divine Judgment may come to pass, which leads them to take measures to conceal the body (in Donwalde's case) or to profit from it, ensnaring someone else, by gilding the grooms with Duncan's blood to make them look guilty. Both characters, Donwalde and Lady Macbeth, seem to think that Divine Judgment is a way of discovering the truth, but one which may nonetheless be averted and manipulated. The third Arden edition analyses Lady Macbeth's advice to Macbeth – "And wash this filthy witness from your hand" (II, ii, 48) – by suggesting that "The Lady's euphemism here perhaps makes her horror at the sight of the bloody and incriminating daggers more evident".[32] However, it could be considered that it is her belief in the ordeal which

[32] Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2015) 182.

leads Lady Macbeth to counsel her husband. Notice how "filthy" is both being applied to murder and to the possibility that the act is discovered through the use of proof, of a glaring "witness" which needs not be interpreted. Blood on Macbeth's hands has the ability to speak, the testimony it provides is beyond question.

Murder has just been committed and, at this point, Lady Macbeth is trying to calm Macbeth down – "These deeds must not be thought after these ways; / so, it will make as mad" (II, ii, 36-37) – while also considering the practical consequences of the murder. The scene takes place off stage, so one would suppose there would be no way of knowing whether Duncan's body had, in fact, accused her. It should not be forgotten, however, that at the end of the play Lady Macbeth, already delusional, will comment: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" (V, i, 37-38). The King, therefore, shed too much blood because he had been murdered and was determined to accuse his killers, a possibility reinforced when we recall Macbeth's reference to the "secret'st man of blood" (III, iv, 125).

One of the points of interest in the corpse as an object of analysis is the fact that the mind/body distinction does not seem to work: the cadaver does not accuse its killer based on a process of mental recognition. While, for some, the medieval ordeal is a miracle, similar to that of the liquefaction of blood, for others it illustrates a soul in refusal of leaving its body until justice has been done.[33] It was, nevertheless, essential to consider the corpse devoid of cognitive abilities: it was an intentional object manipulated by God so that justice could take place. God endowed the body with the ability to bleed, making it the most truthful testimony one could find, for a body without cognition is unable to lie. In the case of the corpse,

[33] Cf. James Hastings, John A. Selbie, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (White Fish: Kessinger Publishing, vol. 18) 2003, 511.

one does not contemplate the possibility of enunciation, the wounds being the substitute for the tongue; indeed, the substitution of wound for mouth can also be traced in *Macbeth's* "twenty mortal murders," even if, as Marjorie Garber notices, "The trope of wounds as speaking mouths was common in the poetry of the period".[34]

The discussion of inanimate bodies being capable of providing truthful testimonies draws on cases of torture in Ancient Greece. Although I will not dwell upon it, it is relevant to briefly contrast the importance of this truthful, but unintelligent, cadaver, with the Greek conception about slaves' testimonies. In *Torture and Truth*, Page duBois, quoting from a variety of texts, both literary and political, from the tragedies to Aristotle's *Politics*, explains how the evidence provided by slaves was only accepted when given under torture, as "In the Greek legal system, torture of slaves figured as a guarantor of truth, as a process of truth-making"[35].

DuBois describes how slaves' testimony would not be heard in court, as only the written statement produced under torture could be shown as evidence. Therefore, those wishing to obtain the slave's testimony would write down the questions, which the torturer would ask (parties had also to agree to pay the slave owner if permanent damage was inflicted on his servant). One of the reasons given for this procedure was the fact that slaves, when not under torture, could be afraid to tell anything contrary to their master's wishes. The point of interest here, however, is the notion that slaves' testimony differed from other types of evidence, in the sense that it was considered more valuable and trustworthy than other witnesses':

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[34] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (NY: Anchor Books, 2005) loc. 3503.

[35] Page duBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1991) 47.

> The *basanos* assumes first that the slave always lies, then that torture makes him or her always tell the truth, then that the truth produced through torture will always expose the truth or falsehood of the free man's evidence.[36]

Basanos (βάσανος), the Greek word for test and torture (a multivalent term to which I will later return), suggests the ability to make the slave speak the truth without failing. The reason why it is presumed that the slave always lies is due to the fact that "Free citizen men will be deceived by clever arguments; slaves by nature will not be misled because they think with their bodies. Slaves are bodies; citizens possess *logos*, reason"[37]. So, while the master possesses *logos*, which makes him capable of reasoning in court, and of distinguishing truth from falsehood, thus understanding the consequences of lying, the slave is unable to anticipate rationally the repercussions of falsehood. Following Aristotle's *Politics,* DuBois explains how the slave:

> Unlike an animal, a being that possesses only feelings, and therefore can neither apprehend reason, logos, nor speak, *legein*, the slave can testify when his body is tortured because he recognizes reason without possessing it himself.[38]

In the slave's case, we encounter a body without cognition, but one which recognizes reason; a body which always lies, unless under torture, when it always tells the truth. It should be questioned, however, whether telling the truth under torture was a physical

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[36] *Ibidem*, 36.

[37] *Ibidem*, 52.

[38] *Ibidem*, 66.

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

In contrast to what happens during the ordeal, the slave's wounds were not subject to analysis, the body being merely a vessel for the testimony to appear. God was absent from the proof, as it was not assumed that it was He who endowed the body with the ability to be truthful.[39] Torturing the slave gives origin not to self-evident proof but to the irrevocable truth itself

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[39] I would parenthetically add that this mode of proof subsists today in our structure of beliefs. The beginning of forensic science may be related with the ancient certainty that the truth about the crime is inscribed in the victim's body. For example, Esther Cohen maintains that the bier-right ordeal entered directly in the judicial system at the time the ordeal was abolished by the Catholic Church. When torture was reintroduced as a procedure in the Italian and French judicial systems the orders to initiate it had to be preceded by previous indications of guilt, such as blood in the cadaver's body. Nowadays, the murdered corpse is simultaneously seen as an intentional object (a responsibility belonging to the author of the crime) and as a testimony of events. It is assumed, in the tradition of the ordeal, that the analysis of the corpse will be factual and that the significance attributed to any interpretation of it is limited. One of the corpse's qualities as a factual object may be that it seems more authentic than other living beings, for it cannot be intentionally false (even if the possibility that others may manipulate it should be considered). Death seems to solidify, even if only for a short period of time, a group of facts left at the investigator's disposal, and the corpse's bodily signs are considered true, because the subject may no longer control them, and fabricate them if he will. From this perspective, forensic science helps us distinguish false corpses (belonging to those who wrote false suicide letters or attempted to fabricate their death) and forgers (those who manipulate the victim's corpse so that it does not incriminate its killer). Although there are considerable differences between the interpretation of the cadaver in the medieval ordeal and modern forensic science, it should be noted that in both cases the corpse is the example of an entity that can only be properly understood by a skilled observer (in the medieval ordeal there was a jury appointed to make sure that procedures followed the rules, nowadays police and judicial experts analyse corpses). Cf. Cohen, Esther, *The Crossroads of Justice – Law and Culture in Late Medieval France* (Boston: BRILL, 1992). Lisa Silverman, *Tortured*

which, when heard in court, will enable a verdict. Torture is not a form of punishment, but a way to extract the truth from a body possessing knowledge that might not be recognized by its owner. In most ordeals, guilty subjects knew the reasons for their accusation (and the probability of being discovered by the proof). The body of the murdered victim in the bier-right proof was acquainted with the identity of his assassin. But torturing the slave stemmed from the assumption that they might have seen or heard things which they did not recognize as being important, or did not consciously remember.

This is not intended to contrast the Greek judicial system, or its particular notion of the body, with the medieval concept of justice, or even with the Elizabethans' conception of either the body or justice. It is, however, relevant to point out how such different civilizations contemplate, first, the notion of a body knowing more than the subject to whom it belongs, and, secondly, the idea of a body without cognition, but which is a vessel for the truth; and thirdly, how the tested body may not be the one who was accused. Notice how in the medieval ordeal, especially in battle, ordeals, duels, or when the accused was a member of the gentry, it was common practice for the suspect to ask a retainer to submit to the ordeal on his behalf. This represents an interesting alternative to the concept of bodily proof: since the body under scrutiny was not the suspect's body, then its physiological reactions should not be the element that determined the proof. In some cases, we may think of the retainer as the person the suspect confided in, which means that the retainer would also have to know the truth, and, thus, that their body could elicit the required proof. However, often a champion was called upon, and it was unlikely that he knew what

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Subjects – Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001).

had really happened. This meant that the body presented to God need not be the body of the accused.

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

In fact, the omens which are brought forth by a body, and which Macbeth will describe in the third act as a mere possibility, are but a redefinition of Lennox's comments, in the second act, immediately before the revelation of the murder:

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

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

Here, these lines reveal Macbeth to be in a frenzy of assassination, suggesting how more murder will inevitably follow. The passage also represents the horrid circumstances that accompany such a crime, further indicating that the usual course of events has been disrupted. The secrecy of the assassination is contested by the physical signs surrounding the crime, the unusual behaviour of which, instead of hiding events, underlines them (something that, as was seen, occurs frequently in *Macbeth*).[40] Despite the similarity between these lines, Macbeth transforms Lennox's impressions. Notice how he describes stones moving, while in Lennox we witness blown-down chimneys and trees speaking: "lamentings heard i'th'air" and "screams of death". Lennox's portrayal of how the "the earth / Was feverous, and did shake" recalls the appearance of the Witches in Act I, and Banquo's comment "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, / And these are of them" (I, iii, 77-78). Moreover, Macbeth's speaking trees anticipate the branches of Birnham Wood and Malcolm's plan, whereas the 'prophesying' of the 'obscure bird,' usually considered to be an owl, could stand for either the magpie, an imitator of the human speech, or the chough, both of which presage ill omens. This reference anticipates the owl that Lady Macbeth later hears and

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

her attribution of the shriek to Duncan's death: "It was the owl that shrieked (...) He is about it" (II, ii, 3). A shriek which, as Ross will later describe it, characterizes a Scotland ruled by the Macbeths: "Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air / Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems a modern ecstasy" (IV, iii, 170-172). The same shriek that anticipates Lady Macbeth's death, seems to appear at a time when Macbeth is familiar with the things that had previously frightened him: "I have almost forgot the taste of fears; / The time has been, my senses would have cooled / To hear a night-shriek and my fell of hair" (V, v, ii, 9-11).

Two things are exteriorized in the Macbeth's passage. First, following Clarendon and Wilson's interpretation, as the Arden edition does, I assume that the possibility that the stones are the objects covering the body, which would mean that their displacement would allow the corpse to be uncovered and, thus, made visible, a thought reinforced by the other elements in the passage, all of which move or vocalize, leading to the crime. At the same time, moving stones were already in Macbeth's mind before the crime takes place, a vision as fatal as the dagger of the mind, moving stones which would speak to accuse and betray him: "thy very stones prate of my whereabout, / And take the present horror from the time, / Which now suits with it" (II, ii, 58-60). Secondly, blood emerges from the corpse in a clear accusation, as if the movement of all the other elements had the singular purpose of producing unequivocal proof and of disclosing the assassination. The fear of being discovered is accentuated by the notion that Macbeth's will of power is impotent before these uncontrollable forces. To the Macbeths, Nature acquires the shape and colours of the bier-right ordeal: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand? No: this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red" (II, ii, 64-66). Macbeth's hand is responsible for staining the sea. According to *The OED*

this is the first reference to the word 'incardine,' as if Shakespeare coined the term so as to literalize the idea of blood-letting in the ordeal, i.e. a flesh (carnal) which colours everything red.

While Lennox's thoughts are put to an end by the idea that such unnatural behaviour among the elements even made the earth tremble, which offers a political metaphor for a Kingdom which has found its ending, Macbeth conjures up the man of blood. He is, therefore, transforming Lennox's lines concerning an unruly night into an account of what took place, and we now understand how these entities have, indeed, brought forth the man of blood, as Duncan was assassinated and bled to accuse his murderers.

It should not be overlooked that, in the fourth scene of the third act, Macbeth, who has just killed Banquo, appears to be in good humour, when he enters the banquet room: "Now good digestion wait on appetite, / and health on both!" (III, iv, 37). Subsequently, it is Lennox's appearance, and his remark, "May it please your Highness sit?" (III, iv, 39) that brings to mind past assassinations, and makes Banquo's ghost occupy Macbeth's seat. It is only upon seeing Lennox that Macbeth's humour alters, believing that the table is full, and that he begins trembling when Lennox directs him to his seat. This is also the reason why Macbeth believes that one of the Lords is responsible for the Ghost's apparition. None of them is, obviously, blameable for Macbeth's guilty conscience but Lennox's presence is disruptive to such an extent that triggers his inner horrors (namely the fear of being caught for his first crime) and compels him to remember Lennox's words, spoken on the morning of Duncan's assassination.

The scene takes place after Macbeth notices the Ghost, a sight which makes the King nostalgically ponder how "the time has been, / That, when the brains were out, the man would die, / And there an end" (III, iv, 77-79). Now, however, men die and

"they rise again, / With twenty mortal murders on their crowns, / And push us from our stools." (III, iv, 79-81). Shakespeare's passage is clear, as it reminds Macbeth of a time, which most likely occurred in battle, when men would find definite death, in the sense of a justified ending that would not return to haunt them.

Other innocent bleeding bodies are mentioned in the play. In *Macbeth's* opening act Duncan questions: "What bloody man is that?" (I, ii, 1). This line represents, as the editors of the Arden edition put it, "the introduction of what is to become a leitmotif throughout the play, in which 'blood' and related terms are mentioned more than in any other of Shakespeare's plays".[41] However, 'bloody' also denotes, according to the *OED*, "a person or animal: addicted to bloodshed, bloodthirsty; cruel,"[42] which is an accurate depiction of Macbeth's later behaviour. Perhaps more importantly, Duncan's question about the bloody man states the problem the play so elaborately alludes to, as it proleptically refers to Duncan's corpse and to the way it will bleed in a judicial mode of proof that takes place in secrecy. The possibility that the King shed too much blood because he had been murdered and was instrumental in accusing his killers, is reinforced when we recall Macbeth's reference to "The secret'st man of blood" (III, iv, 124). Such a reiteration of the imagery of the ordeal is also visible, for example, in the Captain from the first act, whose "gashes cry for help" (I, ii, 42).

Unlike the Captain's innocent bleeding body, the appearance of the Ghost in the third act reinforces the King's assassination, making Macbeth fear the double consequences of such murders,

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[41] Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2015) 130.

[42] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

and not only his most recent one, as it is the memory of the first crime which still provokes sleeplessness, as well as the disorder of "natural events". Macbeth is, thus, afraid of these unjustified murders which return to accuse him, an expression related with the first quotation about a secret made public by "the secret'st man," which uncovers himself to make Macbeth leave his royal stool. Such a man is dangerous in the sense that it exposes simultaneously the crime and its murderer in a public way that will be understood by all. It is unclear whether Macbeth is regretting the assassination or if he rather fears the forms of evidence of the accusation he is now being confronted with, thus bringing to our minds the lines: "I'll go no more: / I am afraid to think what I have done; / Look on't again I dare not" (II, ii, 49-51).

It may not be doubted that Macbeth and his wife worry they will be exposed through the use of a proof so unyielding as the presented by the ordeal, still, such fear does not represent solely the possibility of being discovered. Self-evident proof is not only recognizable by other people; its clarity accuses Lady Macbeth, bringing her true nature to light. Later in the play, we discover that Lady Macbeth has had a change of heart. In the fifth act, she no longer thinks that Divine Judgment may be deceived. From this perspective, when, already mad, she claims "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" (V, i, 37-38) she is alluding to the corpse's untimely way of shedding blood in order to accuse its murderers.

Duncan's corpse seems to possess the capacity to be equally perceived by all observing it, but, more importantly, of letting its killers know things about themselves that they would prefer to ignore. "Here lay Duncan, / His silver skin laced with his golden blood / And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature, / For ruin's wasteful entrance" (II, iii, 112-115). These lines portray Duncan's purity as a jewel against its foil, his silver skin and golden blood,

the stabs looking like a breach in nature.[43] The same image is repeated in act three, when Banquo's murderers put Macbeth's fears to rest, letting him know that Banquo is lying dead "With twenty trenched gashes on his head" (III, iv, 27). Duncan and Banquo's "gashes" are both a sign and cause of their murdered bodies and the speaking wounds that accuse the Macbeths like a "breach of nature," leading them to experience an ordeal of the mind or an emotional ordeal. From the moment Duncan was murdered, his corpse encloses the truth about the couple's character; it describes them in a way they would both prefer to disregard, but know to be truthful. The problem with this type of proof, for Macbeth and his wife, is that there is no end to it, it may not be refuted, redescribed or, as will be seen, ignored.

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[43] Cleanth Brooks noted how eighteenth-century editors often emended "breach" to "reech'd," "drench'd" or "hatch'd," but did not further his thoughts on the topic. Recently, Hannibal Hamlim furthered Brooks' intuition, and associated the word "with the 'breeching' of male children, when they were put into pants for the first time, thus marking their transition from (neuter) child to man". Hamlim rightfully mentions how the word is also used "to refer to the daggers of the attendants as 'Unmannerly breeched with gore'" (2.3.109). Paul Raffield suggests that "breach" may be read in its judicial sense, relating the expression "a breach in nature" with Edward Coke's speeches, in which the same metaphor occurs. Critical editions have considered the underlying image of the "breach in nature" a number of things. The Cambridge edition sees as "an opening or break ('breach') in a shore or dike, letting in ruinous (sea)water, or of attacking troops breaking into a castle or walled city". It also sees it at a representation of "Duncan's body as a devastated landscape, as Macbeth's violated castle, and as the violated bonds of loyalty and hospitality. The OED helps to clarify the term's meaning, as it describes "breach" as " **a.** *fig.* The breaking of a command, rule, engagement, duty, or of any legal or moral bond or obligation; violation, infraction: common in such phrases as *breach of contract*, *breach of covenant*, *breach of faith*, *breach of promise*, *breach of trust"*. This meaning would make sense in Shakespeare's play, in which the Macbeths seem to have simultaneously violated a contract (with his King) and broken the promise of protecting him, consequently violating his trust. See Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1975), p.30. Hannibal Hamlim, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.225. Paul Raffield, "Princes Set Upon Stages: Macbeth, Treason and Theatre of Law," *The Art of Law in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2017), p.67-117. A. R. Braunmuller, ed., Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) 155.

These passages show the centrality of the bier-right ordeal in *Macbeth* and the way Shakespeare refracted Holinshed's detailed description through a series of allusions to the bleeding corpse and to blood as a witness. Such references to this mode of proof create a link between Duncan's murdered body as testimony, its bleeding, and the auguries as the King's accusatorial corpse keeps reminding Macbeth and his wife of the murder, something that the couple repeatedly attempts, but inevitably fails to ignore. These subtle but pervasive references to the ordeal explore its ability to affect the guilty party's consciences. The Macbeth's seem to have internalised the historically superseded ordeal's surviving intimation – the idea that a Divine form of trial will end up, sooner or later, catching those who are guilty – a torturing belief which distinguishes them from other characters.

Hamlet's Mousetrap

> If circumstances lead me I will find
> Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
> Within the centre.
>
> (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 154-156)

> Construct, then, a mousetrap that will catch a sublimer evidence.
>
> Geoffrey Hartman, *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays,* 1975.

Hamlet illustrates the conviction that there is a truth to be tested inside the human body. In the third act, the Prince of Denmark

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

Hamlet's performance does not appear in the main sources for the play, Saxo Grammaticus's book, *Historiae Danicae*, which it is unlikely that Shakespeare read, but which did influence the principal source, Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*. Additionally, there are several references to a play, which critics named *Ur-Hamlet*, which is now lost, but which is presumed to be the basis for *Hamlet*, and there is, of course, much debate about the relationship between Shakespeare's play and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. *The Murder of Gonzago* appears in both the first and second quarto editions of the play, and Geoffrey Bullough, in his study of the play's narrative sources, argues that it contains elements of a description of the murder of Francesco Maria I, Duke of Urbino, as well as allusions to the War of the Theatres. The player's speech would be influenced by Seneca's *Troades* and *Agamemnon*, while the idea of a murderer who betrays himself during a play may have been inspired by

Warning for the Faire Women (1599), which Shakespeare's company had recently performed.[44]

Hamlet needs to "catch the conscience of the King" and assumes Claudius will not be able to hide the truth before the theatrical representation of his own deed:

> Hum, I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaimed their malefactions.
> For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
> Play something like the murder of my father
> Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
> I'll tent him to the quick. If' a do blench
> I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
> May be a de'il, and the de'il hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps,
> Out of mine weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me! I'll have grounds
> More relative than this. The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.
> (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 523-540)

An analysis of Claudius's features would allow access to the hidden contents of his mind, the face being the place where private

[44] See G Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978). See Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare's Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) loc. 1393-2168.

emotions are made public. If the King reacts to the re-enactment of the crime, Hamlet's doubts as to the authenticity of the Ghost will vanish and he will be certain that Claudius is guilty. The test is twofold, as it is intended to verify the Ghost's words, confirming that they are not the action of the Devil, and to test Claudius's actions.[45] As Bruce Danner clarifies, "For *The Mousetrap* to fulfil Hamlet's intent, it must capture Claudius in the uncanny experience of being 'inside' the fiction even as he sits outside it, and thus provoke a reaction far beyond mere aesthetic involvement".[46] In Hamlet's pragmatic resolution of the problem of other minds, the expression "If' a do blench / I know my course" has a double meaning, as it refers to the sign of Claudius's guilt and the course of action Hamlet will have to pursue once he discovers the perpetrator of the assassination.

In the quoted passage, Hamlet seems to be looking for a way to devise his own ordeal, the meaning of which will be unequivocal and which will allow him to condemn the King irrevocably. Hamlet is looking for the type of proof that the Macbeths feared and wished

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[45] Regarding Hamlet's test to the Ghost see: Miriam Joseph, 'Discerning the Ghost in Hamlet,' *PMLA*, vol. 76, n.º5, Dec. 1961, 493-502. Joseph holds the view that several witnesses test the Ghost according to the theory of the discernment of spirits. Hamlet believes in the Ghost the first time he sees him, but he naturally doubts his conviction after he has had time to think. Therefore, he seeks "evidence more reliable than his initial spontaneous conviction" (497). Hamlet's doubts are reasonable and his test, as well as the way he asks for Horatio's help, serves the necessity to double-check the Ghost. Jonathan Sawday, in *The Body Emblazoned*, explains how Hamlet "must test (again and again) the untrustworthy data he has received. In a series of experiments, whose hypothesis is provided by the Ghost, whose subjects are the court of Claudius, and whose methodology is a patchwork of mime, performance and word-play, Hamlet endeavours (fruitlessly) to establish the relationship between cause and event". Cf. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996) 93. Stephen Greenblatt, in the classical work, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, relates "the Ghost charge to revenge and to remember" with the test Hamlet devises in order to establish the veracity of the Ghost. Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 1238.

[46] Bruce Danner, "Speaking Daggers," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 54, n.º1, Spring 2003, 55.

they were able to ignore. Hamlet's test is twofold, as it aims to verify the Ghost's words, confirming that they are not the action of the Devil, and to test Claudius's actions.[47] Reading *Hamlet* in the light of a judicial procedure such as the ordeal helps to further the idea that the reaction that the Prince of Denmark is looking for exceeds aesthetic involvement. Hamlet seems to be hoping that *The Mouse Trap*, as happened with Duncan's corpse, will bring otherwise unseen truths to light.

If we consider the possibility that the expression is being used in a judicial sense, we realize "If a do blench / I know my course" (2.2.593-94) has a double meaning, as it refers to the sign of Claudius's guilt and the course of action Hamlet will have to pursue once he discovers the perpetrator of the assassination. However, 'course' could also stand for corpse, which means that Hamlet would finally be able to understand what happened with his father's body. 'Blench,' as the *OED* clarifies, means "[t]o start aside, so as to elude anything; to swerve, 'shy'; to flinch, shrink, give way."[48] Furthermore, the possibility of an association between 'blench' and 'turn pale'

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[47] Regarding Hamlet's test to the Ghost see: Miriam Joseph, "Discerning the Ghost in Hamlet," *PMLA*, vol. 76, n.º 5, Dec. 1961, pp. 493-502. Joseph holds the view that several witnesses test the Ghost according to the theory of the discernment of spirits. Hamlet believes in the Ghost the first time he sees him, but he naturally doubts his conviction after he has has had time to think. Therefore, he seeks "evidence more reliable than his initial spontaneous conviction" (497). Hamlet's doubts are reasonable and his test, as well as the way he asks for Horatio's help, serves the necessity to double-check the Ghost. Jonathan Sawday, in *The Body Emblazoned*, explains how Hamlet "must test (again and again) the untrustworthy data he has received. In a series of experiments, whose hypothesis is provided by the Ghost, whose subjects are the court of Claudius, and whose methodology is a patchwork of mime, performance and word-play, Hamlet endeavours (fruitlessly) to establish the relationship between cause and event". Cf. Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1996) 93. Stephen Greenblatt, in the classical work, *Hamlet in Purgatory*, relates "the Ghost charge to revenge and to remember" with the test Hamlet devises in order to establish the veracity of the Ghost. Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 1238.

[48] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961.

deserves attention. Arguments against this connection may be found in the *OED*, which argues that 'to blench' only acquired the meaning of 'to become pale' in 1813. Indeed, the Dover Wilson edition of the play follows the *OED* and considers "blench not 'turn pale' but 'flinch,' i.e. from the 'tenting' (= probing). Often used of the eye."[49] Similarly, the New Oxford Shakespeare glosses 'blench' as 'flinch', something which, to judge from the Concordance, Shakespeare's pattern of usage would support. Arguments in favour of relating 'to blench' and 'to turn pale' may be found in the *Middle English Compendium,* sense 5b, which considers 'blench' "of a person, one's complexion: to turn pale." However, the etymology does not seem to be straightforward: "OE blencan deceive (rare) & ON; cp. OI blekkja delude (rare). MnEhas both blench & blink". Furthermore, to blench is intransitive; to blanch is transitive (to make something or someone grow white). In Shakespearean criticism, it was Harold Jenkins who first argued in favour of the association between these terms, claiming 'blench' could have slipped orally into 'blanch'. Jenkins quotes from Q1 and *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*:

> But BB has 'wo er sich entfarbt oder alterirt,' 'if he turn pale or change colour,' which, save that it puts the condition affirmatively, exactly corresponds to Q1 'If he doe not bleach, and change.' Q1 appears to derive its word bleach from a recollection, and perhaps a misunderstanding, of an earlier passage, in which Hamlet says 'if a do blench' (II, ii, 115-16).[50]

For Jenkins, to turn pale or change colour could result from a travelling version of the play, perhaps in debt to Q1.

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[49] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, 1934 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 189.

[50] Harold Jenkins, "Introduction," William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 118.

As Patricia Parker argues, "given that 'blench' itself was scarcely fixed in the single meaning of swerve, flinch or turn aside but could substitute for blanching or bleaching, or that a blancher was one who flinched or turned aside as well as one who bleached or whitened – we need to find an approach different from the traditional assumption of error or mistake," as "the boundaries between blench and blanch, in other words, were easily elided"[51].

By understanding the etymology of 'blench,' and by considering the close homophonic relationship between the two words, it is possible to understand how some members of Shakespeare's early audiences might have allowed 'blench' to slip aurally into 'blanch'[52]. This idea may be furthered if we consider how, at the end of the play, Hamlet's final words, in which he speaks directly to the audience, also relate paleness and theatre: "You that look pale, and tremble at this chance, / That are but mutes or audience to this act" (V, ii, 318-319). In these lines, both meanings, 'to flinch' (tremble) and 'to look pale' coexist, as the effects of theatre on guilty consciences are associated with the paleness of their faces.

The possibility that Hamlet wishes to turn Claudius pale, trying his best to devise *The Mousetrap* as a blood-letting ordeal, is reinforced by the multiple allusions to 'pale' in the play. Unlike what happens in *Macbeth*, in which allusions to blood proliferate, in *Hamlet* the reverse may be found. This could point to the way that Hamlet is imagining Claudius acquiring, as a consequence of his guilt, the white face of his murdered brother, the Ghost. Symmetries between murderer and murdered person are, after all, part of the

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[51] Patricia Parker, "Black Hamlet: Battening on the Moor," *Shakespeare Studies*, 7 ed. Leeds Barroll, Susan Zimmerman, vol. 31., 2003, 142.

[52] In *Hamlet*, the Player Queen replies to her husband's remark "So think thou wilt no second husband wed, / But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead" (III, ii, 195-196), explaining how "If once a widow, ever I be wife," as "Each opposite that blanks the face of joy." Blank coming from blanche, to make pale.

revenge plot.[53] The need to startle Claudius so that his physical reaction can be perceived by both Hamlet and Horatio leads to the re-enactment of murder which has the purpose of draining blood from Claudius' face.

What the Macbeths wish to hide, i.e. the blood which pours from Duncan's body, Hamlet longs to reveal, thus being able to make

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[53] Descriptions of paleness in *Hamlet* abound. For example, Ophelia misunderstands Hamlet's words, despite the fact that her description of his looks is the most accurate in the play: "Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport/ As if he had been loosed out of hell. /To speak of horrors" (*Hamlet*, II, I, 81-84). Ophelia's remarks describe not only Hamlet's looks, but also the reflection of his own father in his figure. In Hamlet's features, Ophelia describes King Hamlet, temporarily freed from Hell, speaking about his own murder. Polonius ignored her intuition and she was unaware of the context that would allow her to interpret it correctly, which is tragic. Only Horatio and Hamlet are able to understand Ophelia's remarks, as they mime the conversation between both friends, at the time Horatio depicted his encounter with the Ghost:

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

This would be the interpretative key for Ophelia's observation. The Ghost's face was, like Hamlet's, "very pale" and he had his eyes fixed upon Horatio, just like Hamlet, miming ['mimicking'] his father's behavior, laid his eyes upon Ophelia. Hamlet's 'piteous looks' expose a sore mind in his distorted figure, but also his sadness, just like the Ghost's, with a face showing more sorrow than anger. If Hamlet's behavior is reproducing his father's, then he too wishes to speak about the horrors that have taken place. However, the Ghost could not say anything to Horatio as Hamlet was also unable to speak with Ophelia. Hamlet's paleness also replicates Horatio's, when he saw the Ghost for the first time: "How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale" (I, I, 56). And Ophelia's reaction to Hamlet's piteous looks seems to equal Barnardo's and Marcellus's response after seeing the Ghost. They had "Almost to jelly with the act of fear, \ Stand dumb and speak not to him." (I, ii, 205- 206)," and Ophelia seems to quietly let Hamlet survey her looks ("As a would draw it," II, I, 91), not speaking with him and doing nothing else. Hamlet's exterior seems to give the reader an explanation about what is happening with him: his looks help to reinforce the vision of the Ghost, when they underline the paleness that derives from it and show that what could have been considered sadness after the death of his father may not now be explained.

Claudius's face loose his colour. From this viewpoint, the parallelism between "If a do blench" and "If he do bleed" is striking: it consists on the similar relative position of each word in a line, with *Hamlet*'s "blench" being later substituted for "bleed" in *Macbeth*.

For Hamlet to unveil Claudius's guilt, it is necessary to be particularly careful with what is selected to be performed. This explains his advice to actors about the best way to enunciate each word, as well as his description about the dangers of overacting. Hamlet's zeal is similar to that of a theatre play director who desires to thrill the audience, but it also reminds us of formal judicial procedures through which a criminal's guilt is uncovered. In this sense, Hamlet's mode of proof may be compared to a technical truth test such as that effected by torture or the ordeal.

The practice of introducing a certain mode of proof before its execution is not recent, and it is one of the aspects relating torture with other methods used to ascertain the truth. In order to distinguish between legal traditions, it is important to point out that in *Traité de la justice criminelle* (1771), a relevant judicial French manual, Daniel Jousse advises interrogators to precede the question, or torture, with an exhortation made to the suspects about the importance of telling the truth. The same author refers to how sometimes the *Parlement* controlled the use of torture with the *retentum*, an instruction demanding the description of the torture's procedures to the accused, with the instruments in view to obtain a confession. As Lisa Silverman argues, in these cases it was required "that the question be 'presented' rather than performed, so that the accused be prepared in every way for torture but that the torture not be physically performed".[54] Similarly, John Langbein shows how, in early modern England, a

[54] Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects – Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 75.

number of earlier warrants authorise only the threat of torture and mentions the importance of a series of cases in which the screws – a common torture device, used to crush the suspected fingers – were not actually turned. Pain would follow if the suspect were not persuaded by this anticipation of torture.[55]

There are similarities between the medieval ordeal ritual and torture procedures since the legislation of torture follows the conventions of the medieval ordeal. As previously mentioned, one of the purposes of the ordeal ritual was to appeal to the conscience of the guilty person, making him confess before the proof took place. Thus, both the presentation of torture objects before the procedures begin and the ritual which takes place before the ordeal represent analogous efforts to contextualize the proof, as well as attempts to coerce the accused.[56] Different judicial traditions and historical periods coerce the suspect before interrogation takes place. In modern times, the pre-test interview and the presentation of the polygraph to the suspect before the test takes place seem to be a modern version of the medieval ordeal. At the same time, torturers in Greece during the 1980's, in Portugal during Salazar's dictatorship, and in Brazil, used to show torture instruments to the accused before the examination took place. This appears to be an effective form of coercing suspects, and one that may be empirically learned by those responsible for the interrogations. The examples given portray situations going from the medieval ordeal, to the usual methods of torture and interrogation, which merely has the purpose of showing how different procedures may share assumptions common to those who find themselves in the position of having to put suspects to the test.

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[55] John Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof – Europe and England in the Ancien Regime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 84.

[56] See Darius Rejalis, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

If Hamlet's play can be compared to a physiological exam with the purpose of inducing a nervous reaction in the suspect, the dumb show would equal such a pre-test in that its purpose was to prepare Claudius for what would follow, as well as to exacerbate his emotional response. It makes sense to think that Hamlet would want to evaluate Claudius's behaviour before and after the test takes place, to persuade him that he would find the truth, and to appeal to his conscience (which, as Claudius's confession proves to the audience, Hamlet was able to do).

Putting someone to the test seems to be an undertaking that requires a rigorous set of procedures, as the accused must feel enormous pressure in order to confess. The threat of being discovered and the menace of further punishment are powerful mechanisms of persuasion. Such constraint must, however, be gradual, so as to give the guilty conscience time to feel remorse. Take, for example, the previously quoted verse "I'll tent him to the quick," which may refer to an impatient or hot-tempered personality, that, if shown during the experiment, would thus reveal itself. Claudius's reaction, leaving the room, seems to point to that conclusion. However, there is no indication in the text that the King is an irascible man; Claudius never reacts when he is first provoked, as previous conversations with Hamlet demonstrate. As the *OED* suggests, one of the meanings of 'quick' is figurative and relates to "persons, chiefly in phrases denoting acute mental pain or irritation, as touched, galled, stunt, etc. to the quick."[57] Accordingly, we might consider how, in *Hamlet*, it does not refer to Claudius's personality but rather to Hamlet's capacity to taunt him. It should be noted, as the Arden edition explains, how tent "was an instrument for examining or cleansing

[57] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VIII, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

a wound".[58] Incidentally, the expression "to the quick" also names, as described by the *OED*: "[t]he tender or sensitive flesh in any part of the body, as that under the nails or beneath callous parts, also, the tender part of a sore or wound."[59] The careful examination of a wound is usually a painful activity, which is why people respond to it. Hamlet knows, and the King's confession will prove that he was correct, that assassination left its marks on Claudius's conscience and this is the [figurative] wound that Hamlet hopes to look at. Moreover, if Hamlet wants Claudius' face to replicate that of the Ghost ("Hamlet: Pale, or red? /Horatio: Nay, very pale" (I, ii, 231) then it does not make sense to wish to see him turn red, but rather to blench, to turn white.

While the double test has the purpose of extinguishing the guilty party's hopes of remaining undiscovered, it also gives them the opportunity to tell the truth without undergoing the ordeal or torture, saving them from what could be considered unnecessary pain. From this perspective, the duplication of the test in *Hamlet* could have the function of helping Hamlet show Claudius's guilt without inflicting further agony. This is not, as will be seen, the Prince's purpose. The procedure has, rather, the objective of reinforcing the conviction of all those involved in the mode of proof and the outcome of the test (a particularity especially relevant in Hamlet's case, as he needs to be sure that this is the correct way to test the Ghost's words, as well as his stepfather's guilt).

I am not claiming that Hamlet as a character (or Shakespeare, for that matter) was aware of the existing complexities in these modes of proof. The present argument rather follows the views of those describing the relation between legal and theatrical

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[58] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 273.

[59] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XI, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

experience in the play.[60] Popular interest in the judicial detection of the truth has been thoroughly represented by critics, such as Malcolm Gaskill, who have shown how crime stories were a popular source of entertainment that appeared in many forms (murder pamphlets and public reporting, among others). Though the medieval ordeal was formally forbidden in the Lateran Council 0f 1215, it continued to exist both in the mindset of populations and in the longevity of some of its forms of proof, like the duel.[61] So, although it is perhaps unlikely that Shakespeare pondered the subtleties of judicial procedure, it is possible for him to exploit, dramaturgically, a culture that was very much attuned to methods of substantiating evidence.

Words, in modes of proof such as the ordeal, possess a limited value, as they are considered virtual instruments of deceit, which the suspect can control. Claudius, a diplomat, would be particularly adept in their use, which is the reason why Hamlet seeks an alternative way to discover the truth. If the suspect's words may not be considered veracious, the analysis must lie in involuntary bodily reactions, seen as the body's response to guilt.

Another relevant characteristic of modes of proof like the ordeal is the idea that the person must know that they are a suspect, so as to increase their anxiety about the test. Since the early twentieth century, critics have sought to explain what exactly it is that

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[60] John Kerrigan describes the way Hamlet supervises repeated trials – the dumb show followed by Act I of *The Murder of Gonzago* – for the sake of a degree of proof. I would however disagree with the idea that Horatio implies the experiment's findings are ambiguous, see *Revenge Tragedy – Aeschylus to Armageddon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Lorna Hutson links Shakespeare's "achievement of a quasi-theatrical presence in language (*enargeia* or *evidentia*) to the forensic rhetoric of circumstantial narrative", Lorna Hutson, *Law, Probability and Character in Shakespeare*, in *Fictions of Knowledge: Fact, Evidence, Doubt*, Yota Batsaki, Subha Mukherji, J Schramm (eds) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 64.

[61] See Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

constitutes proof in Hamlet. For example, in his essay "Hamlet's Hallucination," W. W. Greg was the first to query the dumb show's relevance, arguing that it was unusual for the King not to respond the first time the action was presented. John Dover Wilson, in *What Happens in Hamlet*, concurs with W. W. Greg's case, equally rejecting "the second tooth theory" sustained by authors such as Alfred Pollard and W. W. Lawrence, according to which Claudius would have been able to resist emotionally to the first enactment of the crime in the dumb show, but not the onslaught of the second enactment in the play that follows. Both W. W. Greg and Dover Wilson's views are criticised by W. W. Lawrence who, in "Hamlet and the Mouse-Trap," argues that the problems pointed out by these critical readings of the play are, in fact, inexistent both to those who stage it and to the spectators in the theatre. W. W. Greg's point of view does not, however, seem plausible: "The point of the Mouse-Trap is that the sudden and unexpected shock of the disclosure shall cause the King to betray his guilt: if he withstands one shock he will be less, not more, likely to give himself away on a repetition".[62] Likewise, Dover Wilson's evaluation feels unsatisfactory:

> Had there been too much parallelism in the spoken play, or indeed any clear hint of the coming murder, the King would have seen the trap, and would either have prematurely taken fright or have had an opportunity of screwing himself up to endure the spectacle of his crime and so perhaps have avoided giving himself away in Hamlet's eyes. He must be lured gradually and unconsciously into the trap, and then caught – squealing.[63]

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[62] W. W. Greg, "The Mouse-Trap: A Postscript," TMLR, 35, 1, Jan. 1940, 8.

[63] See John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 145. W. W. Greg, "Hamlet's Hallucination," TMLR, 12, 4, Oct. 1917, 398. W. W. Lawrence, "Hamlet and the Mouse-Trap," *PMLA*, 54, 3, Sep. 1939, 709-735.

From this perspective, when, in the classical debate about Hamlet's dumb show, critics such as W.W. Greg or Dover Wilson underline the importance of Hamlet's play-within-the-play as a surprise element, they are erroneously considering that it would be better if the suspect did not know he was being accused beforehand.

Recent takes on the subject also tend to diminish the importance of Hamlet's plot. In *Shakespeare and Law – A Conversation among Disciplines*, Richard Strier maintains that:

> to gather evidence, to check up on the thing [the Ghost], Hamlet decides to rely on the bizarre idea, which only somebody who is a humanistically trained would believe, that somehow literature is most powerful than life. He thinks that his uncle, who was perfectly happy to commit a murder, to kill his brother, etc., is somehow or other going to be moved by a play… (Laughter) … that because of what he sees in a play, he's going to cough up his guilt. It's completely ridiculous, and the only context in which such a claim appears is Defenses of Literature.[64]

Notwithstanding Strier's contention, however, this is a case in which the theatre should be understood as a form of judicial proof. For example, Elaine Scarry, in *The Body in Pain*, describes the dramatization of torture procedures:

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[64] "Shakespeare's Laws: a Justice, a Judge, a Philosopher and a English Professor," *Shakespeare and the Law: A Conversation Among Disciplines*, ed. Bradin Cormack, Martha C. Nussbaum and Richard Strier. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013) loc. 5403 [Kindle Books]. Unlike Richard Strier, Carolyn Sale sustains that "Hamlet, a play that stages, with its play-within, the theatre's power to provoke a response from kings. Like all revenge tragedies worth their salt, Hamlet offers its audiences a general sense of symbolic compensation for judicial wrongs". Carolyn Sale, "*The* Case of Mines and *Shakespeare's* Hamlet," *in Shakespeare and the Law*, ed. Paul Raffield and Gary Watt. (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2008) 145.

> It is not accidental that in the torturer's idiom the room in which the brutality occurs was called the 'production room' in the Philippines, the 'cinema room' in South Vietnam, and the 'blue lit stage' in Chile: built on these repeated acts of display and having as its purpose the production of a fantastic illusion of power, torture is a grotesque piece of compensatory drama.[65]

The point of the play-within-the-play is not to move the King, but to coerce him into confessing; the play has the purpose of showing the King that Hamlet knows he is guilty. In cases such as inquisitorial torture, in which the precise nature of the charges is obscure, the examination relies upon the fact that the suspect knows that they are being put to the test, which has the effect of increasing their anxiety.

This is the reason why the King-player speech should not be compared to the literary virtuosity of the rest of the play. Literary quality is not, unlike what is expressed in the source of the play, Hamlet's main concern. Notice the differences between what is assumed to be the source for the passage and Hamlet's remarks.

> A woman that had made away her husband,
> And sitting to behold a tragedy
> At Linne a towne in Norffolke,
> Acted by Players travelling that way,
> Wherein a woman that had murtherd hers
> Was ever haunted with her husbands ghost:
> The passion written by a feeling pen,

[65] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain – The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 28.

And acted by a good Tragedian,
She was so mooved with the sight thereof,
As she cryed out, the Play was made by her,
And openly confesst her husbands murder.[66]

Hum – I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene,
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaimed their malefactions. [...]
I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
(*Hamlet*, II, ii, 523-530)

The first quotation belongs to the source-play, *A Warning for Faire Woman*, which, as Bullough states, had been performed by Shakespeare's company and which was published in 1599, where examples of "murders strangely revealed"[67] are discussed. In this case, as in Claudius's, both the guilty woman and the woman in the play have murdered their husbands (even if the eventual similarities between their crimes are not described). The woman's confession is a result of the value of the play being represented, the feeling with which it had been written, and the excellence of the performer. Therefore, the source passage emphasises, in several ways, the quality of the performance.

This does not happen in Hamlet's lines. In the soliloquy quoted above, there is no reference to the merit of the players; Hamlet's advice to the actors is, as seen, a warning to Claudius, rather than an

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[66] G Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. VII, 1973 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 181.

[67] *Ibidem,* 38.

expression of his misgivings about the first player. Likewise, it is not an attempt to call the quality of the text or to the overall performance into question. In fact, Hamlet only mentions "the cunning of the scene". The Harold Jenkins' Arden edition asserts that 'cunning' is here being used in the sense of 'art,' which would be consistent with the meaning of the source of the passage.[68] However, neither Hamlet's soliloquy nor his remarks to Horatio seem to warrant this. On the contrary, it seems that its sole "artistic" advantage is its similarity with his father's murder, as may be perceived when we read both quotations:

> What would he do
> Had he the motive and the cue for passion
> That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
> And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
> Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
> Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
> The very faculties of eyes and ears.
> (*Hamlet*, II, ii, 495-501)[69]

> There is a play tonight before the King:
> One scene of it comes near the circumstance
> Which I have told thee of my father's death.
> (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 71-77)

In the first quotation, 'cue' – which refer to "the concluding word or words of a speech in a play, serving as a signal or direction to

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[68] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins (ed) (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 272.

[69] These lines quote from Harold Jenkins's edition, which uses the word 'cue'. The new Arden Shakespeare reads as follows 'What would he do had he the motive and that for passion / That I have?' This does not change the meaning of the line.

another actor to enter or begin his speech"[70] – leads to the reaction of the other player as Hamlet ponders what the first player might do if he had Hamlet's motives (if he were Hamlet). The player's skill, his horrid speech, would allow him to "make mad the guilty" and "confound the ignorant" (II, ii, 558), suggesting that those who know nothing about the crime are not able to make sense from the action on stage. The second quotation is characterised by the absence of any references to the quality of the play, as Hamlet's advice to Horatio underlines his principal concern: the similarity with the plot with the events of his father's murder. The "horrid speech" in the first quotation would, certainly, be an artful one, however the difference between the subtlety of this reference and the way in which the assumed source for this passage in *Hamlet* repeatedly underlines the excellence of the performance is striking. Notwithstanding, this notion may not be solved without considering Dover Wilson's classical analysis of Hamlet's advice to the main actor.

> Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced
> it to you – trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth
> it as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier
> spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with
> your hand, thus, but use all gently; for, in the very
> torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of
> your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that
> may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to
> hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to
> tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,
> who for the most part are capable of nothing
> but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise.
> (*Hamlet*, III, ii, 1-12)

[70] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VI, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

According to Dover Wilson, the first passage shows the actors that Hamlet is not thinking about Claudius, but that he is concerned with the lines he has given to the player and with the actor's ability to perform them adequately.[71] The lines deal mainly, as Wilson contends, with the speech Hamlet provides to the players. But is Hamlet underlining the need for "a passion"? Or are Hamlet's teachings on how to act properly chiefly about his concern for restraint? "Passion" is mentioned as a characteristic in the art of representation (one which the actors cannot do without), and it is related with the already quoted "the cue for passion," i.e., with the reasons that lead us to action. Nonetheless, what is being highlighted here is the need to suppress excessive emotional gestures (which ought to be countered, using the hand gently, for instance), affected modes of speech, and, most of all, the importance of endowing every speech with "a temperance that may give it smoothness." More importantly, what Dover Wilson considers to be Hamlet's contempt for dumb shows is only disdain for those deemed "inexplicable;" if anything, there can be no doubt that this dumb show is far from leaving anything untold. That Hamlet even mentions dumb-shows should be proof both of his knowledge of their existence in general and of his use of the pantomime in this play in particular, as well as representative of his warning to Claudius.

Hamlet would, then, be using 'cunning' in the sense of skill or, as the Oxford Shakespeare edition sustains, to the "skilful realism of the performance."[72] Additionally, it would equally make sense

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[71] "Hamlet's words show that his inserted speech, which is of course now written, is to be one of 'passion,' and 'that the passion referred to is not love but anger or crime – the passion of the torrential, tempestuous, whirlwind species, which the Herods and the Termagants of the old plays had so grossly exaggerated". See Dover Wilson, *ibid,* 154.

[72] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, GR Hibbard (ed) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 235.

for Hamlet to use "cunning" in its earlier sense of "knowing."[73] This would mean "That guilty creatures sitting at a play / Have, by the very' knowledge 'of the scene, / Been struck so to the soul that presently / They have proclaim'd their malefactions." (II, ii, 585-588). The comprehension of the performance could then be both applied to the act of watching the episode and learning its content, but also to the understanding that it duplicates the action of the murder. The "knowledge of the scene" could then indicate not only the player-speech, but also the dumb show. The main purpose of the play-within-the-play is to build a mousetrap, not to create a work of art.

Usual procedures for finding the truth should not be ignored, as they allow us to realise that the idea that a sudden shock (as opposed to the increase of pain, or intensity during the questioning of the suspect) will make someone confess is counter-intuitive. On the contrary, to those testing the truth, the repetition of the procedure is essential to obtaining a confession (which generally no single shock can accomplish). Claudius was a skilful murderer, capable of deceiving an entire court, and is not prone to sudden emotional reactions.

From this perspective, when critics underline the importance of Hamlet's play-within-the-play as a surprise element, they are erroneously considering that it would be better if the subject did not know he was being suspected beforehand. Even in cases such as inquisitorial torture, in which the precise nature of the charges is obscure, a significant part of the examination relies on the fact that the suspect know they are being put to the test. Such is Hamlet's purpose, which is why W. W. Greg's point of view does not seem sensible: "The point of the Mouse-Trap is that the sudden and unexpected shock of the disclosure shall cause the King to betray

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[73] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

his guilt: if he withstands one shock he will be less, not more, likely to give himself away on a repetition".[74] Or Dover Wilson's:

> Had there been too much parallelism in the spoken play, or indeed any clear hint of the coming murder, the King would have seen the trap, and would either have prematurely taken fright or have had an opportunity of screwing himself up to endure the spectacle of his crime and so perhaps have avoided giving himself away in Hamlet's eyes. He must be lured gradually and unconsciously into the trap, and then caught – squealing.[75]

The sentences above ignore tried procedures for finding the truth. Dover Wilson's idea that the King would be caught squealing is not sensible. A. Hart, for example, insists that Claudius did not "blench" during the dumb show. In his account of Claudius's behaviour during the play, the Hart describes the King as "an energetic and efficient monarch, [who] thinks quickly, acts promptly," but also as a "smiling villain, a seducer, poisoner, and usurper,"[76] a "tough guy, and nothing but continuous 'third degree' methods will break him".[77] That Claudius would not easily confess is a very reasonable notion (this is something known to Hamlet and which could explain the delay of his actions, as he knows he needs to devise the perfect plan). Nevertheless, we are in the presence of a "third degree method," which does not involve the beating of the suspect but does inflict such psychological pain that he will not

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[74] W.W. Greg, "The Mouse-Trap: A Postscript," *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 35, n. 1, Jan. 1940, 8.

[75] See John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, 1935 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 145.

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

[77] *Ibidem*, 17.

be able to resist it (the pressure applied on Claudius's mind was continuous). This signals Shakespeare's (call it Freudian) knowledge of the human mind.

If we accept the theory that the dumb show follows judicial procedures where the presentation of the proof is fundamental, then there would be a considerable difference between the demonstration of the test and the test itself, as the King would know, from the beginning of the dumb show, that what he fears the most, i.e. public exposure and the pain of seeing the re-enactment of the crime, would soon follow. This perspective is sustained in Granville-Barker's preface to *Hamlet*:

> The Dumb Show falls quite pertinently into Hamlet's – and Shakespeare's – scheme. The mimic play as a whole is a calculated insult both to the King and Queen. The 'one scene' which 'comes near the circumstance' of the old King's death, and into which Hamlet has inserted his 'dozen or sixteen lines,' is to be the finishing stroke merely. Were it a single one, Claudius might outface it. It is the prolonged preliminary ordeal which is to wear him down [...] What Shakespeare means, surely, is to make this simply the culmination of a long, tense, deliberate struggle to break down the King's composure, on his part to maintain it.[78]

In his brief mention to the ordeal, Granville-Barker is probably not referring to the aforementioned judicial practice, but his defence of a double stroke is indeed sensible (even though, as advised by the Ghost, Hamlet does not appear to wish to insult the Queen).

One should now return to the process in which interrogators show their suspects details of the crime before a real accusation.

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[78] See Harley Granville-Barker, "Preface to Hamlet," *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1961) 88-89.

This practice has the double purpose of evaluating the suspects' reactions to the idea that the precise nature of the crime was discovered and of building up psychological tension. Hamlet does not wish to cause a sudden shock but rather, as the title he gives his play – *The Mousetrap* – suggests, his aim is to lure and trick the King, and to let him know that there is someone who knows what has happened and that revenge will follow. Accordingly, Hamlet has the intention of gradually exercising psychological pressure upon Claudius until the climax, in the King-player speech. Here, as in the judicial tests described earlier, repetition is essential to Hamlet's scheme.

The King is used to the machinations of the court, and it becomes clear, from the beginning of the play, that he is paying close attention to Hamlet. The King's conversation with Polonius before *The Murder of Gonzago* begins reveals how he is already determined to send Hamlet away to England. That Claudius is observing Hamlet's activities, and that he is very much alert during the performance of the play, may be perceived when the King tells Polonius: "Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go" (III, i, 190). Not only is Claudius recognizing Hamlet's astuteness, but he is also explicitly saying that he will continue to closely survey him. W. W. Lawrence argues that Rosencrantz and Polonius have mentioned to the King and Queen that it is Hamlet's desire that they should watch a play and cites the following verse: "And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties / To hear and see the matter." (III, i, 22-23). Lawrence is right to sustain: "Claudius would be a dreamy simpleton indeed if he did not realize that the facts of the murder have been discovered".[79]

One other aspect is still left to be described: the reason why Hamlet, while devising the plan to catch the King, asks the players,

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

in front of Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Polonius if the player can "for need / study a speech of some dozen lines, or sixteen lines, / which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?" (II, ii, 476--478). If the roles were reversed, Hamlet would surely suspect that the affair was dubious, consequently making the King, at the very least, as suspicious as he was. Has Hamlet so little consideration for his friends' and Polonius' intelligence that he assumes they will not understand the framing of a cunning plan? It is clear that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not the sharpest minds in Denmark, but can the same be said of Polonius? Even if it were so, would none of the three find the episode noteworthy? There is no evidence in the text pointing to the idea that any of them alerts Claudius to Hamlet's endeavours. Yet, previous episodes demonstrate how Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Polonius send word to the King, even when they have not fully understood the intentions behind Hamlet's actions. Everything points to the fact that the King will be in suspense about what will be played.

If the double test is taken to be Hamlet's original intention, then both W. W. Greg's and Dover Wilson's analyses of the passage "Marry, this is miching malicho. It means mischief." (III, ii, 135) have to be reinterpreted. According to both authors, this passage is proof that the dumb show is an unwelcome invention by the players and that it represents not Claudius's crime, but "the *skulking iniquity* of the players, who have introduced this unauthorized and ridiculous dumb show, and so have almost ruined the whole plot."[80] When echoing W. W. Greg's words about the dumb show, Dover Wilson repeats the mistake of considering that the plot would be ruined by what (should) be considered the technical presentation of the proof.

One only has to substitute the dumb show for the introduction of the torture instruments before the proof takes place to understand

[80] *Ibidem*, 157.

that there is nothing ludicrous in these very effective psychological forms of pressure. Despite the *OED*, which considers that there is no other occurrence for the expression "miching malicho," in Shakespeare or anywhere else, and assumes it to be "of uncertain form, origin and meaning",[81] the Arden edition's more extensice notes provide an apt justification for the use of the phrase. "Miche" is interpreted as "to shrink or retire from view, to lurk out of sight"[82] and it is suggested that "malicho" is derived from the Spanish "mallecho," meaning wrong doing. Hence, Hamlet can be seen referring to the actions played by the actors (the plot itself was mischievous). Moreover, "with a play on the word means, the dumb show, by revealing what is to come, also 'means mischief' for the King".[83]

If they had told Claudius about the speech, if Claudius had known not only that Hamlet had staged a play, but that he had also added a few lines to it, this would mean that 1) there was more than a double test being framed, as Hamlet was pressuring the King before the play had begun, 2) that his advice to the actors, generally portrayed as a meta-reflection about theatre, is a warning to the King and the first move in Hamlet's strategy and 3) that the King would understand that the dumb show represents a warning for the speech to come.

It is helpful to seriously consider the first possibility, given that, if Hamlet really wants the King to know about the play before it has even begun, then the question of the double test loses its relevance, as Hamlet is not aiming to surprise the King, but instead seeks to pressure him unremittingly. Regarding the second hypothesis, one

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[81] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. VI, 1933. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

[82] Harold Jenkins *in* Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 506.

[83] *Ibidem*, 506.

could, obviously, wonder why the King, if he is aware of Hamlet's intentions, does call and not end the play before it even begins. Surely, however, diplomatic cunning entails knowing that it is best to understand what the enemy is thinking than to take sudden action? If Hamlet hopes to irrevocably comprehend, by means of the performance of *The Mouse Trap*, whether Claudius is guilty of murdering his father or not, the same may be said about the King (he had already decided to send Hamlet to England, so there would be no harm in waiting a little bit longer). A chess game indeed; both Claudius and Hamlet casting for each other's intentions, in order to be able to respond to the attack that they knew will arrive.

The duel

When read side-by-side, Hamlet's play-within-the-play and the duel scene of act V share important features. Both are presented before the proof takes place; both begin in silence and are followed by noise; both are interrupted before reaching their natural conclusion. Critics such as Nigel Alexander, in *Poison, Play and Duel,* observe how the swordfight is Claudius's trial by combat, prepared with Laertes's assistance, with the purpose of killing Hamlet and putting into action the subject of Hamlet's play (the poisoning of an innocent character).[84] Although these modes of testing may,

[84] For an examination of this scene in relation to the idea of the 'touchstone,' see Nigel Alexander's *Poison, Play and Duel – A study in Hamlet* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971).

More recently, in *Hegel and Shakespeare and Moral Imagination*, Jennifer Ann Bates describes the relationship between Hamlet's play-within-the-play and the duel, observing how "the duel scene is another play within the play. The important difference from the 'Mouse Trap' is that Hamlet is an actor rather spectator". The author focuses on the developing of consciousness in Hamlet, and does not mention the judicial implications of the duel scene. Cf. Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare and Moral Imagination* (Albany: SUNY, 2010) 69.

indeed, be considered symmetrical revenge plots, the duel differs from Hamlet's play in an important way: unlike *The Mousetrap,* the purpose of the duel is unclear for those involved in the procedure, it requires further clarification and must be explained after its conclusion. Critical interpretations dwell on Hamlet's state of mind before the duel, treating it as a touchstone for understanding the ending of the play.[85] As such, reading this episode in the light of judicial procedures illuminates the play's ambiguities, which seem to duplicate those of the ritual of the ordeal by combat.[86]

In his exchange with Horatio, Hamlet claims "Not a whit. We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V, ii, 197).[87] Authors relate this passage with the doctrine of special providences and argue in favour, and against, the idea that Hamlet knows and accepts providence. Hamlet is invoking the doctrine of special providences, according to which, as Keith Thomas sustains in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, "he [God] could also bring about striking accidents or coincidences – 'special providences'. His hand could underline the most trivial occurrence."[88] Unlike

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[85] See, for a reading of the play focused on Hamlet's dispossession: Margreta de Grazia, *Hamlet Without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 2007.

[86] Markku Peltonen makes a compelling case about the influence of a culture of civility, courtesy and politeness, considering that "The duel of honour and its theory came to England as part of the Italian Renaissance notion of gentleman and courtier. The duel of honour, in other words, emerged as an integral part of the Renaissance theory of courtesy" (18). Even so, as Bartlett makes clear, there are good reasons to consider the influence of the medieval ordeal in this practice. Markku Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England – Civility, Politeness and Honour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003) 5.

[87] The source for the line is Matthew 10:29-31: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. [a] And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows".

[88] *Vide* Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971) 97.

Two main critical schools argue on the role of providence. On the one side, that of Granville-Barker, Harold Goddard, and Maynard Mack, among others, according to which Hamlet's faith in providence determines his acceptance of the duel. On

general providences (God's natural intervention in the world), special providences referred to God's unusual interference in persons' lives. Keith Thomas's book argues that Protestantism was responsible for the gradual disappearance of superstitious beliefs, marking the transition to a more rational society. Both possibilities seem reasonable. Here, then, Hamlet can be seen to establish an opposition between augury, as a form of personal intuition, and divine providence, which relates to the possibility of God's intervention in the duel as a means by which to expose and repair Claudius's wrongdoings. The line may equally suggest that Hamlet rejects augury, i.e. that it is impossible to read signs of future events, thus entering the duel without being certain of its outcome. Certainly, this reading aligns with Hamlet's suspicions of foul play: "But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart – but it is no matter" (V, ii, 185-186) and, likewise, his assertion that "It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gaingiving as would perhaps trouble a woman" (V, ii, 188-189). Horatio's reply, "If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit" (V, ii, 191), indicates that he, too, is unable to anticipate events.

The duel begins in silence. Hamlet is no longer an observer, but an actor in Claudius's revenge plot. Hamlet's role as an active participant is underlined by the fact that it is Claudius who introduces the duel "Come Hamlet and take this hand from me" (V, ii, 189), commentating the action while Hamlet and Laertes prepare to play. Hamlet now sees himself in the role that he gave to Claudius during the play in act three: that of discovering what has been planned. The fact that the beginning of the duel is enacted rather than described only serves to accentuate its lack of clarity,

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the other, as sustained by Dover Wilson, A.C. Bradley and Harry Levin, to name a few, Hamlet acts without thinking.

as Hamlet is supposed to perform in a staged performance that he does not fully understand.

Hamlet's position differs from that of a suspect in a trial by ordeal, in the sense that the indicted party usually knows that they are being accused and must prove their innocence. In these situations, a group of rigorous procedures, which were a condition for God to reveal himself, should be followed. The duel is a bilateral type of ordeal, and, thus, one that requires the acceptance of both parties. A brief excursion on the trial by combat in *Richard II* allows for a better understanding of this point. M. J. Russell, in "Trial by Battle in the Court of Chivalry," shows how Shakespeare closely follows the case of *Duke of Hereford v Duke of Norfolk* (1398).[89] In this case, Hereford accuses Norfolk of committing treason, claiming that he was complicit in the murder of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester (the concealed presumption being that the King himself had responsibility in the affair). Each of the appellants accuses the other before the King. Hereford throws his gage down – a signal of challenge in a knightly combat – and claims: "By that and all the rites of knighthood else / Will I make good against thee, arm to arm" (I, i, 69-75). Mowbray accepts the challenge and swears by the sword: "I'll answer thee in any fair degree / Or chivalrous design of knightly trial" (I, i, 77-81). The King tries to make peace, "let's purge this choler without letting blood" (I, i, 153), but both men are willing to enter combat and the challenge is accepted:[90]

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[89] M.J. Russell, "Trial by Battle in the Court of Chivalry" (2008) 29. *The Journal of Legal History* 347.

[90] For a detailed account of the procedures of the trial by combat see also: George Neilson *Ibidem*. M Pelton, *Ibidem*. F Billacois, *The Duel*, Trista Selous (transl) (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990) 27.

Be ready, as your lives shall answer for it,
At Coventry, upon St Lambert's Day.
There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
The swelling difference of your settled hate.
Since we cannot atone you, we shall see
Justice design the victor's chivalry.
Lord Marshal, command our officers-at-arms
Be ready to direct those home alarms.
(I, i, 198-205).[91]

A trial by combat in the Court of Chivalry – a formalised ritual, governed by rules that had been drawn up by Richard's uncle, Thomas of Woodstock – is the chosen method of arbitration. Swords and lances that arbitrate matters are, of course, a reference to the intervention of divine justice in the procedure and the Earl Marshal, Norfolk, is in this passage a defendant in his own court. Gages and oaths are a procedural part of the trial and, here, the problem here lies in the fact that both complainants are swearing to be truthful when, of course, one of them must be lying.[92] The trial by combat is a way to prove the validity of either Hereford or Norfolk's claims, a testament to one of the contestant's honour. Paul Raffield notices how this episode is characterised by the "the chivalry rhetoric of medieval law,"[93] and explains how "*Richard II*

[91] William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, Arden 3rd series, Charles Forker (ed) (London, Thomson Learning, 2002). Citations of the play are to this edition.

[92] For a detailed examination of oaths of the early modern English legal evidentiary system see: B Shapiro, "Oaths, Credibility and the Legal Process in Early Modern England: Part One". *Law and Humanities, 2012.* B Shapiro, "Oaths, Credibility and the Legal Process in Early Modern England: Part Two". *Law and Humanities,* 2013: 19-54.

[93] Paul Raffield, *Shakespeare's Imaginary Constitution: Late Elizabethan Politics and the Theatre of Law* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2010) 110. See chapter 3, "Reflections on the Art of Kinship: Richard II and the Subject of Law," in which the concept of betrayal is related to the treason trial and for an association of Richard's downfall to the betrayal of Christ.

is unusual in the plays of Shakespeare for the number and variety of formal trials and *ad hoc* tribunals which punctuate the action and drive the plot."[94] These trials have in common, as the author makes clear, the fact that they are "variations on the treason trial" which "remind us of the centrality of land to the theme of the play."[95] Land is, of course, what will be seized after the King intervenes to interrupt the procedure, affirming that royal blood should not be dishonoured by the defeat of either party during the trial.[96] Even though one may question the reasons why Richard II interrupts this mode of proof and prefers to banish both Hereford and Norfolk, it is reasonable to sustain that there are few doubts that this is a trial by battle.[97]

By comparing this trial and Hamlet's duel, the degree to which Hamlet is actively consenting to an ordeal can be brought into

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[94] *Ibidem*, 105.

[95] *Ibidem*, 105.

[96] Ernst Kantorowicz, in *The King's Two Bodies*, uses *Richard II* to suggest the theory that the King has two bodies: the body natural (the King's physical mortal body) and the body political (which is perpetual, composed by all the sovereign's properties, lands and people). Kantorowicz considers *Richard II* to be "the tragedy of the King's two bodies," where the opposition between king by nature and the king by grace is easily perceived. For recent criticism on Kantorowicz's work see: Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology in the *King's Two Bodies,"* which criticizes the New Historical reading of Kantorowicz's book. Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology in the *King's Two Bodies," Representations,* 106, (2009), 77-101. Lorna Hutson, "Not the King's Two Bodies: Reading the "Body Politic" in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, parts I and II, *in Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2001.

[97] Quentin Skinner, in *Forensic Shakespeare*, argues that Mowbray "and Bullingbrooke are living in a world far removed from the careful verbal calculations recommended by the classical theorists of eloquence." (...) The king appeals to the terminology of judicial rhetoric, but neither Mowbray nor Bullingbrooke pays the least attention to it. (...) Bullingbrooke shows some faint awareness of these considerations, but Mowbray none at all. He says nothing about the person of the king and nothing about the facts of the case. He speaks with unbridled arrogance about his own hot blood, mounts a violent tirade in which he hurls back the charge of treason, and ends by throwing down his gage in a demand for single combat". Quentin Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 50.

question. Robert Bartlett, in his discussion of the medieval trial by battle, distinguishes regulated private combat from the *iudicium dei*. For example, the duel could be judicial (a means of reaching a decision or of obtaining proof), or it could be a duel of honour, without the idea that God was revealing himself in the outcome of the proof.[98] In *Trial by Fire and Water*, Bartlett asserts that, from the fifth to the thirteenth century, the trial by battle is characterized by "the absence of other means of proof divine judgement, single combat, a means of proof". In his distinction between types of ordeals, Bartlett reaches an interesting, and helpful, conclusion:

> Trial by battle was a ritual form of an activity that men frequently saw around them in a non-ritual form. They might well wonder why the result of the ritual form should be determined by forces so irrelevant to the non-ritual form. Trial by fire and water existed *only* in a ritual form and was, therefore, relatively immune from doubts of this kind.[99]

Hamlet's duel performs a series of questions inherent to the trial by combat as a mode of proof, which distinguished this form of trial from those of fire and water. The duel offers a way of drawing an extremely complex case to a definitive conclusion. In *Hamlet*, before the wager takes place, the Prince asks for Laertes' pardon

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[98] Robert Bartlett, *Ibid*, 114-115.

The classical book on the subject is George Neilson, *Trial by Combat* (NY: Macmillan & Co, 1891). https://archive.org/details/trialbycombat00neilgoog. See also Henry C. Lea's *Superstition and Force*. In it, Lea describes medieval ordeals as barbaric and superstitious, a view that has been revised in recent studies on the subject. Still, his distinction between judicial combat and the duel is important: "The object of the one was vengeance and reparation; the theory of the other was the discovery of truth, and the impartial ministration of justice." Henry Lea, *Superstition and Force: Torture, Ordeal and Trial by Combat in Medieval Law,* 1870 (NY: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996) 88.

[99] *Ibid*, 117.

"Give me your pardon sir, I've done you wrong; / But pardon't as you are a gentleman" (V, ii, 198-199). To this Laertes deceitfully replies "I am satisfied in nature, / whose motive in this case would stir me most / To my revenge" (V, ii, 216-218). The King, in contrast to what is asked of Richard II, does not intercede and does not try to make peace between Hamlet and Laertes. Indeed, unlike Norfolk and Hereford's trial by combat, Hamlet accepts the duel without fully realising which type of fight is he entering into, as suggested by his declaration "And will this brother's wager frankly play" (V, ii, 225).

The duel is Claudius's mode of proof and it could also be considered Hamlet's trial of treason, in which, as if it were a judicial trial by combat, Claudius asks a champion, Laertes, to submit to the trial on his behalf. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the King is guilty of usurpation and poisoning and duels were often invoked in the Middle Ages, as Bartlett notices, to put on trial "heinous and clandestine crimes, like treason, arson and poisoning, the cases turning on disputed evidence."[100] This also seems to be the type of circumstance – that of treason and poison – in which an ordeal would be used to obtain a verdict.

Additionally, if considered a duel, the episode combines a group of characteristics severely judged in Shakespeare's England. As Malcolm Gaskill quotes from *The diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple* (1602±1603) and notes how: "Throughout the period, moralists and lawyers alike saw duelling as 'an offence not onlie against [the fund]amentall [laws] of this kingdome but even against the laws of nature,' and taught that it was a heathenish and atheistically act combining suicide and premeditated murder, destroying the soul and leaving room for neither penitence nor

[100] Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England,* 2000 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003) 106.

forgiveness."[101] From this viewpoint, Hamlet's lines on providence also question the nature of the duel from a judicial perspective, uttering apprehensions that were familiar to the audience. On the one side, Hamlet's acceptance of the wager can be interpreted as a suicidal act, whereas, on the other, Claudius clearly commits premeditated murder. It should not be forgotten, accordingly, that Claudius considers that the proof's outcome has been decided in advance. As Nigel Alexander claims: "The most important thing about the fight between Hamlet and Laertes is that it is not, in the strict sense, a duel. It is intended to be a fatal accident."[102] Claudius's devious plot is not that of presenting a clear form of proof, but one whose equivocal nature allows him to enact his revenge plot (whether the scheme works as planned is a question to which I will return).

Insofar as it repeats the action of the play, the duel shares an important feature with Hamlet's mousetrap.[103] As seen, in the dumb show the action is repeated in order to accentuate Claudius's reaction to the play and to provoke him to confess. In *The Mousetrap*, the most important lines are those introduced by Hamlet with the intention of sounding out the conscience of the King. The opposite happens in the duel, where words do not have value; they are a preparation for what follows. What doubles the dumb show's structure is not,

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[101] *Ibid*, 210.

[102] *Ibidem*, 174.

[103] François Billacois, in *The Duel*, uses Ernest Jones analysis of *Hamlet* to describe the field of a duel using the psychic process of decomposition and the process of doubling, and makes the following claim: "In Shakespeare's tragedy, it is only during the final duel that the hero becomes generous towards the brother-in-law manqué, Laertes, whom he is going to kill; it is only then that he can both kill the King-neo-father (Claudius) and avenge the King-father (Hamlet), thereby proving himself worthy to reign. But this murder investiture makes him the equal of his rivals to the point where he accompanies them to death. The victorious duellist does not become King. He becomes the King's brother. He invests as King the son of the man his own father had previously killed in a duel. This man of words gives his dying voice to Fortinbras. 'The rest is silence'". *Ibidem*, 236-237.

therefore, the progression from silence to noise, but the existence of two poison plots with the purpose of murdering Hamlet, as Claudius wishes to be sure the succession of strikes will eventually kill his stepson.

The Mousetrap is interrupted when the guilty party, Claudius, gets up. Initially, the duel seems to replicate this structure, when, after Laertes wounds Hamlet and both change their rapiers, the King claims: "Part them. They are incensed". (V, ii, 281); Hamlet, however, proceeds. Osric later interrupts the scene, pointing to the fallen Queen, while Horatio looks at Hamlet and Laertes, noting that both of them are bleeding.

In "The 'Amending Hand': *Hales v. Petit*, *Eyston v. Studd*, and Equitable Action in *Hamlet*," Carolyn Sale describes how "a crucial exchange of objects occurs, as one of the two instruments prepared by Claudius to bring about Hamlet's death finds itself in his hand. Hamlet uses that instrument to kill Claudius while suggesting that he himself does nothing at all."[104] Hamlet is described as being between worlds, he "inhabits an unusual ontological space and a charged legal one,"[105] he knows he will die, and must therefore act. The plot Claudius thought was in control leads, it appears, to an unexpected turn of events, something made visible in the King's attempts to mask the poisoning of the Queen – "She swoons to see them bleed" (V, ii, 294).

Although the play within the play is interrupted before the ending, its verdict as a mode of proof is clear to all those involved, namely Horatio, Hamlet, and Claudius. The duel, however, is not self-evident, rather it requires an explanation, as may be perceived in the Queen's comment: "No, no, the drink, O my dear Hamlet, /

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[104] C Sale, "The 'Amending Hand': *Hales v. Petit*, *Eyston v. Studd*, and Equitable Action in *Hamlet*", in *The Law in Shakespeare*, Constance Jordan and Karen Cunningham (ed) (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 201.

[105] *Ibidem*, 201.

The drink, the drink – I am poisoned" (V, ii, 294-295). At this point, Hamlet realizes that the cup was poisoned and accuses the King of treachery. Laertes's lines help to clarify what happened:

> It is here Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain,
> No medicine in the world can do thee good,
> In thee there is not half an hour of life –
> the treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
> Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice
> Hath turned itself on me, lo here I lie,
> Never to rise again.
> (V, ii, 293-299)

The purpose of this passage is to explain to Hamlet what has happened. The lines also reveal the instrument of the crime and the identity of the traitor, making clear, if any doubts remained, that the King is responsible for tempering the poison.

Poisoning, as known, was considered an atrocious crime. Malcolm Gaskill quotes Sir John Croke's position on the subject to a jury in 1614: "of all murders poisoning is ye worst and more terrible 1) Because it is secret 2) Because it is not to be prevented 3) Because it is most against nature and therefore most heinous 4) It is also a Cowardly thing". [106] From this perspective, Claudius's rigging of the duel with poison is crucial, as it highlights the King's manoeuvres to maintain power, the secrecy of his actions, the way they may not be prevented, and how they are in contradiction with nature. Like every other feature of the duel, Claudius's actions have a double meaning. The rigging of the duel may be the result of the King's actions, detached from the role that providence could play, and it may be seen as a retaliation from providence due to Claudius's

[106] Malcolm Gaskill, *Ibid*, 208.

transgression. Clarifying if we are witnessing a duel of honour or of an *iudicium dei*, helps to distinguish both perspectives. Swift revenge follows the duel, as Hamlet, either as minister or scourge, will now murder the King, while being able to exchange forgiveness with Laertes.

The nature of the duel – unlike *The Mousetrap* – purposefully leaves, I would argue, a number of questions unanswered. Critics such as Keith Thomas emphasize how the emergence of Protestantism was responsible for the gradual disappearance of superstitious beliefs, marking the transition to a more rational society. However, recent appraisals of Thomas's argument assert differently; Alexandra Walsham's "The Reformation and the 'Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed," furthers Bob Scribner's assessments, claiming that "scepticism" and "belief" with regard to manifestations of the supernatural – whether divine or diabolical – coexisted throughout the Middle Ages, with circumstances determining the explanation that triumphed on a given occasion."[107] Walsham calls attention to a body of work that shows "how assumptions about miracles, prodigies and providence, ghosts, angels, demons and other inhabitants of the invisible world, survived and adapted."[108] Walsham also indicates how "It is no longer acceptable to dismiss assumptions about astrology, providence and the apocalypse as forms of irrational delusion,"[109] claiming that "Protestantism, in no sense rejected the notion that the sacred could intervene in the world. In the guise of the doctrine of Providence, it placed fresh emphasis on the power and omnipotence of God and defended vigorously the precept that

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[107] Alexandra Walsham, "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed." *The History Journal,* 2008*:* 497-598.

[108] *Ibidem*, 501.

[109] *Ibidem*, 504.

he interceded to warn, punish, chastise, try and reward individuals and communities alike."[110]

The notion that contradictory beliefs often coexisted seems sensible and allows us to return to Hamlet's line on providences. We may now realise that "there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" re-enacts two conflicting beliefs. On the one side, if the play's ending is an accident, if it describes how the King's revenge plot concludes unexpectedly, then the line is untrue. On the other hand, if divine providence intends the massacre, then the passage is truthful. This would mean that the multiple deaths are justified, each representing the punishment for a specific crime: Hamlet for Polonius's death, Claudius for treason and poisoning, the Queen for lust, Laertes for poisoning Hamlet.

At this point, it is useful to consider John Kerrigan's perspective in his recent book, *Shakespeare's Binding Language,* which examines how:

> *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (c1600) is framed by two actual duels [...] One belongs to the pagan prehistory of *judicium dei* – that between Old Hamlet and Old Fortinbras [...] the second is the exercise with bated rapiers, by the Prince and Laertes, which turns lethal in Act 5.[111]

Kerrigan insightfully argues that "Old Hamlet put both himself and his lands in jeopardy when he made his gage/wager with Old Fortinbras – creating risks for Denmark which run into the tragedy," concluding that, in the end of Hamlet, "What looked like a duel between the mighty opposites of prince and king was really

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[110] *Ibidem*, 501-508.

[111] John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 230.

a resumption of the fight between Old Fortinbras and Old Hamlet. Shakespeare solders the connection by giving fathers and sons – as Belleforest does not – the same names".[112] Accepting Kerrigan's insightful perspective, however, shuts down the possibility that the play's ending might offer different readings and considers Hamlet's fate to have been predetermined from the beginning of the play.

Hamlet's final lines present his advice to Horatio: "I am dead, / Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright / To the unsatisfied." (V, ii, 343-345), or "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, / Absent thee from felicity awhile, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story" (V, ii, 351-354). Horatio survives, but is charged with the task of explaining the tragedy of Denmark to others and, as such, he is required to justify Hamlet's actions and explain who is guilty of his father's murder. In Hamlet's exchange with Horatio and in the wish for his story to be told, we realize that, while he knows that a truth test may help to uncover a criminal, he understands that sometimes to pronounce a verdict about someone's culpability is a way of telling a story.

Macbeth's Two Spent Swimmers

In *Hamlet*, thoughts and hands working together point to the commitment of a unified self towards assassination. Hamlet's test seems to have proved that it is possible to gain access to the secrets of other persons against their will. Hence, *The Murder of Gonzago* seems to be the interpretative key granting Hamlet access to the King's guilty conscience. If Hamlet's exercise epitomizes an attempt to determine what someone is trying to conceal through the observation of his external behaviour, in *Macbeth* the opposite is

[112] *Ibidem*, 230.

represented, as we have the possibility of knowing what "criminals" experience, as well as the labours they go through in order to hide the symptoms of their deceit.[113] This passage from Hamlet is helpful as way of unlocking aspects of Macbeth.

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

The main themes of the play are represented in these lines: black thoughts that lead to murder; hands that must do the deed which the eye does not wish to see; time agreeing to assassination and then being disrupted by it; Hecate, goddess of the magic arts, represented as having three bodies (i.e., *Macbeth*'s three witches); and, finally, the usurpation of the throne, a wholesome life which, in the case of the Scottish tragedy, represents Duncan.[114]

The tragedy is prompted by the witches' encounter with Macbeth, and their enunciation of the prophecy that will trigger his actions. The witches hail Macbeth as "Thane of Glamis," (I, i, 46) which

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[113] Shakespeare, *Macbeth,* ed. Kenneth Muir, 1951 (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2001). Quotations follow this edition.

[114] See Kristen Poole, in *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare*, for an analysis of the opening of the play, "which sets the stage for a disordered space time," and its account of the distinct beings charaterized in the play and "the coexistence of theo-spatial models". "Thus in a play like Macbeth we witness the interaction of characters who seem to be inhabiting different, and fundamentally incompatible, spatial epistemologies". Kristen Poole, *Supernatural Environments in Shakespeare – Spaces of Demonism, Divinity and Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 20. On knots and riddles in Macbeth see John Kerrigan, *Shakespeare's Binding Language*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2016) chp 12.

he is, "Thane of Cawdor," (I, i, 47) which he will become, and finally, "King hereafter" (I, i, 48).[115] When the King promotes him to Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth assumes the prophecy can be relied upon, deciding that instead of waiting for the third prophecy to be fulfilled, he may act upon it, murder the King, and remain in power. The play portrays the agreement of a married couple towards the decision to commit murder, and their attempt to survive through what becomes a complex crisis. As Marjorie Garber describes, in *Shakespeare After All*, the image of "two spent swimmers / do cling together / And choke their art" (I, ii, 7) "evokes and points forward to a moment when the two Macbeths, likewise "[d]oubtful" and exhausted doom each other and pull each other down".[116]

The play seems to probe the relationship between, as A. C. Bradley puts it in his celebrated essay, imagination and body.[117]

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[115] David Scott Kastan, in *Shakespeare After Theory*, notices how the ending of the play reenacts its beginning, with Malcolm being hailed King three times, just as Macbeth had been by the witches, suggesting the likelihood of another period of tyranny: "The ending may be seen either to restore the legitimate line of Duncan, redeeming the murderous interlude of Macbeth's tyranny, or merely to repeat the pattern of violent action that Macbeth initiates. The play both begins and ends with an attack upon established rule, with a loyal nobility rewarded with new titles, and with the execution of a rebellious thane of Cawdor. Malcolm is three times hailed as king exactly as Macbeth has been by the witches, and Malcolm's coronation at Scone either returns the nation to health and order or provides the conditions for a new round of temptation and disorder" see *Shakespeare After Theory* (NY: Routledge, 1999) 159. On the role of Malcolm, see also Emma Smith, *Macbeth: Language and Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[116] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (NY: Anchor Books, 2005) loc 17537 [Kindle Books].

[117] A. C. Bradley grants importance to this aspect, when he describes Macbeth as a "bold ambitious man of action," which has, "within certain limits, the imagination of a poet". According to Bradley, "Shakespeare has concentrated attention on the obscurer regions of man's being, on phenomena which make it seem that he is in the power of secret forces lurking below (...) the writing on his face of strange things he never meant to show" (282). The author is alluding to passages in the play where there is a difference between inner feelings visible in the face and someone's wish to hide them (a possible example would be: "False face must hide what the false heart doth know," [I, vii, 83]). Apart from an imaginative self and a reflective mind, Macbeth is possessed by these "hidden forces operating on minds unconscious of their influence" (284), i.e., the witches' power, a "presence of inchoate evil in the

In a more recent analysis, Brian Cummings clarifies how: "[e]arly in the play, Macbeth himself comments on this rule of the imagination, and as if in afterthought or else in horrible premonition (it is hard to say which) he becomes the first to utter the word 'murder' in the play".[118] Cummings quotes Macbeth's line "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical," arguing that "The borderline between imagining terrible things ('but fantastical') and doing them, is the great ethical and political crux of the play. Macbeth cannot help imagining things, and once imagined, cannot stop doing them."[119] To Cummings, Macbeth's imagination has a causal effect in his actions, as it leads him to do things. Garber's perspective is slightly different: "If the witches are causative, it is not because they tell Macbeth what to do – or, in fact, because they *tell him* anything – but because, like Iago, they allow him to interpret things as he wants to see them[120]. In this reading the witches are causative as they influence Macbeth's interpretation of things, providing him with a justification to do as he wishes. These descriptions seem to be influenced by A. C. Bradley's celebrated essay, in the sense that

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soul itself" (291), described as terrifying. Therefore, in *Macbeth* we have an inner self, a conscious mind and hidden forces. The "location" of the hidden forces is unclear, but they seem to be linked to the self's conscious mind. At this point, the whole representation seems unclear, as Macbeth's inner self and conscious mind are linked to the interior powers of the soul and the outward faculties of the witches, an account in which the various parts of Macbeth's body, mind, consciousness and soul seem to be intertwined. The reason why A. C. Bradley's depiction of Macbeth uses so many different terms to sketch the relationship between his character and his actions is due to the fact that he describes his nature by dividing it into fragments, such as imagination, body, hidden forces, etc., each responsible for a certain state of affairs. I would maintain that in Macbeth's case there is, as the play makes clear, an innocent self, but not a sole inner self. See: A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy - Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, 1957 (London: Macmillan and Co, 1971) 295.

[118] Brian Cummings, "Metalepsis, the boundaries of metaphor," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, Katrin Ettenhuber (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) loc. 5199 [Kindle books].

[119] Cummings, *Ibid*, loc. 5201 [Kindle books].

[120] Garber, *Ibid*, loc. 17458. [Kindle books].

they implicitly dissociate imagination and actions, the will to do something and the act of doing it.

In fact, in *Macbeth*, there appears to be a distinction between the body, related with the will to murder ("I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat" (I, vii, 80-81), and conscience ("But in these cases, / We still have judgment here;" [I, vii, 7-8]).[121] In fact, Lady Macbeth's concerns point to what could be considered an important particularity of some modes of proof. Individuals are described as if they possess two selves, which – for sake of clarity – I will refer to as the true self and the false self. Here, the designation true/false corresponds to the relationship between each person's intentions and their bodily reactions; the untrue self makes us capable of deceit and of attempting to hide it, whereas the true self, prompted by guilt, attempts to show, through physical reactions, what the untrue wishes to hide.

The true self manifests itself through visible bodily proofs, such as perspiration, insomnia, nervousness, and may be considered the body's reaction to the mischief of the untrue self.[122] There are two points of interest in this description: first, the two selves coexist simultaneously, even if not peacefully, with each attempting to deceive the other; secondly, although body and mind act in unison

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[121] Stanley Cavell sees it as Macbeth's "a wish to escape a condition of the human" (...) "I hear Macbeth's speculation of deeds done in the doing, without consequence, when surcease is success, to be a wish for there to be no human action, no separation of consequence from intention, no gratification of desire, no showing of one's hand in what happens". Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge – In Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 233.

[122] Gail Kern Paster, in *Humoring the Body*, notices how "early modern placement differs importantly from modern ontologies, which tend to distinguish sharply between psychology and physiology, between the mental and the physical". This section does not attempt to read early modern emotions historically. On the contrary, it tries to understand and relate Macbeth's portrayal of body and soul with contemporary philosophical theories, such as Derek Parfit's take on personal identity. For a historical view see: Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004) 5.

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

In *Macbeth*'s conceptualization of the relationship between people's faces and their inner feelings, those who are easy to read are differentiated from those who are not. The presupposition seems to be that virtuous people naturally reveal their emotions, whereas an evil character has to try to conceal his or her hidden intentions.[123] This correspondence between faces and thoughts takes

[123] In *Othello* the topic is represented in a slightly different way. One sits through the play while successive inquests follow each other. This is not a case, unlike some authors argue, of erroneous interpretation, but one where the interpreter decides to supplement each bit of evidence in order to prove a pre-established theory. The idea, in *Othello*, that we may decide to imagine that the clues confirming our worst suspicions are everywhere is representative of a particular theory of interpretation. Othello will devise a causal explanation about Desdemona's guilt that appears to make perfect sense. The Moor, like Hamlet, believes one's conjectures may be proved through the analysis of exterior bodily signs, which point to an interior, hidden, truth. Showing Desdemona's reactions as proof is conducting an exercise similar to that of Hamlet, but in *Othello*, as will be seen, the interpretation of these reactions has been previously stipulated.

place, for example, when the Thane of Ross arrives, and Lennox claims: "What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look / That seems to speak things strange" (I, ii, 47-48). Not only Ross'

Interpretation is the decision to understand something not clearly spoken, as if reality were the equivalent of the worst of thoughts and it was never given its counterpart in words. The presumption is that Iago's statements will never be properly understood if one does not supplement them with what he left unsaid, which is why to have no doubts is to be able to see and know the extra others failed to mention (a presumption which, as will be seen, is common to other truth tests). Here lies an important distinction between making erroneous suppositions (I see or hear A and understand it to mean B) and wishing to discover the supplement for what it is said (I see or hear A and consider it must mean A, plus something else). Such theory of interpretation derives from the fact that Othello wishes to determine, in the presence of others, that someone's true self is not visible, but well concealed. His vision about the self is different from what is being described in *Macbeth*'s case. In the Scottish tragedy, evil characters need to hide bodily proof of their deeds. Virtuous figures, however, either are vessels where emotions and thoughts coincide and become visible (someone is frightened by the sight of horrors and shows it in the face); or the absence of bodily proof implies there is nothing being hidden. To the Moor, though, both honest and deceitful characters veil their views, every word and bodily sign is representative of an unmentioned, and potentially monstrous, idea about other persons. Iago's words, from an interpretative point of view, are thus very similar to the physiological signs that, for Othello, betray both Desdemona and Cassio's guilt. In this tragedy, hands and smiles are also the visible expression for what is only partly explained. See, for example, "Give me your hand. This hand is moist, my lady" (...) This argues fruitfulness and liberal heart:/ Hot, hot and moist. This hand of yours requires / A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,/ Much castigation, exercise devout, /For here's a young and sweating devil, here, / That commonly rebels. 'Tis a good hand, A frank one" (*Othello,* III, iv, 36-44). Moist hands, for Othello, find its correlative in the eyes, which is why, before killing Desdemona, the Moor demands: "Let me see your eyes. / Look in my face". (IV, ii, 25-26). Othello is incapable to recognize that sometimes truthful people show similar reactions to those who are guilty, due to fear or to the fact that they feel guilty about something else. Desdemona's moist hands do not show her guilt, as she was innocent, but only fear, which, in fact, provokes physiological reactions such as those previously described.

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

eyes, which represent the weird events he has seen, are easy to read, as it is considered that there is a proper way for eyes to look like at the moment of describing strange events.

In this case, the bodies of those depicting peculiar affairs do not have to try to resemble what it is that the person is describing. On the contrary, that is seen as the natural bodily response to the events observed. Traitors, however, should be defined by their ability to conceal their emotions. Likewise, Duncan's ironic comment towards the treason of the first Thane of Cawdor shows how he was unable to anticipate treason: "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face: / He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust" (I, iv, 11-13). For Duncan, if the face truly mirrors the soul, he would have detected the traitor, through the analysis of his expressions, instead of trusting him. Duncan should probably consider the possibility that he is not a good judge of character, something which will be proven in his failure to anticipate Macbeth's treason, a fact underlined, as often noted, when Shakespeare places Macbeth's entrance in the play after this comment. Duncan's observation seems to suggest that traitors have the skill we admire in actors, who make an art out of constructing a (false) mind in the face, and that no critic would be able to distinguish the true nature of a good performer. Nonetheless, unlike Duncan inference, it should be considered that the ability to hide emotions is not a character trait, as we all do it consciously or unconsciously, at one time or another. What distinguishes us is the skill to lie, as Lady Macbeth knows only too well:

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

> Your face, my Thane, is a book, where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
> Your hand, your tongue: look like th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under't.
> (*Macbeth*, I, v, 62-66)

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

Additionally, he needs to give the impression of being like the "innocent flower," even when he is the "serpent under't," which is a variation upon the image, exemplified in *Hamlet*, of how a serpent had stung Duncan on the ear. This passage, as noted in the Arden edition, is a deviation of Vergil's *latet anguis in herba* (a serpent is hidden in the middle of the grass). More importantly, the passage is an apt translation for Lady Macbeth's purposes, since "flower" is a term for "trope" (the flowers of rhetoric). Essentially, Lady Macbeth is suggesting that rhetoric is an instrument of deceit, a beautiful surface but one used for perverse ends. This association with rhetoric is made clearer by the mention of "tongue," which introduces both

the flower and the serpent (note how Lady Macbeth is also using her tongue, i.e., her own rhetoric, to persuade Macbeth to commit assassination). This is emphasized by Lady Macbeth's initial speech, which takes place before Macbeth arrives, at a time when she is preparing herself to help her husband accomplish his purposes: "That I may pour my spirits in thine ear, / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round," (I, v, 26-28). Lady Macbeth's spirits echo the witches' power and Claudius's "leprous distilment" poured into King Hamlet's ears.[124]

At the same time, chastisement is associated with uses of the tongue, Lady Macbeth's persuasive instrument, with which she recalls the way she will threaten her husband, by claiming he is not manly, as seen in her assertion that Macbeth is "quite unman'd in folly" [III, iv, 72]). Lady Macbeth's spirits will seal her husband's ears, and chastise his hesitations. These "Spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts" (I, v, 40-41) will be those she will subsequently petition to unsex her. When she is speaks with Macbeth, she is the one being chastised, with the intention to "fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full / Of direst cruelty" (I, v, 42-43). Thus, the gold of the crown binds both Lady Macbeth and her husband as a single element uniting their vaulting ambition.[125] Yet, at the same time, the crown also portrays Duncan's murder and the disparity between him and Macbeth. While Duncan is represented as a good King, Macbeth is depicted as a tyrant whose "Golden opinions from all sorts of people, / which would be worn now in their newest gloss, / Not cast aside so soon" (I, vii, 33-35). This sentence, claimed by Macbeth when he was still undecided in his assassination plans, describes Macbeth's life before the murder and afterwards. He

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[124] Cf. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller (Cambridge: The New Cambridge Edition, 2008).

[125] See G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme: Further Considerations of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1963) 130.

was well thought of, but that will cease with Duncan's murder.[126] Unlike "gold," which represents perpetuity and cannot disappear or deceive, golden opinions may not last forever.

Furthermore, Macbeth must pay attention to his own bodily behaviour, as it risks revealing his true intentions. Lady Macbeth refers to eyes and hands, which are commonly associated with deceitful behaviour, but also to Macbeth's tongue, suggesting that she is frightened that his words will betray them.

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

[126] For an account of the imagery of usurpation read the following: Caroline F. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and what it tell us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

Macduff's sentence may be considered a prophecy of Lady Macbeth's unfortunate destiny: hearing about a murder leads to the loss of her mind and, consequently, to her death.

On the relationship between bodily signs and innocence, one may understand how, when the accused is not guilty, the body does not represent his ordeal, as the innocent person's body has nothing to reveal. However, the same does not apply in the case of the accused, and although they might try to control their body, their true self speaks louder, and causes physical signs to appear. When the suspect is guilty, they are unable to control the appearance of body expressions, leading to the expression of their guilt. However, what happens when physical signs do not seem to represent the body's guilt? Nowadays, it is common for the body of the victim of torture to present no scars, or obvious bodily proof to evidence that torture has taken place. Contrast the following: a Brazilian police officer with a stun gun explains how "The main thing is not to leave any marks;"[127] whereas the European Commission of Human Rights argues that "[The falaka] if skillfully done, breaks no bones, makes no skin lesions, and leaves no permanent and recognizable marks".[128] The sentences quoted portray two major forms of stealth, or clear, torture: electrotorture and falaka (or falanga). Commonly, in electrotorture an electric current is transmitted through electrodes that may be placed on any part of the body (the common areas being hands, feet, fingers, toes, ears, nipples, mouth, and genital area), producing excruciating pain. Unlike, for example, cigarette burns, which leave obvious visible traces, electrotorture may go unnoticed in an inspection, as this method leaves only visible small reddish patches, which are easily missed by those who are not

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[127] Darius Rejalis, *Torture and Democracy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007) 190.

[128] *Ibidem*, 269.

experts in the detection of torture.[129] Electrotorture started being used relatively recently, given that it was difficult for torturers to administer shocks that would inflict pain without killing their victims (the main problem was to balance high voltage with low amperage) while, at the same time, the existing techniques have performed well. Early police devices used electrotorture in countries such as Spain, which applied the electric chair during the civil war; Portugal, which resorted to batteries from 1932 to 1939; and Brazil, which started applying electric wires in 1935. In Argentina, the *picaña electrica*, used to prod cattle, was transformed into a portable device that could easily be employed in torture suspects. The magneto, a generator that produces a high voltage spark, was used by the French in Algeria. This form of torture was easy to apply, as magnetos generated power for telephones, cars, refrigerators and planes (which means that, like the saw during the Inquisition, they were easily available for torturers, and could go unnoticed in an inspection by a humanitarian organization). Both the *picaña* and the magneto were soon popularized, being joined by other common electrotorture techniques, such as tasers and stun guns, which are highly efficacious as torture instruments, as they provoke intense pain, while leaving few, if any, visible marks.

Falanga, on the other hand, has been practiced worldwide, as testified by its various names (in Turkish, Arabic or Farsi, it is called *falaka* or *falaqa*, in Moroccan Arabic, *karma* or *arma*, while Europeans call this practice the *bastinado*, after *bastón, bastóne* or *batons*). To paraphrase Darius Rejalis's description and distinguish long whips, used to control groups of workers, cattle and carriages, from short whips, meant for controlling a single worker or domestic slaves, for exorcism and penance in the Catholic church

[129] Michael Kerrigan, *Instruments of Torture*, 2001 (London: Spellmount Publishers, 2007) 150.

(a practice passed on from Roman judges), for disciplining children in school and British sailors. There is a large variety of whips, which vary in size and material. Even if most of them scar the body permanently, there has always been a small tradition of clean whipping (which left bruises, but no scars as some slaves were too valuable to be damaged by the procedure). The *falanga*, therefore, belongs to the old tradition of whipping and consists of the prolonged beating of the victim's feet, which causes acute swelling and pain, may produce chronic disability, muscle fatigue, among many other side effects, but does not leave visible traces to the untrained eye. As noticed in *Instruments of Torture*:

> (...) although a very localized assault, the pain in fact reaches quickly though the body right up to the head. The torture is redoubled when, after the beating, the victim is made to walk on rough ground, perhaps giving the heaviest guard a piggyback. When there is a need for a clean outcome, torturers usually pour water into the feet, make the victim jump in a pool of cold water to reduce the swelling, or apply yogurt or anti- inflammatory cream to the feet. After some days it is usually very difficult to identify that sole produces, over the course of a few minutes, the most maddening pain and mental anguish in the victim.[130]

The issue of identifying the victim of torture poses problems, such as the sceptic's question, "Was he truly tortured?," which is relevant, for example, when one is dealing with refugees who, if torture is proven, will gain political status and avoid being returned to their countries. The question captures the belief that visible proof rules out any sceptical doubts about other persons, as if every thought

[130] *Ibidem*, 122.

and occurrence that were exteriorized in visible evidence would not allow secrets. Medical organizations try, therefore, to uncover what remains hidden and unexpressed, the exterior being used to pinpoint the interior's existence (the implication seems to be that visible proof would manifest its causality, making interpretation unnecessary). Medical staff and humanitarian organizations thus attempt to solve this type of problem and provide a pragmatic reply to the question posed. This means that institutions such as the RCT (Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims), in Copenhagen, are always attempting to find new ways to diagnose stealth torture.

Hermann Vogel, a consultant radiologist at a Hospital in Hamburg, Germany, travels the world in an effort to verify claims of torture. In an interview, he says the following:

> The methods used in Turkey for torturing people with electric shocks have changed because of the efficient work of local activists in diagnosing torture. They used to apply one electrode to one of the victim's fingers and the other to the penis or toes. This left cell damage that could be detected in tissue samples taken from the site of the electrode. Now they are soaking the victim in water and applying larger electrodes, which does not cause local damage to tissue. My Turkish colleagues have asked me to investigate whether it will be possible to detect any effects of the electric current when it is applied this way. I am confident that it will by using MRI scan.[131]

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

This is one of many testimonies explaining how electrotorture may be observed through the use of radiographs or MRIs.[132] In fact, many studies concur with Vogel's perspective, and maintain that although this type of torture does not leave open wounds or fractures, it causes alterations in the body. The same happens with falanga; Kirstine Amris's study shows how this technique produces transformations in the musculoskeletal system only detected by specialists.

According to this investigation, the bleeding, swelling, and the oedemas in the soft tissues of the feet disappear after a few weeks (most lesions repair six weeks after torture has taken place), while ulcerations and fractures may be found, but are rare if the torturer is skilled. However, some vestiges of torture can still be traceable: "[...] at clinical examination reduced elasticity in the foot pads, loosening of the skin, soreness and coating of the plantar fascia (aponeurositis), sensory disturbances in the soles, joint dysfunction, and myofacial changes in the lower extremities are reported as being characteristic [...] The use of imaging in substantiating the clinical diagnosis and documentation of falanga is based on MRI and ultrasound studies showing morphological changes with a layered plantar fascia in torture victims exposed to falanga".[133]

The two quotations, above, show how torture may be proven through the use of MRI scanning technology. First, the medical staff (correctly) assumes that torture leaves physical traces, no matter how hidden they may be. Even if bodily proof is not left for all to see, it is hidden on the body, the vessel where events took place.

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

[133] Kirtine Amris, Sofie Daneskiold-Samsoe, Soren TorpPedersen, Inge Genefke, Bente Danneskiold-Samsoe, "Producing medico-legal evidence: Documentation of torture versus the Saudi-Arabian State of Denial," *Torture,* n.º 17 (3), 2007, 181-95.

This makes the body a place where secrets are buried, but which are still likely to be found by a skilled observer. It should be noted that although there are many differences between the work of these doctors and the activity of torturing, both presume that there are hidden secrets inside the human body that may come to light when the body is used as a place of inquiry. Secondly, techniques such as MRI scanning or radiography transform the idea of interiority in the body when their results are made public. From this point of view, different ways of scanning the body give a shared dimension to what were previously considered to be hidden contents. This means that physicians are attempting to externalize what the torturer tried so skilfully to hide, by rendering the body's interior visible. Therefore, from an interpretative point of view, these interior morphological changes are paired to easily detected exterior physiological signs, such as perspiration.

Even though scan tests can (and must) be interpreted, they do not show irrefutable evidence to those who examine them. A causal relationship between the morphological changes in the body and torture must be proved, and, in order to do so, doctors must show that the changes occurring in the body are a result of torture and not of prior injuries. Thus, for torture to be proven, the patient's history must be told in detail; it becomes necessary to find the relationship between their country's history of violence, their life previous to torture, their family and friends, as well as to thoroughly construe the story of their imprisonment and of the torture techniques used. Doctors must evaluate how the physical and psychological symptoms presented by the patient relate to the story patients tell and the knowledge of torture techniques applied in the country. When they do this, doctors are recognizing that an evaluation of the victim's status may not be limited to an analysis of his or her body. From this viewpoint, to learn the truth about a torture victim means to be able to tell their story and not just to

extract the truth out of the body. This is, in addition, an extremely important difference between those practicing torture and those attempting to denounce it. To the victim, however, the body is a place of betrayal, of pain that cannot be proved without the use of largely inaccessible and sophisticated technology. For the majority of the cases in which falanga was applied, for example, the subjects feel prolonged pain for many years, but not until very recently could the trauma's marks be found, which means that victims remember what caused the pain, but are not able to point to any material evidence of it. The body in which no signs of torture are left visible is the one where no self (neither true nor untrue) of the victim is able to reveal itself.

At the same time, contrary to what happens with the medieval judicial ordeal or with the characters that have been described, such as Claudius and Macbeth, torturers do no analyse bodily signs in contemporary torture. What other modes of proof consider to be the causal relationship between the subject's culpability and his physiology is not taken into account in these cases, since contemporary torture is not based on an analysis of bodily signs. Torturers are not attempting to identify guilt through an evaluation of visible signs, instead they are trying to obtain a confession.

Also relevant, when examining stealth torture, is the fact that, although the invisible signs do not correspond in any way to the victim's intentions (who cannot control what appears and disappears in his or her own body), such torture demonstrates the torturer's wish to hide proof that torture has taken place. In the medieval ordeal the accused does not have control over his or her body, but they either committed the crime or they did not, so in some way they may be considered responsible for the outcome of the test. When one speaks about invisible signs in torture, one is describing the torturer's intentions, as well as

their skill. The torturer's ambition of leaving no vestiges of what could be considered their crime correlates with Lady Macbeth's concern in hiding the evidence. There is equivalence between Lady Macbeth's efforts to mask her face and the torturer's need to conceal the victim's bodily signs. In fact, there is a clear correspondence between the torturer's labours and Lady Macbeth's need to wipe away the intentions and the traces of murder from her husband's face.

While Lady Macbeth needs to control her own body and her husband's, the torturer has only to manage the corporeal signs produced by one person. Nevertheless, these modes of proof seem to imply that the difficulty in controlling one's body is as complex as the calculation of what will happen with another person's body. From this perspective, the criminal's body is as alien to them as the victim's is to the torturer. It is also important to note that there is a period of delay built into each of these activities. The judges in the ordeal need three days in order to discover if the arm presents signs of the ordeal (if it is cured), whereas the torturer needs to wait for the tortured subject to heal before they discover whether the signs of torture have permanently scarred the body (i.e., before they are able to move the prisoner).

The recognition of torture when there are no obvious physical traces requires a new understanding of the body, one which accepts that torture can be used as a way of punishment leaving unforgettable memories but not permanent visible physical wounds. There is a dissociation between memories of events and physical signs. The victim is thus left with a severed body: the corporeality which perjures itself by providing no testimony of the events, and the remembered body, in desperate need of being acknowledged. The acknowledgement involves, therefore, not only the gathering of empirical data, but also acknowledged sensibility, which plays a pivotal role in the inquiries. Thus, rules should be followed when

interviewing a torture victim, both for the purposes of asylum or compensation.[134]

As Charles Altieri suggests, *Macbeth* should be read with Derek Parfit's theory of the self in mind.[135] In his essay, Parfit questions the notion of personal identity, and attempts to explain how questions related to it may be explained without the use of the concept.[136] Parfit describes the case of a person whose brain is transplanted into another body, successfully divided, and transferred into two different persons; as well as the case of special beings that look exactly like humans but are different in that they reproduce through a process of division. Parfit's examples have the purpose of substituting the concepts of psychological continuity[137] and psychological connectedness[138] for that of identity. The author aims to show that the existence of several selves is not as impossible as one may think. Thus, a self may correspond to a continuous self throughout time, but also to different selves, as transformations of character or changes in life-style may produce multiple selves associated with a single individual. This explains the common idea that we are no longer the same when we experience a life-changing transformation.

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

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

[136] Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" *in Personal Identity,* ed. John Perry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975) 199-226.

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

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

Through time, an individual may possess different selves, which they might refer to as their "anterior self" or they "future self." Parfit attempts to show that, in the continuous existence of each person, there are degrees of relation between earlier selves and future selves. This is the reason why the author thinks that the person living with two halves of the brain of different people, as well as those who possess the brain of another, may survive without the need to be described through the use of a principle of identity. Parfit uses the word "self" to designate the highest degree of psychological connectedness, claiming that the several selves of an individual whose brain is divided lives just as a person who, after a violent emotional process, cannot describe themselves as being the same. One would not find, in *Macbeth*, a single body and mind, but a series of selves which vary.

Altieri claims that we are presently accountable for our various future selves, which is the reason why we must try to act responsibly. But, unlike us, Macbeth assumes to know who his future self will be. A. C. Bradley, in his celebrated essay, is right to notice that the "the words of the Witches are fatal to the hero only because there is in him something which leaps into life at the sound of them".[139] The knowledge of the future makes it impossible for him to choose courses of action which do not involve a path towards what he considers to be his prophesized destiny, and which confirm his ambitions. The witches' insight not only eliminates other possibilities of action, but also presents the following dilemma: if Macbeth is meant to be King, why not become King (right now)? It soon becomes clear that Macbeth will not be able to delay the reward and wait for the proper time to come; instead, he decides to transform his future self into his present self. The play debates usurpation,

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[139] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy – Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*, 1957 (London: Macmillan and Co, 1971) 292.

which critics have described as a jump in time, the desire to make instants elapse so that a distant future may be transformed into the present, an aspiration appearing in passages such as "We'd jump the life to come" (I, vii, 7) or "Away and mock the time with fairest show" (I, vii, 82).

Macbeth's several selves are, of course, described by the witches during the opening of the play: he is Macbeth and Cawdor, he will become Glamis and King. After Macbeth becomes Thane of Glamis, and before the assassination is committed, his several selves coexist in what is (or seems to be) the unity previously represented by the three witches. When Macbeth and his wife start to plan the murder of Duncan, the dissociation between their selves' conscience and bodily signs acquires importance. "Murder will, finally, change things, as the witches" claim, that "Glamis hath murder'd Sleep, and therefore Cawdor / Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!" (II, ii, 41-42), makes clear. The various selves share the murder that has taken place and the impossibility of sleep, but the way Macbeth, Glamis, and Cawdor are invoked indicates that there is not a single conscience at stake.[140] Lorna Hutson, in *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, notices how "the conception of sleep on Shakespeare's scene is not limited to that of remorse of conscience. It is a more flexible, polyvalent, forensic argument involving, among other things, the argument of innocence and the possibility of witness".[141] Morover, Hutson exposes how Shakespeare is reading Cicero, where "sleep is an ambiguously

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[140] Lorna Hutson, in *Circumstantial Shakespeare*, claims that "Shakespeare's striking innovation in Macbeth is to divorce forensic rhetoric from questions of law and justice, associating it instead with the depiction of a profound subjectivity, and with feelings of guilt, which become, as it were, nationally diffused through the language of domestic deprivation – sleeplessness, lack of nourishment, maternal failure – associated with witchcraft. Lorna Hutson, *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2015) 145.

[141] Hutson, *Ibid*, 147.

hyperbolic proof of innocence," and quotes his "story of two sons who were acquitted of parricide, when all other signs pointed suspiciously at them, simply because they were able to sleep".[142] In this way, "the play's achievement is the enduring power of its depiction of the torments of Macbeth's guilt".[143]

Macbeth is dealing with the effects that his deeds have on his present and future self. Parfit's theory allows us, therefore, to introduce a temporal dimension to the difference between true and untrue selves. The degree of continuity between selves (this temporal dimension) allows us to understand how the actions of someone's anterior self have consequences in their present and future selves; whereas the concept of psychological continuity would explain the psychosomatic effects of murder, such as sleeplessness. After the assassination, therefore, there is a corporal continuity between Macbeth, Glamis, and Cawdor (their body is the same), a causal continuity (the fact that Glamis murdered sleep makes both Cawdor and Macbeth suffer from insomnia), and a conscience which time has transformed. From this perspective, Macbeth fails to anticipate the negative effects murder will inevitably have on his future self (he assumes that his true self will deal with murder in the same way as he has dealt with killing in battle before, and fails to realize that the nature of remorse resulting from usurpation will be very different).[144]

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[142] *Ibidem*, 164.

[143] *Ibidem*, 159.

[144] Jennifer Ann Bates, in *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination*, reads A.C. Bradley's mentioned essay and contrasts it with Hegel's reading of *Macbeth*. Contra both authors, she considers that "it is superstition that leads him to murder the King." The play is considered a "pre-modern tragedy," in the sense that Macbeth is wicked, but not evil, and does seem to have what Hegel would consider to be a moral conscience: "Macbeth is not unimaginative. Rather, his imagination portrays very clearly the desolation of his imagination. To the extent that Macbeth *believes* his imagination (as he believed the witches), Macbeth does not see his imagination at work. In this respect, he is dreaming. And in this respect, again, he is not a

True and untrue selves coexist, therefore, through time, challenging each other and producing dilemmas for the person's body and soul. This does not, however, solve the problem, as Macbeth and his wife frequently seem to represent a body and soul working in unison and suffering from a similar type of bodily pains. While there is dissociation between Macbeth's anterior and present selves, there is frequently correspondence between Lady Macbeth and her husband's consciences and bodies. Parfit's essay presents an interesting alternative to the argument which has been provided by critics who tend to evaluate the tragedy through a discussion of the variation of strength between the two main characters during the play. Critical accounts may indeed fail to explain the theory that they briefly state. For example, A. C. Bradley notices how, in the beginning of the play, Macbeth and his wife seem to be "of equal importance,"[145] and, more importantly, how "Her ambition for her husband and herself (there was no distinction to her mind) proved fatal to him."[146] The significant section of the phrase consists in the idea that in Lady Macbeth's mind there was no difference between what she envisioned for herself and for her husband. Bradley, however, considers each character separately, instead of taking them into account as a single entity. At the same time, Freud's essay on Lady Macbeth (almost) provides the explanation we have been looking for, as the author briefly mentions Ludwig Jekels' belief that Shakespeare divides a character into two personages "which taken separately, are not completely understandable and

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responsible self-conscious agent" (loc. 4346). I disagree with Bates, as I do consider Macbeth to have full conscience of the implications of murder. Still, the author is right to note that, in the monologue "Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow," "The irony here of course is that Macbeth is symbolically representing the death of his own imagination as well as the death of his wife" (loc. 5). Cf. Jennifer Ann Bates, *Hegel and Shakespeare on Moral Imagination* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010) 5.

[145] *Ibidem,* 293.

[146] *Ibidem*, 317.

do not become so until they are brought together once more into unity."[147] Freud claims:

> The germs of fear which break out in Macbeth on the night of the murder do not develop further in him but in her. It is he who has the hallucination of the dagger before the crime; but it is she who afterwards falls ill of a mental disorder [...] Thus what he feared in his pangs of conscience is fulfilled in her; she becomes all remorse and he all defiance. Together they exhaust the possibilities of reaction to the crime, like two disunited parts of a single psychical individuality, and it may be that they are both copied from a single prototype.[148]

This is the reason why Lady Macbeth may not be understood without "considering the Macbeth who completes her."[149] The relationship is, however, more complex than Freud's conception, as the he fails to see how both Macbeths suffer physically from the crime.[150] Not only does Macbeth experience sleeplessness but he also has hallucinations (in a scene, to which I shall return, in

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[147] Sigmund Freud, "Some Character-Types Met with in Psycho-Analytic Work," *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, vol. XIV, 1957. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1973), 323. For a discussion of the play and Freudian models, see David Willbern, "Phantasmagoric *Macbeth*" *ELR* 16 (1986): 520-49). For a comprehensive account of the views of Bradley, Freud, Wilson Knight, L.C. Kights, and Empson, in relation to *Macbeth*, see Nicolas Tredell, *Macbeth – Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (NY: Palgrave, 2006).

[148] *Ibidem*, 324.

[149] *Ibidem*, 323.

[150] Richard Strier quotes Freud's essay in order to demonstrate that the "pleasures fully imagined in the play are not physical [...] What is focused upon is the inability of the Macbeths to enjoy happy hierarchical sociability. Unlike Duncan, who seemed to enjoy life's pleasures [...] The rest of the play concerns Macbeth's lack of all pleasures", see *The Unrepentant Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 143-145. For a discussion of Macbeth's fragmented self, see Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980). On Macbeth's masculine identity (or lack thereof), see Coppélia Kahn's psychoanalytic perspective of the play in

which Lady Macbeth's role as his helper is crucial). This would mean that neither character would be entirely made of remorse or defiance; on the contrary, they both share similar feelings, even if at different times, as if they were the single prototype the author alludes to. Although Freud gives the interpretative clue and then inflects his argument, Parfit's account helps to clarify how Macbeth's case seems to be similar to a situation where two people who were fused together have before them the difficult task of conciliating different desires, intentions and characteristics. They are not, unlike Freud's considerations, copied from a single prototype; rather, they are a single individual, resulting from what Parfit would call a fusion, with compatible desires and characteristics:

> To give examples – first, of compatibility: I like Palladio and intend to visit Venice. I am about to fuse with a person who likes Giotto and intends to visit Padua. I can know that the one person we shall become will have both tastes and both intentions. Second, of incompatibility: I hate red hair, and always vote Labour. The other person loves red hair, and always votes Conservative. I can know that the one person we shall become will be indifferent to red hair and a floating voter.[151]

The fusion of two beings "would involve the changing of some of our characteristics and some of our desires".[152] This is a relevant point, for, at first, Macbeth's conflicting selves render him unable, in Shakespeare's words, to decide to go through with the deed, and what enables his actions is the incentive given to him by his wife

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Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981).

[151] Derek Parfit, *Ibid*, 212.

[152] *Ibidem,* 212.

(i.e. her rhetorical skills). This would explain why Lady Macbeth solves her husband's hesitation towards murder and vice versa, as what made them compatible allows them to fight towards the same goals, share fears and intentions. Parfit is, though, also underlining the ambiguity in the fused subject's behaviour, making him become a floating voter with indifferent taste in hair. In *Macbeth,* this allows us to understand how the subject about to fuse has, like a couple to be married, little control over their (individual) actions. Interestingly, in Parfit's terms, although each Macbeth is a unique individual, they seem to act as a fused subject with the degree of compatibility Parfit longs for. *Macbeth* is a case in which two people act as one and this is the characteristic that enables them to make decisions and overcome their individual anxieties. They are able to act in unison like a fused being, finding solutions to their problems. Shall we say they are the epitome of marriage?

Generations of critics have argued that Macbeth's frenzy of murder alters events. Harley Granville-Barker first noticed that the tragedy begins, from the couple's point of view, the moment Macbeth feels he should not share the details of the crime with his wife.[153] If, in the beginning of the play, Macbeth received advice and emotional strength from his wife, if she sketched the murder plans for him, Macbeth ends up refusing to share his knowledge of events with her. Granville-Barker considers the following lines:

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

[153] Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, 1974 (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1974).

And sees them as an indication that "He treats her like a child [...] It is worth noting that, in this scene, Macbeth's mind is consumed by the ill-powers of Nature–upon the powers that the weird sisters wield–as if it is their fellowship he now feels in need of".[154] Altieri agrees that something is said to have changed in the nature of their relationship, and she is expected to wait and applaud his actions, not to take part in them. Suddenly, Macbeth wishes not only for his wife to be unacquainted with the details of the crime, but also puts her in the position of having to applaud actions which she has not helped to devise. Another possibility should, however, be brought up, as Macbeth's sorrow in the end of the play does not appear to show the lack of consideration for his wife that critics deem to exist. It could be argued that the assassination of Duncan's makes Macbeth realize that such actions have consequences not only in his future self, but also in his wife's (that they are inseparable). Macbeth knows that caring for his own body and Lady Macbeth's is the same thing, which is why he realizes she will share the physical effects of the murder. He will, therefore, attempt to protect them both from further pain, which means safeguarding her from the knowledge of the other murders. This need to protect his body (which is the same as Lady Macbeth's) had started a little earlier, when Lady Macbeth gives her husband her usual advice, suggesting that he should disguise his thoughts before their guests: "Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks; be bright and jovial among your guests to-night" (III, ii, 28-29). Macbeth's role was one of following her suggestions without commenting upon them, he now replies in a similar tone:

[154] *Ibidem*, 76.

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

Macbeth wants his wife to be innocent of the details of the plans, but asks her eye and tongue to deceive Banquo. More than that, she has to use her memories, her fond remembrance of Banquo, to make him feel safe, so that he does not suspect their intentions. Their faces must mask the mendacity of their hearts. Macbeth has already attempted this dissociation, as before the murder is carried out he wishes for a separation of the senses; hand and eye must be alienated: "The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be, / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see" (I, iv, 52-53). If his eyes could but be closed while the murder takes place, when the hand is in charge, then his moral conscience would not be able to interfere. Macbeth longs for the sensation of leaving one's body while the crime is being committed. Although the eye is afraid of murder, once it is committed there is, or so Macbeth thinks, no longer the problem of seeing it. Lady Macbeth comments: "These deeds must not be thought / After these ways: so, it will make us mad" (II, ii, 32-33). Both share the erroneous assumption that if they somehow dissociate their conscious beings from their actions, murder will have no effect on them.

The idea that thoughts may be stopped finds its parallel in Macbeth's desire to close the senses during the time of the crime,

different attempts to protect each other. In Parfit's terms, this would be exemplary of the fused person thinking about their self in terms of survival and not of personal identity. The problem would be that Macbeth and his wife incur in the fallacies of self-interest. It is a case in which "what we ought to do can be against our interests. There is only the general problem that it may not be what we want to do".[155] According to Parfit, both egoism and altruism stem from the assumption that personal identity matters. If, however, one understands that several selves coexist in a relationship of degree, then the concern for my particular and present self is a mistake, as I should be concerned with the implications my actions may have on my several selves.

In *Macbeth*, although the couple suspect that usurpation and further assassinations in the long run will be negative to their well-being, they find excuses to do it, assuming it will fulfil their present desires. This would be a situation in which one goes against one's best interest, hoping to be able to avoid the consequences of one's own acts (and an act of egoism based on an erroneous assumption about personal identity).[156] Had the couple realized this, they would have been able to avoid the tragedy.

At the same time, from the moment Duncan is assassinated, Macbeth and his wife try to delay the tribunal of interpretation that would make them responsible for their actions. This point is an interesting parallel with Hamlet's delay of Claudius's death. While Hamlet wishes to catch his uncle's reaction, Macbeth and his wife attempt to dissociate their bodies from their conscience, in the false

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[155] *Ibidem*, 220.

[156] For a recent analysis of Macbeth's lines "Then comes my fit again / I had else been perfect, / Whole as the marble, founded as the rock, / As broad and general as the casing air; / But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears" read *Renaissance Figures of Speech*. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, Katrin Ettenhuber (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) loc. 903 [Kindle books].

assumption that 1) such a feat may be successfully accomplished, 2) that they possess a single body and mind, instead of a series of true and untrue selves fighting continuously through time, 3) that skill is not required to control bodily reactions, 4) that they are protecting each other, thus, safeguarding their fused being. Finally, they assume that to delay the tribunal is to avoid it entirely, which, as was seen, is not the case.

In its characterization of bodily signs and physical reactions, *Hamlet* assumes signs do not need to be interpreted, they are considered to be so clear that the only thing to do is to look at them attentively. This is the reason why Horatio and Hamlet seem to see the same when they look at Claudius. This type of evidence seems to demonstrate a dichotomy between forms of proof: if, on the one hand, they seem to work through an ostensive definition (pointing to an object and defining it), on the other, they also depend on the observer's ability to tell, or justify, a story. Both forms of description will be object of discussion in the following chapter, which will open the discussion to other forms of testing evidence, such as dolls' houses for forensic use.

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Truth in a nutshell

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

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

This chapter examines two complementary attempts to control interpretation. In doing so, it considers the possibility that a problem may be solved if the observer is both attentive and skilful, and further contends that possessing the ability to point to objects or characteristics in order to make truthful assertions is a fundamental part of this hermeneutic process. However, the act of pointing to something gives the impression that interpretation is not being used as a tool for the object's comprehension, which, as will be seen, is not always the case. This way of understanding intricate problems considers that certain objects, used as touchstones, allow us to make truthful judgments. In such cases, the interpreter must manage the touchstone appropriately, thereby associating the technique of pointing to interpretative tools such as comparison and analysis. Critical literature on "interpretation" and the hermeneutic tradition is considerable, its classical precedents ranging from Biblical exegesis to the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur, to the New Criticism developed by critics such as Wimsatt and Beardsley, and reader-response critics like Stanley Fish. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics is particularly relevant, as it denies the presumption that legal hermeneutics is a special case, and places it side by side with theological and philological

interpretation. The concept of interpretation is, thus, redescribed in the context of legal hermeneutics.[157]

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

Frances Glessner Lee's Doll's Houses

In a crime scene, the unexposed side of a pillow is stained with lipstick marks. Is this an indication of natural death, suicide, or

[157] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Exemplary Significance of Legal Hermeneutics" and "Hermeneutics and Historicism," both in *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004) 321 34, 519 32. Chapter 3 furthers the discussion of interpretation as a term of art.

murder? Learning how to distinguish different hypotheses will be the investigator's task. Frances Glessner Lee, a wealthy woman with an unusual interest in death, forensic medicine, crime investigation, and doll's houses, searched for a way to deal with such problems. Consequently, Lee was responsible for the establishment of the Department of Legal Medicine at Harvard, in 1931. Primarily, however, she is remembered for building "The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death," a group of dioramas that reproduce crime scenes on a one-inch to one-foot scale. The "nutshell models," small doll's houses featuring gruesome details, have the purpose of teaching policemen to be attentive, and to reflect upon the type of proof one may find in a crime scene. Constructed over many years, in obedience with the most rigorous principles of representation, the models were extremely detailed, as Glessner Lee considered that the policemen would only take the exercise seriously if they felt the crime scenes were real. Varying according to each crime, the dioramas contain, for example, droplets of blood on the floor or in a baby's nursery room wall, a dead miniature body in a cabin, a box of tiny chocolates beneath a bed, cigarettes, newspapers, an open window. All models have a calendar on the wall, which indicates the day of the murder.

Inside the nutshell called "Unpapered Bedroom," one encounters a miniature doll lying dead in bed. In the police report, it is explained that Mrs. Bessie Collins had rented a room to a couple that identified themselves as Mr. and Mrs. John Smith.[158] On Monday morning the man leaves early, paying for the room and asking the landlady to leave his wife undisturbed, as she wished to sleep in. At three in the afternoon, Mrs. Bessie Collins asks the maid, Stella Walsh, to

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

see if the area may be tidied. At five, the servant says something is wrong, as she is unable to wake Mrs. John Smith. Both women enter the room and discover the body is cold, prompting them to call the police. Investigators find the room exactly as the landlady had left it.

This educational tool has the purpose to train police officers, in order to improve their observation skills, avoid the destruction of valuable evidence, and notice small details, without which the crime scene would be misunderstood (policemen were given the information usually available in investigations, such as witnesses' testimonies). Charles Dickens, in *Bleak House*, characterized Inspector Bucket as an intelligent man with a "cunning eye," one who "mounts a high tower in his mind and looks out far and wide."[159] In the case of Glessner Lee's dioramas, police officers should possess intelligence and observation skills, but instead of looking far and wide, they were required to concentrate on the particular elements of the crime scene. Glessner Lee explains that,

> The inspector may best imagine them by imagining himself a trifle less than six inches tall. With that firmly in mind, a few moments of observation will then make him able to step into the scene and there find many tiny details that might otherwise escape notice.[160]

Whereas Dickens's Inspector Buckley searches his own mind for an explanation, Glessner Lee's investigators must concentrate their attention on each object. To properly see them, the viewer had to position himself in the correct angle, given that the puzzle

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[159] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Wordsworth Classics, 2001) 655.

[160] Frances Glessner Lee, "Foreword to the Investigator," *in* Corinne May Botz, *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004) 47.

proposed by Glessner Lee could only be solved if the observer were in the right place. This was not, however, the entirety of what the investigator had to envision:

> Because continuous actions cannot be represented, each model is a tableau depicting the scene at the most effective moment, very much as if a motion picture were stopped at such a point. (...) In presenting these cases the Nutshell laboratories are acting as a consulting agency, the time and date when a case is presented to them is not necessarily the same as the time and date when it is reported to the police. Each case is based on actual facts, altered to avoid identification and enlarged to create a more intricate problem.[161]

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

[161] Frances Glessner Lee, *Ibid*, 47.

of Glessner Lee's method: although the crime scene is taken as a whole, each object represents a particular problem needing to be disentangled, without which it becomes impossible to find the solution to the case. For this to be possible, it is necessary to have method.[162] Lee provided the material which would usually be at the investigators' disposal when approaching the crime scene, as well as initial statements from witnesses. It should be considered that a crime scene represents a place where something extraordinary takes place. The occurrence of a murder, whose meaning has to be disclosed, is frequently compared with an enigmatic site that resists interpretation. Yet, the crime scene is also a location where a problem is presented, thus calling for interpretation. Perhaps a reasonable account for this would be to consider that crime scenes and, consequently, the objects inside them, are difficult to explain, but do demand explanation. In her "Foreword to the Investigator," Glessner Lee observes:

> It will simplify the examiner's work if he will first choose the point at which he enters the scene and, beginning at his left at the place, describe the premises in a clockwise direction back to the starting point, thence to the centre of the scene and ending with the body and its immediate surroundings.[163]

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

[163] *Ibidem*, 47.

Each article presents a problem needing to be solved. Lee's skilled observer should point carefully to an object, in an attempt to underline otherwise unnoticed features, which exist, and are potentially visible, only to be seen by particularly good observers or specialists. This perspective results from the idea that the interpreter's surveillance brings forth hidden characteristics of things or situations. Such a mode of understanding assumes that doubtful things can be exhaustively analysed through observation. The description of the scene in a clockwise direction turned police officers into systematic analysts, and had the purpose of making them acknowledge every article in the room, whether the item had relevance or not. Assumptions should only be made after the categorization of the objects had taken place, as every detail could be of importance for the solving of the crime. To observe a scene in a strictly clockwise motion implies, first, the act of collecting information and, secondly, the transformation of that information into proof. Glessner Lee does not, however, portray this as an explanation of evidence; her aim with the nutshells is to observe something and not to interpret it. As will be seen later, in these modes of proof, interpretation seems to be considered something the observer adds to the facts previously analysed, which should be dismissed in accurate evaluations.

A comment in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* helps to enlighten Glessner Lee's theory of observation, as the possibility of showing an object without explaining is arguably better understood if one considers ostensive definitions.[164] Wittgenstein argues that, to understand what "red" is, we do not need to hear an explanation of what red means, but only to point to a red object or to say "that is red". Hence, the colour may be demonstrated through the

[164] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* transl. G. E. M. Anscombe, 1953 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001, § 27 to § 39) 11-17.

application of the word "red" to a red object; to understand an object is to be able to name it and to comprehend its use. Likewise, P. M. S. Hacker contends that ostensive explanations may appear in the form of "a deictic gesture; something pointed at; a verbal formula that is, or that is called".[165] These definitions are not, however, a description or a justification, instead "what it does is provide a *standard of correctness* for the use of the word red".[166] There are important differences – which will be discussed later – between Glessner Lee's perspective and Wittgenstein's claim. Nevertheless, the notion that "an ostensive definition explains the use" of a certain word accurately represents these investigators' ambition, as their main purpose in a crime scene is to be able to point to some objects and determine what their use was in that context.[167] This process may be learned through what Wittgenstein calls "ostensive teaching of words":

> An important part of the training will consist in the teacher's pointing to objects, directing the child's attention to them, and at the same time uttering a word; for instance, the word "slab" as he point to that shape. (I do not want to call this "ostensive definition," because the child cannot as yet ask what the name is. I will call it "ostensive teaching of words". – I will say it will form an important part of the training, because it is so with human beings; not because it could not be imagined otherwise.[168]

Here, Wittgenstein is describing the way in which children learn to relate a certain object, colour, or shape with its name, thus

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[165] G. P. Baker, P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning,* 1980 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 85.

[166] *Ibidem*, 91.

[167] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Ibid*, § 30, 12.

[168] *Ibidem,* §6, 4.

associating "the word and the thing." Unlike an ostensive definition, which requires someone to acknowledge and understand what names are, this introductory process merely aims to teach students to name objects. Such procedure, which in Glessner Lee's theory of observation would consist of the making of a list with the name of the objects in the crime scene, is the first step in Wittgenstein's process of learning. After this, one could be taught how to describe them, as "naming and describing do not stand on the same level: naming is a preparation for description. Naming is so far not a move in the language-game – any more than putting a piece in its place on the board is a move in chess."[169]

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

[169] *Ibidem*, §49, 21.

of ostensive definitions, Glessner Lee is concerned with the need to give police officers technical tools. Pointing to something is, therefore, not only a way of understanding the object but also of showing others what was perceived.

Although listing the objects in the nutshell consists of the enumeration of what is found, the second step in Glessner Lee's proposal is to advise investigators to employ these found details as what Wittgenstein would call "samples". This vast group of entities includes, but is not limited to colours, actions, objects, events, and shapes, depending on how they are used, which may result in them acquiring different significances.[170] They are, therefore, an example for something else:

> The observer must therefore view each case with an entirely open mind. The Nutshell Studies are not presented as crimes to be solved – they are, rather, designed as exercises in observing and evaluating indirect evidence, especially that which may have medical importance.[171]

The type of indirect evidence that can make a difference in investigative decisions can, therefore, be considered a sample with an unusual role. The occurrence of a murder transforms the common meaning of the objects that lie inside the crime scene; they are often described as possessing something that needs to be reinterpreted, so that they may be understood. Each diorama presents a fiction requiring a justification and, more importantly, endows objects with a secondary, but highly important, meaning. In Glessner Lee's doll's

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[170] As P. M. S. Hacker notices: "When used as samples, functional objects typically do not have their usual functions nor actions their standard roles". G. P. Baker, P. M. S. Hacker, *Ibid*, 99.

[171] Frances Glessner Lee, *Ibid*, 47.

houses, some coffee cups and bloodstains have a double function: even as certain objects fulfil the particular function for which they were made, they are also evidence for something else. Although the use of the objects does not change in and of itself – a lipstick stained pillow is, after all, still a pillow – they acquire an additional function, their place in the scene is transformed in this context where they work as proof.

In the models, therefore, evidence is distinguished from regular objects, given that it is, somehow, dissonant. The strangeness of the clue may stem from a diverse range of reasons. An object may, for example, be simply be misplaced, as happens in the nutshell "Attic." In this model, the observer should seek to understand why, if the victim committed suicide by hanging herself, one of her shoes is on her foot and the other on the stairs that lead to the attic. Attention should be paid to the doll's face, which exhibits scratches and bruises that could suggest murder. Likewise, there is proof which contradicts other pieces of evidence. In "Attic," the love letters on the floor could reveal nostalgia for a lost past, but the scratches on the woman's face indicate violence, which suggests that when all of the evidence is taken into account homicide makes more sense than suicide. Missing clues are also significant. If a man was shot and the bullet is not in his body, police officers should search the premises for it until it is discovered, as the trajectory of the bullet provides indications as to the precise location of where the murder took place.[172]

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[172] In the TV show *The Wire*, Season 1, episode 4, Detectives Jimmy McNulty and Bunk Moreland enter an old crime scene, in which they observe the scene and attempt to put themselves in the position shown in the photographs of the murder so as to understand the trajectory of the bullet. While observing the scene, they repeat the word "fuck" and point to the evidence. The bullet trajectory explains how the murder occurred, in an exercise which Glessner Lee would approve of, as it is based on observation and pointing to the evidence. *The Wire*. David Simon, dir., Robert F. Colesberry, Nina Kostroff Noble, prod., 2008, DVD.

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

In the case of the Glessner Lee's dioramas, objects are only significant when she wishes them to be so, as they translate her deliberate intentions in the construction of the models. As with a riddle, policemen have to discover Glessner Lee's intentions and explain them. In a crime scene, for example, when both criminal and victim touch these entities, they bestow meaning on them. Assassination is responsible for endowing objects with new and

eloquent features but the investigators' interpretation also plays a significant role in their explanation.

This type of proof would, therefore, be difficult to interpret due to its complexity, but expressive as it reveals someone's actions and intentions in a certain situation. In the case of the dioramas, while objects effectively speak as they reveal Glessner Lee's intentions, the models only tell us what she wishes them to say, they are intentional objects. If the same could be said of a crime scene, then each object could be explained according to the way it had been handled by the murderer, the victim, or both. The explanation for their transformation of status could not be found in the object itself, but through the way someone had manipulated them. Pointing to objects and writing lists are, after all, methods of making choices, of picking something from a context and underlining its significance. The objects in a certain museum, returning to Wittgenstein's samples, were chosen by someone, most likely an expert, who considered them, for example, illustrative of the art of a given period. These choices are often reason for disagreement between connoisseurs, who must also find factual evidence for not accepting others' points of view. The reason why disagreement and erroneous conclusions are limited in Glessner Lee's doll's houses results from the fact that she is responsible for the writing of a history of each object, she is able to distinguish those which have a relation with the crime and those which do not, meaning that she is able to correct the investigator's conclusions. Although it makes sense to assume that our skills of observation improve with experience, it should not be presumed that pointing to something is an act which does not involve interpretation or require previous judgment; in a literary text, as will be seen, the critic may point to a certain passage and underline it through the use of quotation, but this does not, in itself, help to elucidate their thoughts about the text or even the text itself. Neither the act of observing nor that of "describing the

premises" may be considered neutral activities; they rely upon a worldview and prior experiences which so often determine our gaze. Glessner Lee recognizes this, which leads her to understand the need to systematize observation and, still, when depicting the necessity to "evaluate indirect evidence" she seems to consider that this assessment will be mainly factual.

Not all cases are, however, like the crime scene models. Evidence which is considered self-sufficient, requiring no other proof or explanation, is seldom, if ever, refuted as mistaken or misinterpreted by its observers. The correlation between innocence and clear bodily signs is ancient, as the ordeal illustrates. Although there is critical disagreement regarding the purpose, or social function, of the medieval ordeal, it may be considered that one of its relevant characteristics is the idea that God interferes in the proof's outcome so that self-explanatory marks may appear on the guilty party's body.[173] Eberhard of Bamberg described the ordeal's execution and its rigorous principles:[174] in the hot water ordeal (*judicium aquae ferventis*), three days before the proof takes place, the accused is blessed and begins a period of fasting, in which they would only eat bread, salt, herbs, and are required to pray. The priest enters the Church followed by the jury and the accused. While the others waited, the Priest elects the place where the fire is to be lit and blesses it, as well as the instruments which are to be used in the exorcism of the Devil's presence, after this he then celebrates Mass.

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

[174] *The Breviary of Eberhard of Bamberg*, ed. Zeumer em MG.LL. Sec. V, *Formulae*, 650, transl. *in* University of Pennsylvania Translations and Reprints. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1898) 7-9.

The suspect's arm is then cleansed with soap and observed by the jury while the water is boiled. If it was a simple ordeal, used to try misdemeanours, the accused would be asked to put his arm in the water at wrist length, or to take a ring or a stone from the water from a previously established distance. When the accusations are more serious, the accused would be submitted to the triple ordeal, in which the whole arm was immersed in water until it reached the shoulder, whether there was, or not, an object inside the cauldron. When the proof ended the suspect's arm is bandaged with a clean cloth and sealed with a seal of the church. After three days, the limb is unwrapped, and if the wound is clean and the injuries healing well, they would be considered innocent. Although there would be a jury present at the ceremony which might, sometimes, disagree,[175] most ordeals were solved without further inquiry. The meaning of the bodily signs was deemed incontrovertible, and not the mere outcome of an observation which determined a state of affairs. The criteria governing the application of the ordeal was based on the consideration that it was validated by Divine intervention, thus there was not a role for human interpretation in it. It was not supposed to be uncertain; it was an objective mode of proof based on fact.

In Glessner Lee's dioramas, the investigator's skill relies on their capacity to observe the evidence. In the ordeal, the ritual needed to be meticulously followed so that a clear result might be secured. Failure to do so would produce dubious bodily signs, such as an arm which the jury is unable to evaluate with certitude. The inconclusive outcome of the proof is not related with the subject's eventual guilt, with God's role on the test, or the jury's evaluation, but with the inability to follow the procedure. In this case, the interpreter's role does not rely on his capacity to be a good judge.

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[175] Cf. Bartlett, Robert, *Trial by Fire and Water – The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

This means that observation is not considered a technical tool. In theory, if the priest followed instructions, the jury's role would only be that of claiming a verdict and making it clear to others, by publicly showing an irrefutable result.

As with Glessner Lee's objects, the arm is a sample, proof of the test which has taken place. It is, however, a sample that may not and does not need to be grouped with other forms of evidence; it is the single proof that allows the jury to pronounce a verdict and to dismiss all other types of evidence. Pointing to the limb follows its observation, and its importance is derived from the fact that it is used as a way of distinguishing truthful and untruthful bodily signs, as well as proclaiming a verdict. In the ordeal, judges are not naming something, but reaching a verdict. This would, then, correspond to the type of proof which may be portrayed as eloquent, in the sense that it has different meanings depending on context.

To assume so, however, is to ignore that ordeals were acts of God, which is to disregard the idea that it is God who endows objects and limbs with exceptional abilities. Ordeals reveal God's intervention in the proof (in the same way that Glessner Lee devised her models) and they are, from this perspective, intentional objects. I would, therefore, deny the notion that these things do, themselves, utter the truth. Ventriloquism, in this situation, is expressed by God's intervention in the proof.

The idea that judgments sustained by factual knowledge should be encouraged seems to stem from another relevant point of view. As shown earlier, in the medieval judicial ordeal it is presumed that to put something on trial is to submit it to a physical test from which clear conclusions can be drawn. This is to consider that ordeals are a non-intellectual way of determining the truth. For example, in the medieval cold-water ordeal (*judicium aquae frigidae*) it was assumed, as Hincmar de Reims upholds, that water was a divine, purified element, which would not receive those who

had been stained by a crime. After the ritual had taken place, the suspect would be tied with a rope and lowered into a pond or a reservoir of water. If Nature took its normal course, i.e. if they drowned, the suspect was innocent, for this form of proof differed from others in requiring a miracle to convict the accused. The outcome of the ordeal was self-explanatory and did not require the use of complex intellectual judgments. The fact that a miracle was required for the accused's body not to be taken into the waters made the verdict easy to justify.[176] The implication seems to be that a judgment of fact is clearer than intellectual forms of proof, since it does not depend on human speculation, but on evidence based on facts that may be observed by all. While human reasoning is individual and may lead to differentiated conclusions, facts are universal. The ordeal is seen as a way to put something to the test, an experiment dealing with the purpose of making the truth appear and interpretation unnecessary.

The similarity between the ordeal and Glessner Lee's models is rooted in the fact that pointing is a way to form a verdict, even if in Glessner Lee's case it is required than one should indicate more than one type of proof. The act of ostensively showing something in the ordeal is accompanied by the determination to prove its truthfulness or falsity. Glessner Lee believes that if the investigator shows an object and establishes its correct use the truth is determined. In this context, the truth is not necessarily equivalent to the solving of the diorama (even if that is desirable) but is tied to the depiction of the objects' accurate use/meaning in the nutshell. Glessner Lee regards ostensive definitions as the ability to clarify ambiguous things, as they seem to solve the need for a definite, and unequivocal, mode of proof. Moreover, she appears to consider that if the true use of

[176] Hincmar de Reims, *De Divortio Lotharii Regis et Theutbergae reginae,* Letha Böhringer (intr) (Hannover: Hahn, 1992) 155.

the object is found, then different people will understand it in the same way (pointing allows us to dismiss further explanations). For Glessner Lee or, as has been shown, in the ordeal, there is only one use for some expressions.

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

> "We name things and then we can talk about them: can refer to them in talk" – As if what we did next were given with the mere act of naming. As if there were only one thing called "talking about a thing." Whereas in fact we do the most various things with our sentences.[177]

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

[177] Wittgenstein, *Ibid*, § 27, 11.

the forms of proof which have been depicted is that they seem to be a way to deal with bodily proof (and language) which departs from the presupposition that some things, in the proper context, may only be described in one way. It probably seems now that the only similarity between ostensive definitions and the act of eliciting the verdict in the ordeal is the assumption that both interpreters point to something as a means of clarification. Still, the notion that some expressions, or samples, may be defined without the need for explanation is a common ambition in these procedures.

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

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

> He [the investigator] should look for and record indications of the social and financial status of the persons involved in each model as well as anything that might indicate their state of mind up to or at the time of the demonstration.[178]

According to Glessner Lee's advice, there is little difference in discerning the social class of someone through the analysis of his or her objects and finding out what the deceased was thinking. Like Hamlet, Glessner Lee is looking for visible (and public) evidence of things that are usually considered inner properties of someone's mind. In her nutshells, police officers learn to distinguish someone's intention of committing suicide from that of murder. The reason for this lies, as Glessner Lee makes clear, in the fact that objects inside a house tell us things about the subject who lives there, about their daily habits, ways of living, and (public) intentions. For example, "Unpapered Bedroom," the first nutshell described, presents two problems: the investigators have to identify the woman and attempt to understand what caused her death. Glessner Lee explains how investigators are required to search the trash for evidence leading to the identification of the culprit. Likewise, they should look into a pillbox at the top of a table, where they will discover ten capsules of barbiturate (Seconal), a dangerous substance if mixed with alcohol. The empty bottle of rum provides, therefore, part of the explanation they are looking for. Glessner Lee equally sustains

[178] Frances Glessner Lee, *Ibid*, 47.

that, by examining the pillbox, it is possible for the policemen to find out the apothecary that had sold the pills, as well as the doctor's name, in an attempt to identify the woman. At the same time, attention should be paid to hidden clues, such as marks of lipstick on the underside of the pillow. A woman always removes her make-up before going to sleep, so this could indicate that Jane Doe was "incapacitated to some degree and went to bed with her lipstick on".[179]

Unless it can be proven that Mrs. Smith frequently forgot to remove her makeup, this indicates that something out of the ordinary has presented itself. In the case which inspired Glessner Lee, the lipstick gave the medical examiner the clue he was looking for, as, despite the fact that there was no evidence of violence on Mrs. Smith's body, her eyes presented a strange colour. Together with the lipstick, it was revealed that the spouse had drugged his wife and then placed a pillow over her head until she stopped breathing (the husband's confession would later prove that this had been the case).

This perspective relates to Wittgenstein's denial of the relationship between sensations, their names, and the impossibility of defining feelings such as "pain" ostensively. In contrast to what happens with a blue shirt, which may be a sample for the color "blue," there is not, for Wittgenstein, a sample for sensations or memories relating to pain. Unlike colours, which are learned by association, expressions of pain may not be understood by linking a sensation, its memory, and the name given to the feeling. When one says "I feel pain," this is not an expression of an inner phenomenon or of an inner experience, but a process of learning acquired through "expressive behaviour;" as Wittgenstein explains:

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[179] Corinne May Botz, *Ibid*, 108.

> A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.[180]

Although Glessner Lee would probably agree with Wittgenstein in what concerns the notion that one could not define feelings or interior processes ostensively, she is looking for public samples of what are generally taken as mental states. The dioramas are based on the assumption that the objects found in the crime scene (as well as the objects that surround us) may be used as a criterion for the correction of what people consider to be private thoughts. These objects are not, in themselves, expressive, but they are a manifestation of the use we generally give them, and, therefore, allow us to distinguish someone's intention of committing suicide from natural death, for example.

For Glessner Lee, social status and states of mind may equally be understood through the evaluation of someone's possessions, samples which are deemed to be public indications of a person's intentions. While not claiming that there is a correlation between private thoughts and some objects, I believe that when Mrs. Smith is incapacitated by the combined effects of barbiturates and alcohol, she is unable to remove her lipstick, which produces a stain on the pillow. Evaluating this stain is not a form of gaining access to the hidden contents of Mrs. Smith mind, but of understanding that our behaviour (which includes thoughts and sensations) may be described by public evidence. Understanding a "mental state" implies getting acquainted with the victim's way of life, her use of the objects that surround her (if there were numerous bottles of alcohol in the apartment one could

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[180] Wittgenstein, *Ibid*, § 244, 75. Cf. M. R. Bennett, P. M. S. Hacker (eds) *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 102.

probably conclude that either the victim or someone else drank too much). Glesser Lee does not define emotions by referring to a sensation, but to a certain object, which she takes as a sample for something else.

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

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

I have been describing the case of bodies that observers accurately interpret. The opposite is, however, illustrated in Euripides's play Hippolytus, which depicts the failed attempt to discover the truth about the death of Phaedra, through the determination of what is considered to be the central proof. *Hippolytus* theorizes the question of proof which seems to be self-explainable, but that is, in fact, misinterpreted by those observing it. In the play, Theseus arrives home and discovers that his wife, Phaedra, is dead. When he finds a tablet in Phaedra's hand – without knowing that Aphrodite has devised such plot as a way to punish his son Hippolytus for his devotion to Artemis – Theseus wrongly believes that Hippolytus is to blame for the tragedy. The letter is considered a true testimony of Phaedra's last words, and proof of Hippolytus's actions. Once the letter's authenticity had been proved, as Phaedra's golden signet validates it, Theseus does not doubt its value and considers it the highest form of proof available, which he makes clear when confronted by Hippolytus: "This [Phaedra's death] is the fact that most serves to convict you, villainous man!"[181] For him, the letter cannot be differentiated from Phaedra's corpse, as both are assumed to provide unambiguous proof of his son's actions. Theseus's mistake is to presume that if the letter truly belongs to Phaedra, it must contain true words, never questioning the possibility that Phaedra might lie as, for him, there is an indissoluble relationship between the dead corpse, the letter, and the guilty person. Theseus does not consider the possibility that the meaning of proof could not be its most visible sense, or the hypothesis that his wife's letter could possess hidden meanings or intentions.

Regarding the most appropriate way to discover the truth, father and son disagree: Theseus looks upon the letter as a fact,

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[181] Euripides, *Hippolytus*, David Kovacs (ed. and trans) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 217.

disregarding Hippolytus's oath, and asking him: "For what oaths, what arguments, could be more powerful than she is, to win your acquittal on the charge?"[182] In this hierarchy of evidence Theseus considers Phaedra's corpse to be the highest form of proof, which allows him to presuppose that it is not necessary to conduct further inquiry. When Hippolytus inquires if his father will banish him without pausing to "examine my oath, and sworn testimony or the words of seers? Will you banish me without a trial?,"[183] Theseus replies by asserting that "This tablet contains no divination by lot, and its charge against you is convincing".[184] Here, Theseus intertwines "tablet" and "corpse," as if they are synonyms and the single self-evident proof he requires to determine the truth. His perspective is opposed to that of Hippolytus, who mentions four procedures to determine the truth, such as the oath, testimony, the words of seers, and a trial.

Later in the play, when Hippolytus is dying, Artemis observes how Theseus ascribes more importance to Phaedra's false words than to Hippolytus's oath, and how he fails to seek other forms of proving the truth, such as instruction from the prophets or cross questioning. Artemis is condemns Theseus for assuming proof can be self-evident and for stipulating the truth instead of "put[ing] the charge to the proof nor grant[ing] Time the right to investigate it".[185] According to Artemis, the burden of proof stands with the accuser, who should not only demand a test to what is considered evidence (the type of test Frances Lee Glessner was describing) but also an investigation throughout time. This is a particularly relevant point, as it seems that self-proof does not

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[182] *Ibidem,* 217.

[183] *Ibidem,* 217.

[184] *Ibidem,* 225

[185] *Ibidem,* 247.

require a period of research. Artemis, however, underlines the idea that proof requires interpretation and that analysis demands time. She criticizes Theseus's belief that all that is necessary to find the truth is to point to a single entity and show what one deems to be true.

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

The problem is not, despite Artemis's and Hippolytus's presumptions, the fact that the corpse is not self-evident (Theseus was right in taking it as the main form of proof and in considering

that it pointed correctly to suicide). However, Theseus believes the letter and the corpse to signify only one thing, and he assumes they are interchangeable and ignores the possibility that the letter might not articulate the truth. Consequently, the play problematizes the notion that there is a limit to self-explanatory proof and suggests that understanding a piece of evidence (even a determinant one) does not equate to comprehending the context in which it appeared or to providing reasons to explain it.

Two paintings in *Hamlet* and Matthew Arnold's touchstones

The desire to be certain is not a rare ambition. Most people enjoy being right, some making an actual effort to be accurate in their judgments, some setting their hearts on finding a method which allows them to diminish erroneous conclusions. Such a need for organization may derive from an individual desire for orderliness, a difficult context, or a specific profession, among other reasons. The following pages addresses the belief, held by some, that there are considerable advantages to finding ways that allow us to dismiss, or at least diminish, the need for multiple explanations. This way of understanding intricate problems considers that some entities may be used as a touchstone for the verification of the authenticity, or veracity, of other entities, whether they are persons, objects, or texts.

Such anxiety for an explicit and valid mode of proof which could be similarly understood by different persons was rendered in Euripides's play *Hippolytus*. Theseus uses Phaedra's letter as an indictment, despite having lamented the absence of a reliable truth test, which would allow him to draw a distinction between friends and enemies: "Oh, there ought to be for mortals some reliable test for friends, some way to know their minds, which of them is

a true friend and which is not (...)".[186] Here, Theseus articulates the well-known ambition for a form of evaluation that is able to distinguish types of people, to differentiate the meaning of their actions and intentions, so that one is able to accurately identify friends and enemies. Paradoxically, the moment Theseus pronounces the absence of such a mode of proof corresponds to the instant where he misjudges the situation, accusing Hippolytus.

That *basanos* (βάσανος) denotes both torture and test as already been examined, but it is also true that the word refers to *basanite*, i.e., touchstone, as well as expressions such as "put to the test," "question by applying torture," "to be put to torture" and "touchstone."[187] In *Torture and Truth*, the classicist Page DuBois studies a group of literary, judicial, and philosophical texts in an attempt to delineate the evolution of the word *basanos*, and how it relates to the idea that the truth is concealed inside the human body. The earliest use of the term *Basanos* relates exclusively to mercantile contexts, in which it describes the touchstone by which the purity of gold was tested; it was a stone which was generally fieldstone, slate, or lydite. As DuBois points out, authors such as Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles used the word – as Theseus's reference to "test" (in Greek *basanos,* βάσανος) exemplifies – to describe a procedure intended to determine if someone or something was authentic. Later, the term acquired the meaning of an ordeal and torture.

According to the *OED,* a touchstone may be "a very smooth, fine grained, black or dark-coloured variety of quartz or jasper [...] used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by the colour of the streak produced by rubbing them upon it".[188] Indeed,

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[186] Euripides, *Hippolytus*, David Kovacs (ed. and trans) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995) 215.

[187] *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 1843 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948).

[188] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XI, 1933 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961).

"touchstone" means the act of trying the authenticity of gold, but also, "that which serves to test or try the genuineness or value of anything; a test, criterion".[189] The use of the touchstone consists of drawing the alloy across the surface of the stone being tested, after which the colour of its trace is compared with the colour left by the pure metals, thus providing, by simple ocular inspection, a relatively accurate indication of the purity of the alloy. Therefore, the use of a touchstone requires the right stone, the metals under analysis, and an observer of the results of the procedure. The fact that any observer is expected to reach identical results (to see what others witnessed without the need for further justification) is also relevant. In such cases, the interpreter must apply and manage the touchstone appropriately, which established a strong correspondence between this procedure and interpretative methods such as comparison and analysis. In the case of entities which are viewed as touchstones, but that are not quartz, the accuracy of the interpreters' assumptions derives, in part, from prior experience and insight. It will, however, be shown that observers tend to focus on the method which allows them to reach what they regard to be, and sometimes are, truthful conclusions.

Using objects as touchstones is a way to give them a supplementary function, of transforming a stone, a painting, or certain lines into a form of testing other entities. These objects are retrieved from their original context in order to be given the use of touchstone. In the analysis of literary texts, specific passages are selected in order to provide criteria against which other passages are contrasted and understood, so that a conclusion may be reached. Objects employed as criteria for the value of others do not necessarily lose the features that made them apt for the purpose; after all, quartz is still quartz after the test of gold takes

[189] *Ibidem*.

place, in the same way certain Shakespearean passages remain unchanged. These entities do acquire, however, a supplementary function, as they are transformed into the measure by which we are able to test other things. While, in some cases, objects may be used to try entities which are different from themselves, as the *basanite* exemplifies, others tend to be applied to test objects belonging to their own category, as it would be unusual for someone to use a literary passage to examine the quality of gold. As previously described, it is considered that these entities possess, in a condensed form, special features. Either they are considered genuine, which is the reason why they may accurately be used in contrast with other things; or they represent (or are the image of) someone who was authentic, and whose qualities were, somehow, transferred to the object.

In some procedures it is necessary to evaluate whether the value of the different methods is to be found in the use of the touchstone itself, if it relies on the interpreter's unique ability, or in the relation between the two. Likewise, it should also be considered whether the result is pre-determined or if it derives from the use of the method. The case of *basanite* is relevant as it portrays the aspiration for the identification of the substance's authenticity, so long as the procedure is followed. Moreover, the result is not determined *a priori*, it is a consequence of the procedure, which the observer may not influence. To possess a touchstone, to attempt a touchstone technique, or to be a touchstone are, therefore, all part of a system concerned with testing entities in order to yield truth. While "using a touchstone" requires quartz, the golden alloy, the substance to be tested, and someone to do the test and observe the results, the modes of proof to be surveyed tend to compound some of these functions. Although the quest for certainty and authenticity is present, the way the procedure is systematized is often analogous, as the golden alloy is mistaken for the touchstone. At the same time, the

surface might also be that of the person observing and validating the procedure.

Crucially, it is also believed that the touchstone makes it possible to ascertain if a substance that possesses the characteristics and appearance of gold is, indeed, authentic. A similar ambition can be seen in those using literary touchstones, which take the form of passages that are used to measure the value of certain texts, or those quoting lines of poetry as a self-sufficient argument about their value. Still, many other cases discussed represent the attempt to prove the contrary, namely, if those we suspect to be untrue are, indeed, as conjectured, inauthentic. While in mercantile contexts substances necessarily had to be tested even if there was no suspicion of inauthenticity, in these modes of proof there is a prior assumption of guilt that must be demonstrated, or dispelled, by the test.

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

> Look here upon this picture, and on this,
> The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
> See what a grace was seated on this brow,
> Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
> An eye like Mars to threaten and command,
> A station like the herald Mercury
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,
> A combination and a form indeed
> Where every god did seem to seat his seal
> To give the world assurance of a man.
> This was your husband. Look now what follows.
> Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
> Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon judgment, and what a judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have –
Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush?
(*Hamlet*, III, iv, 53-81)

In this scene, which follows Hamlet's dumb-show and his failed attempt to kill Claudius, the Prince seeks to confront his mother, in the hope of making her understand the difference between King Hamlet and Claudius. Critics have observed that miniatures – small-scale detailed portraits – were commonly used in the scene, while some illustrations suggest that during the Restoration two paintings were hanged on the wall.[190] Both the Cambridge and the Oxford editions notice how Hamlet either draws miniatures from his pocket, or retrieves a locket of his father and places it opposite Claudius's locket on Gertrude's neck. Regardless of the method used, the representation of both Kings are reduced-scale

[190] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. John Dover Wilson, 1934. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 177.

images, but ones which are considered to possess, in a concentrated form, the most relevant features of each man, which is to say the truthful impression of Gertrude's two husbands. Hamlet is, as will be seen, assuming that these features are facts, and not descriptions or interpretations of affairs.

Hamlet, presuming that what he observes may be perceived by everyone, sees in his father's portrait what he considers to be his innate qualities. Although the procedure replicates Anne's, in this case there is a distinction between what Hamlet sees, the object being looked at, and his mother's own and his mother's own interaction with the painting. Here, the presentation of two brothers – a common act amongst families, generally with the purpose of underlining the existence of shared family traces – is intended to illustrate the superiority of one sibling over the other. Accordingly, when looking at King Hamlet's portrait, one should see the combination of 'Hyperion's curls' and Jove's front, 'eye[s] like Mars', and a posture 'like the herald Mercury'. As Hamlet makes clear, all of these divine qualities were sealed by the Gods "to give the world assurance of a man" who knew how to threaten or command.

Previously, it has been shown how Glessner Lee assumes that ostensive definitions can provide a way to clarify problems during the investigation of a crime. At first sight, it seems that Hamlet is anticipating Glessner Lee's methodology, or the ordeal, when he points to each locket and claims "This was your husband." The Prince, however, accompanies the gesture of pointing with a description of what he is seeing, as if he is determined to avoid the possibility that, like an ostensive definition, the paintings could be subject to misinterpretation. Before his description of the King is discussed, Hamlet's procedure should be considered, along with the possibility that both the act of pointing at and the verbal formula "that" are more than a mere introduction for the description which will follows.

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

There is, therefore, a difference between what Hamlet thinks he is doing and his actions. The method with which he attempts to explain what he sees, as well as to persuade his mother, makes clear that he is determined to find truth in the representations of the two men. The act of pointing reflects the wish to state the obvious, in an attempt to persuade his mother. Hamlet aims to show that there is a leap of judgment between her decision to marry his father and Claudius: "and what judgment / Would step from this to this?" More importantly, Claudius is described as infecting the idea of King Hamlet, causing him to wither away, preventing his growth. Hamlet was hoping that the image of King Hamlet

might flourish in his mother's heart, and that Claudius would be blamed for preventing Gertrude's mourning. This is the reason why Hamlet asks: "Have you eyes?," and in doing so refers both to the eyes which should be looking at the paintings, but also into her memory, in which King Hamlet should have played an important part. That Hamlet is able to produce the required effect may be seen in the Queen's reply:

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

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

> Gertrudes: Wheron do you look?
> Hamlet: On him, on him. Look you now how pale he glares.
> His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
> Would make them capable [...]
> Gertrude: To whom do you speak this?
> Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?

Gertrudes: Nothing at all; yet all that is I see. [...]
Hamlet: Why, look you there, look how it steals away.
My father, in his habit as he liv'd!
Look where he goes even now at the portal.
(*Hamlet*, III, iv, 124-138)

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

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

Hamlet is willing to be put to the test, as he has the conviction that any mode of proof would allow him to show his was not madness. In this discussion, for Hamlet, his alleged madness is a matter of phrasing, so the test would give him the possibility of re-wording his sentences, of making matters clear. Yet, here Hamlet's

criteria seem to be duplicitous, as he is questioning the very same belief that guided him during the play. It was seen, in the previous chapter, how Hamlet assumed that to put someone or something to the test would lead to indisputable facts, which require the observer to be capable of showing results. Here, however, failure to be understood produces obscurity, as Hamlet fails to comprehend that, without a publicly shared referent, he is unable to demonstrate a point of view.

Hamlet's situation is ambiguous; when he is showing the portraits, he seems to be using his thoughts about his father to describe what he considers to be the evidence revealed by the miniatures. When Hamlet sees the Ghost afterwards, he is, in fact, pointing to a certain entity and attempting to indicate its existence, an action which is analogous to declaring "this is a corpse." His mother's inability to see King Hamlet's figure, however, will lead to the assumption that the act of showing should be supplemented. Hamlet's evidence, since other interpreters do not share it, must be re-phrased and transformed into a narrative. Both Glessner Lee and the medieval ordeal use the act of pointing as a way to reduce multiple explanations. Hamlet, however, feels the need to describe what he is seeing.

Two contradictory justifications can be given for such a procedure: either the lockets are so eloquent that they produce excitability in the subject viewing them; or these are objects that require explanation. The first justification leads us to assume that these lockets, unlike other objects, are communicative, that they possess special properties and produce effects on the subject, while the latter suggests that the task of explaining the meaning and existence of objects relies on the person looking at them. While in the first hypothesis the interpretative work is performed by the object, in the second, the effort relies upon the subject. The possibility that Hamlet is using King Hamlet's painting as a way to test Claudius's image and produce an effect over his mother

clarifies the problem. The lockets do not produce excitement, nor do they need to be explained. However, to simply show them does not, as in Claudius's truth test, provoke the desired effect. Instead, Hamlet is required to utter the words that will make the difference. In both cases, Hamlet's interlocutor has the passive role of looking at the paintings and seeing the evidence he is showing. The act of explaining appears to be an intricate procedure; whereas to account for, or to perceive what is being shown, as long as there is a proper referent, seems to be simple.

One realizes that the description of one of the portraits has primacy over the other. Claudius's miniature exists solely in relation to King Hamlet's portrait and translates Hamlet's perspective about both men. For the Prince of Denmark, King Claudius' painting only has importance when it is compared with that of his father.[191]

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[191] Similarly, in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* a painting is used as referent for the judgment of two brothers whose personalities are being compared. However, a serious test is not conducted and the observer's previous opinion is maintained after the comparison takes place. Molly arrives for the first time to the Hamley's house, and she is shown a crayon-sketch featuring Mrs Hamley's two sons. Molly is told: "Tell me just what you think of them, my dear; it will amuse me to compare your impressions with what they really are." Here, Molly's ability to judge others is being tested, given that Mrs Hamley assumes she holds the truth to the character of her sons (a perspective which readers will later discover to be erroneous). Although Molly adequately replies that she "can only speak about their faces as I see them in the picture," her description will be influenced by Mrs Hamley's not so subtle remarks.

The eldest boy, Osborne, is considered to be very beautiful, even if Molly notices that his head is down and his eyes may not be seen. The key to Mrs Hamley's opinion of her sons is, however, to be found in her remark: "He is not quite so handsome now; but he was a beautiful boy. Roger was never to be compared with him." Mrs Hamley's consideration of the drawings has the purpose of underlining the physical and intellectual qualities of one sibling over the other. As in the case of the Claudius painting, one sibling is the alloy to which the other will be compared, in a test where one must be portrayed as superior. In this case, there is no second painting to be used as an alloy to compare with the first, both brothers are represented in the same picture, and the depiction itself seems to portray the differences between them. But judgment is not retrieved from the comparison between figures and the observers do not seem to be affected by the test. Even though Molly politely agrees with Mrs. Hamley's opinion, she is able to find qualities in Roger's looks: "No, he is not handsome. And yet I like his face. I can see his eyes. They are grave and solemn-looking; but all the rest of his face is rather merry than otherwise." Mrs Hamley

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

In the truth test being performed it is, nevertheless, unclear who the touchstone might be. In a sense, Hamlet uses the portrait of his father as if it were a material touchstone, the gold alloy, by which his uncle's character and behaviour is tested. However, while Claudius is the substance that Hamlet wishes to test, it is difficult to determine if the touchstone is his mother, the physical portrait of his father, or Hamlet himself. Claudius is the substance Hamlet wishes to test, but it is difficult to determine if the touchstone is his mother, King Hamlet's portrait, or Hamlet. The line "These words like daggers enter in my ears" (III, iv, 95) seems to point to the fact that his mother is the touchstone being scratched by the procedure. One of the daggers represents pure gold, the other is the alloy used to contrast her surface, which could indicate that the Queen would combine the role of observer with that of the touchstone. This does not, however, seem plausible, as there is no indication that the Queen possesses the capacity of quartz (which, as mentioned before, requires special characteristics). It is also difficult to know whether his mother is truly affected by the test or by Hamlet's performance, i.e. the violence of his words, or the

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replies: "He is a good, steady fellow, though, and gives us great satisfaction, but he is not likely to have such a brilliant career as Osborne." Readers of the novel will discover that Mrs Hamley's opinions derive from her special appreciation of one sibling over the other, and not from accurate judgment, as Osborne is denied the Cambridge scholarship, while Roger's scientific work will be publicly recognized. In his own house, however, Osborne will always be the one used to judge Roger.

Cf. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Wives and Daughters,* Amy M. King (ed. and trans.) (NY: Spark Educational Publishing, 2005) 66.

appearance of madness in his performance, as the declaration "Alas, he's mad" appears to confirm (III, iv, 106).

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

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

In "The Study of Poetry," Matthew Arnold describes a way to rectify the criteria by which we understand and judge literature, suggesting that the critic must seek a "touchstone method" as a way

of avoiding the fallacy of historical and personal appreciations and provide poetry's "real estimate." In contrast to Sainte-Beuve – who believed that art, unlike politics, was truthful – Arnold's test has the purpose of helping to identify charlatanism:

> Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half--sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is impermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance.[192]

As with the difficulty of validating the authenticity of descriptions of individual people, the problem of authenticity in poetry resides in the difficulty of evaluating degrees of truthfulness. If poems and people were simply and straightforwardly truthful or untruthful it would be easier to distinguish, or at least to categorize them. Charlatanism blurs distinctions, it is something the critic may do consciously or not, but that makes them argue in favour of inauthenticity. Although one could suppose that testing poetry has as its main purpose the evaluation of its degree of authenticity, the trial appears as a form to detect fraud and untruthfulness, both in literary texts and in the way critics write about them. The thought that authors, poems, and critics may possess inauthentic convictions despite their best intentions differs from other cases in which subjects know they are guilty of something and have to hide their

[192] Matthew Arnold, *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, A. Dwight Culler (ed.) (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961) 307.

emotions in order to evade being caught. When, however, one is not consciously being untruthful, there might not be any signs of deception to be found.

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

> Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course, we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar.[193]

The value of the great masters' lines is taken as self-explanatory, as they represent prototypes which, when compared to other texts, may validate their quality and allow us to do without interpretation. To Arnold, the touchstone consists of a group of passages from classic authors, such as Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare, which can be contrasted with the lines being critiqued, so that their true value might be understood. The best poetry, which is considered to embody a high degree of seriousness, would then appear before the critic. This

[193] *Ibidem,* 311.

procedure seems to possess the ability to bring to light characteristics in the tested poems that the critics might ignore, as well as make obvious the signs of their inauthenticity. Arnold's method, like some of the methods used to analyse taciturn objects previously described, stems from the assumption that inauthentic literary texts, unlike those that are authentic, have hidden secrets. Everyone will, therefore, understand the touchstone passages as Arnold intends them to be understood, even if it is unclear whether these lines have already been previously tested and proved to be truthful.

It should be noted how Arnold's procedure is an illustration of what it is to ostensively demonstrate a point of view about a particular text. While explaining the reason why the *Chanson de Roland* deserves some praise, but claiming it does not possess "high poetic quality," Arnold claims: "Let us try, then, the *Chanson de Roland* at its best."[194] Submitting poetry to a trial takes the form of quoting a passage from it, not from a passage that is considered plain, but from one that the critic judges to be the very best of the poem. A selection of two lines is quoted, and the author notes how "We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether; here is rightly due such supreme praise as that M. Vitet gives to the *Chanson de Roland*."[195] The lines are used as if they are self-explanatory, Arnold does not paraphrase or explain them, but takes them as evidence and assumes the reader will be able to conclude the same that he did, and see the superiority of one passage over the other. Homer's touchstone lines dismiss the need for justification.

Arnold suggests that we "take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep," or "[t]ake of Milton that Miltonic passage,"[196] in order to find each author's most

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[194] *Ibidem*.

[195] *Ibidem*.

[196] *Ibidem*, 312-313.

distinguishable features (the Miltonic in Milton). Each passage translates Arnold's admiration not only for certain authors, but also for certain segments of their work. It seems, therefore, that Arnold is pointing to lines that he particularly likes, thus validating the quality of passages in need of critical appreciation. At the same time, however, all lines belong to what is generally considered to be the canon and their quality would not be easily questioned. Even critics with different literary preferences would probably agree with Arnold's choice of Shakespeare or Dante. This means that, although one may argue against the use of such method, and even prefer the use of different lines, the selection of Arnold's passages seems, paradoxically, to make perfect sense. We may disagree with the reasons why he selects such passages (among the important characteristics of the passages are to be found "high seriousness;" "highest poetical quality;" "discussion of the matter and substance of poetry;" "style and manner," "mark, accent, high beauty, worth and power; poetic truth, poetic beauty," "truth and seriousness"), as well as with his translation of the lines. However, one does not necessarily disagree with the passages themselves.

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

> But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of its quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them.[197]

This passage determines the set of requisites necessary for the method to work, such as using expressions of great masters, the

[197] *Ibidem*, 311.

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

Consider how, the term "touchstone" is a composition of two words, "touch" and "stone." "Touch" comes from the Old French "*touchier,* or *toucher*, literally 'touched;'" the *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins* states that it means "To put the hand or finger, or some other part of the body, upon, or in contact with (something) as to feel it."[198] When one wishes to put the authenticity of gold on

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[198] *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, ed. Julia Cresswell. *Oxford Reference Online*. (Oxford University Press. New York University: School of Law), n.

trial by useing quartz, the alloy must have direct contact with the stone. In Arnold's assessment of poetry, the relationship between the critic's mind and the lines is also important, as he must "touch" the passages and be "touched" by them. Such may be understood by the fact that Arnold underlines how the student of poetry must learn how to apply the golden lines in order to understand the passage's "whole force:"

> And I wish every student of poetry to make their [touchstone passages] applications of them for himself. Made by himself [the student], the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me.[199]

Without memorization, the student may only understand Arnold's proposal intellectually, they will be unable to reproduce it, as they will not have experienced the lines. Such experience may be thought upon in the sense of "being touched" by the lines, as in to be moved by them. 'Touch' is also "said in fencing to acknowledge a hit made by your opponent and more generally in recognition of a good or clever point in a discussion,"[200] an acknowledgement Arnold describes when in contact with good poetry: a poet has "grand, genuine touches;"[201] "at moments he [Burns] touches it [high seriousness] in a profound and passionate melancholy;"[202] or "we may be inclined to prize Burns most for his touches of

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4, accessed August, 2010: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t292.e5072

[199] Arnold, *Ibid*, 314.

[200] *Oxford Dictionary of Word Origins*, ed. Julia Cresswell. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. New York University: School of Law, n. 4, accessed August, 2010: <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t292.e5072188

[201] *Ibidem,* 324.

[202] *Ibidem,* 325.

piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos."[203] At stake is not only the poet's ability to move us, but also the critic's skill to recognize such moments in poetry and reproduce them in their texts. The critic's essay would, then, be the exact reproduction of the trial and would have the capacity to make us see the results of the method's application, which, like *basanite*, are supposed to be "in itself evident."

Arnold takes his preference for specific lines to be so exemplary that he never considers there is an act of selection implied in the choice. But his procedure does not differ from what most critics do when they try to understand if a text they like may be compared to a long lineage of texts usually thought of as having quality. For example, T. S. Eliot, in spite of his best objections to Arnold, concurs that classics are useful as a standard, arguing in "What is a Classic?" that "The value of Virgil to us, in literary terms, is in providing us with a criterion."[204] What differs is the idea that these "golden single sentences,"[205] as Arnold refers to them in the essay "A Friend of God," constitute a group of lines with an autonomous value. John S. Eells Jr.s' seminal study compiles and extensively quotes every reference to the touchstone passages in Arnold's essays, noting how Arnold occasionally misquotes the lines and pointing to translation peculiarities, such as the fact that Arnold considers that the best translation of Homer is the one which attempts to maintain an hexameter measure.[206] Eells argues that Arnold's obsession with examples is a consequence of his

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[203] *Ibidem,* 326.

[204] T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, Frank Kermode (ed.) (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) 129.

[205] Matthew Arnold, *Essays, Letters and Reviews by Matthew Arnold*, Fraser Neiman (ed.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) 335.

[206] John S. Eells, *The Touchstones of Matthew Arnold* (NY: Bookman Associates, 1955).

incapacity to take an abstract approach to problems in his essays. Arnold's empiricist use of quotations may be considered a way to display, *a posteriori*, a group of facts in a specific order. T. S. Eliot would most likely agree with this point of view, since he makes use of Arnold's touchstone method when he applies quotations as a way to demonstrate arguments in his essays (a point to which I will return). In fact, it can be argued that his essays are organized through a progression of passages considered representative. From this point of view, both authors believe there are facts in need of evaluation, which must be displayed in a proper order and unified within a cohesive description. In "A Review of *The Anxiety of Influence,"* Paul de Man rejected the idea that some passages have an intrinsic value that does not require explanation:

> There is an abundance of poetic quotation and, in the case of Milton, Blake, Stevens, Emerson, and others, implicit interpretation on an advanced level, but always embedded within the argument and without clarifying comment, as if the inferred meaning of difficult and ambiguous passages could be taken for granted.[207]

De Man objects to Harold Bloom's use of sentences "stated as if they spoke for themselves," by pointing out the disparity between the use of quotation and the need for comment. It is considered that Bloom uses the passages in order to sustain his main line of reasoning, but lacks detailed explanations of the quotations. Bloom is, according to De Man, presupposing that his assortment of literary examples is self-explanatory and self-justifying, and that they provide an ostensive use to the quotations. To consider that the meaning of a quotation may be implicitly inferred is to assume that it works as

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[207] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight. Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 268.

a touchstone and, therefore, that different readers will be able to interpret it equally. De Man objects to the perspective that the use of quotations is less ambiguous than their explanations and attempts to show that a difficult passage without a proper clarification is no more than just that, a passage requiring an interpretative exercise from the reader. What seems to be in question here is a matter of use: not only it is necessary to be able to point out the golden passages, but also to justify the use given to those choices.

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

> We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent of poetic virtue of the highest masters.[208]

Here, too, the interpreter plays an important role, as they are required to distinguish the reasons why a certain poet failed the test. Comparison with other poets is used as contrast, but the interpreter is required to understand the nature of the difference between those who are masters and those who are not. As with Hamlet, pointing to the contrast between figures/texts is no longer sufficient as the test must be supplemented with the justification for Arnold's choices. This would mean that the interpreter's role is no longer merely that of selecting and memorizing the lines, but rather they must also be able to account for the results of the trial. The strangeness

[208] Matthew Arnold, *Ibid,* 326.

of the procedure derives from the fact that, for Arnold, different interpreters are expected to uniformly understand the outcome of the proof, as if the poetical verdict was clear, but somehow required *a posteriori* explanation. Even for those in possession of literary touchstones, therefore, part of the critical exercise relies on the interpreter's ability to justify the verdict. One may argue that the contrast between passages always allows for truthful verdicts, but that criticism is maintained by each interpreter's ability to disagree with the reasons given to justify the inauthenticity of a certain text. Arnold does not seem to contemplate the possibility of error in his justifications. One may, however, agree with his conclusion about an author, saying that Burns fails to be a master, but disagree with the reasons given – claiming, in Arnold's terms, that Burns has poetic virtue, but not truth of manner, for example.

There is, therefore, a clear difference between discovering the authenticity of a certain text (which may be portrayed as a relatively fast judgment) and being able to justify or give reasons for this conclusion (an activity that requires time). One might say that literary criticism is characterized by being a protracted type of judgment, for its slowness and rationality, for the constitution of arguments in an explainable and shared progression. When Arnold argues in favour of the use of touchstones in interpretation, he maintains the notion that these passages allow the interpreter to obtain fast results. Instead of receiving detailed, long, and often contradictory explanations about a certain state of affairs, the use of a touchstone seems to simplify interpretative situations that would otherwise take a long time. The Gryphon, in *Alice in Wonderland* enunciates a similar principle: "'No, No! The adventures first,' said the Gryphon in an impatient tone: 'explanations take such a dreadful time'".[209]

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[209] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass,* 1865 (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), 91.

Here, the Gryphon places adventures and explanations in opposition, considering the former to be captivating in themselves and the latter to be long and devoid of interest. But the Gryphon also implies that, although the enunciation time in adventures and explanations may be the same (both take time to be told), adventures are easier to understand, whereas explanations claim an extra interpretative effort. In relation to touchstones, adventures would equal the verdict in the *basanite*. Although Arnold's criticism belongs to the category of explanations that require time to be told – even due to the fact that the critic's mind requires an extensive period of learning before being able to choose the so-called golden passages – the presumption that the conclusions about the poem are easily perceived by all those observing the outcome of the test makes it seem that the adventure/verdict has primacy over explanations.

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

A third, and final, illustration of the use of an entity as touchstone is characterized by the thought that, sometimes, adventures really are better than explanations or, at least, that they enable us to

overcome problems that had previously appeared unsolvable. Therapy, for example, is usually an activity that requires time in order to heal the patient. Imagine, however, an expeditious type of treatment based on the medieval judicial ordeal technique, in which the doctor would impose upon the subject a task more severe than the problem the patient needed to solve. They would, perhaps, prefer to abandon the symptom than to maintain it, and be continually forced to perform a punitive task. Picture, for example, a woman troubled with severe anxiety causing acute physiological signs such as sweaty hands, who has spent years in therapy only to see her symptoms worsen. In such a case, each time the woman feels anxious during the day, the doctor makes her wake in the middle of the night, go downstairs, get the cleaning materials, mop and wax the kitchen floor, only to remove the wax the next night (an activity she found abominable). When the task is finished she has permission to return to bed, but the next day the procedure would be repeated if she experienced the symptoms. Cleaning the floor, only to scrub it again night after night would certainly be particularly painful. This type of therapy, actually performed by Jay Haley, has the purpose of making resistant patients realize that a symptom could be extinguished if they are forced to perform a severe ordeal. In the book's introduction, Haley problematizes his difficulties in finding a justification for swift therapy:

> At that time there was also no explanation of a rapid therapeutic change because there was no theory of brief therapy. It was assumed that if one did brief therapy, one merely did less than was done in long-term therapy. Therefore, my directive had no rationale.[210]

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[210] Jay Haley, *Ordeal Therapy – Unusual Ways to Change Behavior,* 1984 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985), 2.

Haley interrogates the problem of having found a very effective, but theoretically unsound way of solving difficult cases. Intuitively, he discovered that patients which had been in therapy for years were being healed by this method, which contradicted the notion that the treatment required time (Haley later discovered Dr. Milton H. Erickson's procedure also included the use of special ordeals). Unlike other techniques, Haley considers that the body may decide to let go of a symptom if it seems less painful than continuing to maintain it. While other forms of therapy attempt to rationalize subconscious thoughts and repressed emotions ("Her other therapy had been talk, talk, talk and hadn't changed anything"[211]), Haley seems to have found a non-intellectual way of dealing with patient's problems. I would argue that he seems to consider that his method is an irrational way of fighting persistent bodily symptoms, which may help to explain the reason why this is described as a brief type of therapy. While explanations require time, as the patient must make sense of their symptoms, the body's physiological response to a threat is usually fast. The type of reaction Haley anticipates appears to be similar to the way the parasympathetic system reacts when the subject is threatened, an alertness which makes it detect the cause of the threat and then attempt to avoid it (the body being, again, depicted as an organ with its own agency).

The notion that someone threatened by an ordeal would prefer to abandon his or her symptoms recalls the judicial procedures previously discussed and the idea that the way the test is presented could have the effect of making someone confess: "Sometimes the person must go through it repeatedly to recover from the symptom. At other times the mere threat of an ordeal brings recovery".[212] The punitive function of Haley's therapeutical process has the purpose

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[211] *Ibidem,* 25.

[212] *Ibidem,* 7.

of making patients realize the pains they will have to go through if their symptoms persist.

With the ordeal technique, the therapist's task is easily defined:

> It is to impose an ordeal appropriate to the problem of the person who wants to change, an ordeal more severe than the problem. The main requirement of an ordeal is that it cause distress equal to or greater than that caused by the symptom, just as the punishment should fit the crime.[213]

In the judicial ordeal, the method has the purpose of identifying guilty subjects, and even though the procedure is painful, it is not perceived as a form of punishment. Haley's therapy, however, is a way of maltreating the body, making the subject accomplish tasks that their body will dislike; indeed, Haley's first chapter is entitled "The Touch of Penance". Previously, it has been shown how *basanos* names the ordeal; the touchstone was the mode of proof itself, the test being used to determine an individual's authenticity. Those applying the ordeal would, therefore, be the equivalent of the examiner in the test of gold, while the subject would take on the role of both alloys (guilt and innocence being evaluated by the kind of marks on the body). Haley's therapy reproduces this notion, as it ascribes to the therapist the role of examiner, whereas the patient, i.e., quartz, is subjected to the test. While, in the ordeal, the result of the test is to be evaluated by the degree of physical signs appearing on the body, this procedure looks forward to the absence of marks (something which could be explained by the fact that, in judicial ordeals, subjects do not possess prior signs on the body, which made their later appearance relevant). The positive outcome of the therapy, therefore, is considered to be the abandonment of

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[213] *Ibidem,* 6.

the patient's symptoms; the women who stops having sweaty hands is healed, a sign that the method has worked.

The conditions for the ordeal must be previously established:

> The selection of an ordeal is done by the therapist, preferably with the client's collaboration. The ordeal must be severe enough to overcome the symptom, it must be good for the person so that he benefits by doing it, it must be something he can do and will accept in terms of its propriety, and the action must be clear and not ambiguous. It should have a beginning and an end clearly established.[214]

The agreement between parties as to the nature of the procedure helps to ensure that it will be accurately performed, that it is not a form of self-punishment, that somehow the person will benefit from it. While, in Haley's therapeutic process, the assignments are punitive to the body, it is considered that the subject ultimately profits from the method. There is, therefore, a partitioning between what is good for the subject's body and what is beneficial to their mind. Even exercise, which is supposed to be good for the body, must be performed until the muscles get sore, in a way that will provoke pain. This means that, in the long run, the subject will benefit from the exercise, but that their body will dislike the experience.

It should be questioned, when thinking about some of the other procedures previously mentioned, whether the outcome of the therapy is previously determined. Haley holds the view that it is necessary to persuade his patients of the certainty of the result: "When someone believes that nothing can be done to help her and all experts are stumped, it's sometimes a good idea to offer a guaranteed

[214] *Ibidem,* 15.

cure".[215] This guarantee is not described as the promise of a cure, which would be unethical, but something "used to persuade the client to follow the directive that sets up the ordeal".[216] Although in this case the conclusion of the procedure may not possibly be determined *a priori*, one of the parties – the patient – considers it to be so, while the other – the therapist – is not certain it will work, but has high expectations about it. The asymmetrical relationship established between patient and therapist, a necessary condition for the method to work, is thus irrevocably linked to the belief of one the parties regarding the certainty of the procedure. When the method works, patients realize that, if the symptoms ever return, they will merely have to repeat the ordeal; the patient forced to read during the whole night to fight insomnia, for example, prepared himself by buying Dickens' collected works. When the procedure worked the first time, it confirmed the patient's beliefs about the validity of the method and, as such, he will always deem the results to be determined beforehand.

Apart from the performance of tasks considered to be an ordeal, the therapist themselves might be the test:

> Any act that is defined in one way by the client can be redefined in a less acceptable way by the therapist so that it is something the person doesn't like. For example, something the client describes as vengeful can be redefined as protective and encouraged by the therapist. Or an act that the client defines as independent of the therapist can be redefined as done for the therapist, thereby reframing it in such a way that the person would rather not continue do it. Another class of ordeals is the confronting techniques used by some therapists. When a therapist forces the client

[215] *Ibidem,* 35.
[216] *Ibidem,* 36.

> to face what the client would rather not face, and the client has sought out this painful experience, it can be classed as an ordeal procedure. Similarly, insight interpretations that the client doesn't like are an ordeal to experience. In such cases the therapist itself, rather than a specific act by the therapist, becomes an ordeal for a person, and the ordeal must continue as long as the person has the problem.[217]

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

Both Matthew Arnold and Hamlet make a move from ostensive pointing to supplementing that act with a description. From this point of view, ostensive quoting and justification seem to be procedures which work in a similar way. If quoting is considered to be the ability to point to an object and name it properly, to provide a justification,

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[217] *Ibidem,* 12.

in this context, means to be able to explain the conclusions derived from a certain test to others in a clear way. While quartz allows for a verdict about the authenticity of a substance, the merit of Arnold's procedure, despite his best intentions, is that of allowing the dialogue to be maintained. This is another distinction between quartz and both illustrations, as the use of the stone dismisses all other types of explanation. In Haley's therapy, however, justification itself acquires the role of ordeal, as it is something the patient would prefer not to hear and which possesses a punitive character.

It has been demonstrated how Hamlet and Matthew Arnold assume that some entities may be used as touchstones. But the accuracy of their test depends upon the intimate association between object, the entity being applied as the golden alloy, and the interpreter, here seen as the touchstone. In Haley's therapy, in spite of the fact that the entity which is deemed to be the touchstone is the patient, the ordeal requires skill and depends on the therapist's ability to understand them, to find the proper type of method and to maintain it during the required amount of time:

> Like any powerful means of changing people, the ordeal is a procedure that can cause harm in the hands of the ignorant and irresponsible who rush off to make people suffer.[218]

It could be argued that the therapist's skill relies on their ability to use the patient as quartz during a certain amount of time, a use that will stop being necessary the moment the person is cured. Consequently, the patient is not, contrary to what happened in the two previous illustrations, a touchstone.

The chapter that follows deals with interpreters considered to be a criterion in and of themselves. In this case, the mode of proof

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[218] *Ibidem,* 23.

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

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TOUCHSTONE

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Desdemona: – O, fear interprets.

Shakespeare, *Othello,* V, ii, 78.

William Moulton Marston is the inventor of the systolic blood pressure test, an integral technical component of the device that would late be known as the polygraph. He also created "Wonder Woman," the bouncy heroine whose weapon of choice, the Golden or Magic Lasso, had the purpose of forcing those captured into obeying and telling the truth. There are interpreters who resemble this super heroine, in their ability to adopt or devise modes of testing that enable them distinguish between types of entities. In acknowledgment of their rare and seemingly effortless capacity to read individuals – of being a touchstone for particulars – let us call them "Arnoldian". The following pages represent such figures or modes of interpretative insight, illustrated by particular techniques of literary criticism, in modes of proof such as the polygraph, and in some forms of torture.

In previous chapters, the concept of "interpretation" has been applied in its broadest sense, that of a universal practice, while methods intended to resolve problems, such as the ordeal, have been treated as homologous to literary criticism. The strategies used by these modes of proof to determine truthful answers, and to restrain interpretation, have been surveyed. But the fact that multiple forms of analysis have been placed along a continuum, as well as the general sense given to the word interpretation, appears to imply that the technical use of the term has somehow been lost. In this account, one recognizes the story of how the

concept, which in its original sense was a technique that had the purpose of clarifying the veiled truth of Scripture, was progressively transformed into a worldview, the concept is now ubiquitous and its meaning is unstable. "Interpretation," while once a word particular to literary studies, is now applied as one which allows us to understand a variety of cultural practices and fields of knowledge. In fact, the conversion of a technical skill into a way of reading the world made all forms of ascribing sense an act or process of interpretation.

From this perspective, interpretation came to name something which everybody does in their everyday life and which may not necessarily require a particular talent or special aptitudes. Understanding the reason why one's neighbour appears to be suddenly upset, the workings of the subway in a different country, explaining a given text, or realizing whether a suspect seems guilty, are generally seen as ways of making sense which vary in their degree of specialization. In the section that follows, the impulse to interpret and the need for restraint that some interpreters experience will be the primary focus. Indeed, one way to describe these modes of proof, as well as certain literary criticism, is to consider that they differ from other ways of reading the world in their claim to limit interpretation, as if they wished to return to a time and a place in which the concept was not generalized.

Eliot on interpretation, the polygraph and Franco Moretti's charts

Critics such as T. S. Eliot have pointedly expressed their discomfort with uses of 'interpretation' as a term of art. In his preface to G. Wilson Knight's *The Wheel of Fire,* Eliot explains how "it has taken me a long time to recognize the justification for what Mr. Wilson

Knight calls 'interpretation'".[219] The word, separated by inverted commas throughout the essay in order to expose this particular use as a neologism, aims at depicting the way qualified judges, i.e. scholarly readers, analyse texts. To constrain the use of the concept to its technical sense, as Eliot does, implies that those wishing to interpret must possess particular skills and master a group of specific procedures.[220] In essence, Eliot's preface longs to understand which uses could be given to 'interpretation' and what distinguishes them from more general ways of understanding.

A shift of interest in the analysis of literature is signalled here, as if Eliot had captured in his essay the moment in which a pregnant term of art was being created. In fact, the concept is nowadays so widespread that it is difficult to conceive of a time in which interpretation was not the rule. Eliot's preface oscillates between a disinclination towards this notion and the acceptance of Wilson Knight's analysis, in which he "has insisted upon the right way to interpret poetic drama".[221] Knight is said to describe each of Shakespeare's play according to its internal pattern and visual imagery, formal criteria and aesthetic principles, instead of comparing it with similar works or characterizing the author's intentions. The book – the publication of which Eliot had arranged

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[219] T. S. Eliot, "Introduction", G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire – Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy*. 1930 (London: Routledge, 2001) xv.

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

[221] *Ibidem,* xx.

with Oxford University Press – presents a distinction between "criticism," as a judgment of value, an analysis of plot or character, and "interpretation," which represents the "comprehension of a set of correspondences" according to each play's theme and imagery.

The demarcation Eliot alludes to indicates a particularity, according to which "interpretation" would be the activity of pointing to and describing patterns intrinsic to the text, and criticism, which would be the discovery of elements extrinsic to it, such as placing a given poem among other works deemed to be of the same or similar quality. Here, then, the dichotomy between inside and outside finds a different expression. In order to describe the pattern, one must see it or understand it, which suggests that, in Eliot's rendering of Wilson Knight, an insightful critic is capable of comprehending the interior of the text; the critic appreciates a certain poem's imagery. The fact that various interpreters may, and in fact do, determine multiple patterns in the same text helps to clarify how the description of the poem's imagery is, in itself, a matter of interpretative choice – something Wilson Knight would not deny. One would thus be tempted to say that the process of recognizing a pattern is the activity of characterizing different configurations in a text through time – an endeavour that would vary according to its interpreters' beliefs and interests. However, as Eliot makes clear, the idea that a text possesses an inside is always accompanied by the hope that the interpreter is able to expose it.

> It is also the prejudice or preference of any one who practices, though humbly, the art of verse, to be sceptical to all 'interpretations' of poetry, even his own interpretations; and to rely upon his sense of power and accomplishment in language to guide him. And certainly people ordinarily incline to suppose that in order to enjoy a poem it is necessary to discover its meaning, a meaning

> which they can expound to anyone who will listen, in order to prove that they enjoy it. But for one thing the possibilities in meaning of 'meaning' in poetry are so extensive, that one is quite aware that one's knowledge of the meaning even to what oneself has written is extremely limited, and that its meaning to others, at least so far as there is some consensus of interpretation among persons apparently qualified to interpret, is quite as much as part of it as what it means to oneself.[222]

Eliot's account, which outlines a valuable lesson for readers such as the narrator in Henry James' short-story "The Figure in the Carpet," underlines a peculiar error in interpretation: the presumption that to enjoy a poem is to determine its singular meaning. Interpretation seems to be accompanied by the idea that a text possesses a mystery that needs to be solved, the content of which is difficult to understand. The presumption of inner secrecy – which has been examined in multiple ways in previous chapters – is visible when Eliot, despite himself, confesses that he was "tempted to use the word 'secret' as an alternative to 'pattern,' but that I remembered the unlucky example of Matthew Arnold."[223] If, on the one hand, "interpreting" a text would mean clarifying these difficulties and making it accessible to others, on the other hand it seems erroneous to assume that a single interpretation would comprise the whole meaning of a poem. Proficient interpreters, according to Eliot, must separate the "class of poets, not unknown to any age, which has all of the superficial qualities, and none of the internal organs, of poetry".[224] In such case, error of judgment is a result of mistakenly

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[222] *Ibidem,* xviii.

[223] *Ibidem,* xvii.

[224] *Ibidem,* xvii.

considering the exterior is in fact the interior, which is to say deeming the superficial qualities to be the internal organs.

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

In fact, one way to justify the existence of specialized interpreters is the need to uncover interpretative faults. Identifying a mistake presupposes the existence of interpretation as a tool, and opposes it to more general ways of viewing the world, while also reinforcing the idea that certain people are more capable than others at these tasks. The notion that mistakes must be corrected also validates the idea that one must be properly taught in order to interpret correctly. If one accepts the description of interpretation as an activity of experts, then understanding poems shares procedures with other types of specialized modes of proof, and may be differentiated from non-technical forms of understanding the world. A particularity in examinations intended to detect deception helps to clarify this point. Although the instrument we call a polygraph is the centre of this technique for evaluating individuals, the test depends, as has been shown, on other critical elements that are integral to the process, such as the pre-test interview, the reply to a previously established group of questions and, lastly, the interpretation of the chart.[225] This usually involves the appraisal of the physiological reaction to relevant and comparison questions; the examiner, who analyses the charts, is responsible for it.

Analysis and interpretation often appear as interchangeable concepts in James Allan Matte's study of Psychophysiological Detection or Deception, the accepted scientific term designating polygraph evaluations. A scientific chart contains four different physiological records. Paraphrasing the author's words, respiration patterns are recorded through two different pens at the top of the chart – one characterizes thoracic and the other abdominal breathing; galvanic skin conductance is documented in the middle

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

of the chart; and, lastly, cardiovascular activity is registered at the bottom of the page, revealing changes in blood pressure, pulse rate, and pulse amplitude.[226] Those looking closely will, however, find a difference between the task of reading each separate chart, identified as "analysis," and what is considered to be the general "interpretation" of results.

In the chapter "Analysis, Interpretation and Quantification of Physiological data," each section concerning a specific chart is referred to as "Breathing Analysis," "Galvanic Skin response / Conductance Analysis," or "Cardio Analysis." On occasion, the author uses the term "interpret" to refer to the way a polygraph examiner reads the trace on a chart (using phrases such as "in order to properly interpret the GSR/GSG tracing").[227] However, for the most part, "interpretation" is the expression used when physiological data as a whole is considered, as in when several charts are simultaneously taken into account. While analysis is deemed a partial account, interpretation allows the polygraph examiner to have a full comprehension of the test; it is considered the specialized capacity to analyse, compare, and evaluate the group of charts, thus permitting a conclusion to be reached about the suspect.

Interpretation is, therefore, perceived as a tool which enables a comprehensive view of the examination. Such a broad understanding of the term may not, however, be associated with the perspective of those who think about the concept in its more general sense. In this mode of proof, interpretation is what allows for conclusive results to appear, putting a stop to a multiplicity of hypotheses; interpretation is being used as a valuable instrument, restricting a world of possibilities, controlling results and allowing us to acquire

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[226] James Allan Matte, *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection* (Lancashire: J. A. M. Publication, 1996) 371.

[227] *Ibidem,* 380.

certainty regarding the outcome of the test. As Matte makes clear, there is, therefore, a demand for skilled examiners:

> In addition to those who graduated from unaccredited polygraph schools whose curriculum may lack adequate physiology training, many earlier graduates of accredited polygraph schools have failed to supplement their initial limited knowledge of physiology in spite of continued advances in forensic psychophysiology. Thus many "polygraphists" are "technicians" who interpret chart tracings by memorizing known tracing patterns without knowing the physiological cause for the particular pattern analyzed. This can lead to errors in interpretation that otherwise could have been avoided.[228]

The charts consist of the visible exteriorization of the subject's physiological reactions to the questions posed. To an amateur user of the polygraph, or in non-specialized arguments about the mode of proof, evidence is assumed to be self-explanatory. Visible results of deceit are supposedly so clear that everyone will reach identical conclusions when looking at them (analysis would be so obvious a task as determining whether a certain arm has been burned in the ordeal, a known ancestor of the test). To a professional, however, the capacity to make sense of what is brought to light depends on a technical understanding of the investigation, which is a result of extended education and training. The extent of their physiological knowledge distinguishes real polygraphists from mere technicians, as those who have memorized the most common patterns appearing in the charts, but who are unable to understand the physiological causes of a particular trace. As elsewhere in Matte's study, in this passage interpretation is understood as a tool handled by those

[228] *Ibidem,* 371.

who are well acquainted with human physiology, the polygraph as an instrument, and the group of questions posed. An expert polygraphist is able to understand what causes a pattern, to describe it accurately, and to provide a verdict.

In polygraph examinations, interpretative error may derive from insufficient knowledge, the incapacity to properly understand the causes giving origin to a pattern, or an inability to accurately read the charts. A difference between Eliot's characterization of Wilson Knight's ability to determine the Shakespearean pattern and the interpretation of the charts derives from the fact that, in polygraph tests, the chart is seemingly visible for all to see. The register is, itself, a pattern, which has been brought to light during the evaluation. But understanding the pattern, in itself, is as complex as the analysis of a Shakespearean sonnet. The following passage demonstrates what a polygraphist might see in a chart:

> A PVC results in a sudden drop in blood pressure and blood volume. In the top tracing the PVC occurs at almost regular intervals without specific stimulus thus is regarded as *uniform distortion*, whereas in the bottom tracing the PVC occurs only on a specific stimulus thus is regarded as a reaction.[229]

Knowing that PVC stands for "premature ventricular contraction" does not help to explain the differentiation between a "uniform distortion" and a "reaction," the reasons that make one or the other appear, or their importance to the general comprehension of the chart. It could be argued that this is due to the fact that these terms require explanation. "Uniform distortion" is portrayed as a "series of equal but nonconforming breathing cycles interspersed within an average tracing segment," which means that the subject

[229] *Ibidem,* 389.

may be attempting to control their breathing cycle, in order to obtain a seemingly normal chart.[230] Usually, as Matte explains, breathing rates below ten cycles a minute indicate that the suspect is controlling respiratory patterns ("normal breathing rates ranges ten to twenty-four cycles per minute").[231] It may now be perceived that mastering the term does not simplify the interpretative task. Learning the terminology is, nonetheless, the easy part, and it does not make us skilled interpreters. Notice figure XII-38 in the book and its explanation, quoted bellow:

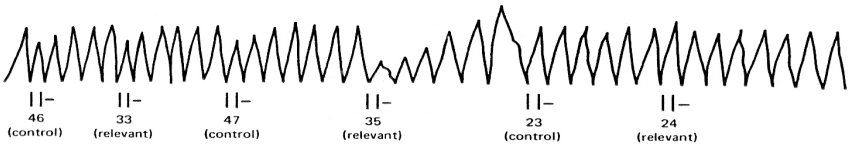

Figure 1: Analysis of a breathing pattern.

> Question #35 above reflects significant suppression followed by hyperventilation signifying that both the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems activated on this relevant question. The neighbouring control question #47 reflects mild suppression with no evidence of a relief pattern. Therefore, a score of -2 (D) or deception is given to this Spot in the breathing tracing.[232]

Those who know that subjects experiencing fear of detection tend to suppress breathing cycles during inhalation ("this results in either sustained, ascending, descending or suppressed breathing cycles of less than average amplitude on a stable baseline") may understand why deception (score – 2) was given to this Spot

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[230] *Ibidem,* 379.

[231] *Ibidem,* 379.

[232] *Ibidem,* 411.

in reply to question 35.[233] Fear activates the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems in response to relevant questions (those in which pertinent information is asked), as opposed to what happens in control questions (those not significant to the test, and used to compare results). When the polygraphist equates this result with those presented in the other charts, in which similar patterns of duplicity were found, they obtain a verdict of deception. The chapter dedicated to the analysis of the charts, which a lay user may read carefully and repeatedly in order to try to make sense of each graphic and its description, substantiates Matte's account concerning the necessity to having specialists analyse the results. Proof, in polygraph examinations, is self-evident, but only to those capable of seeing it. One relying merely on observation and assuming it will be sufficient to learn the procedures will be unable to comprehend the charts.

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

[233] *Ibidem,* 373.

solve the problem, which suggests that correct interpretations are obtained when one becomes an expert.

In this case, and to a non-skilled interpreter, it is quite easy to appreciate how showing something only works with those capable of understanding what is being highlighted. Returning to Eliot, to differentiate "reading" a text and "interpreting" it, as the author does, implies the existence of a category of specialized interpreters, skilled in the art of understanding literature. This is the reason why numerous meanings, in order not to be erroneous, may only exist within a limit judged to be accurate by those "qualified to interpret," in other words, those who possess particular analytical skills. Such activity presupposes a technical sense given to the term "interpretation," characterized in the preface as the pursuit of those wishing to comprehend both the poem's surface and its core, and not bind the comprehension of a text to the discovery of its meaning:

> But our first duty as either critics or 'interpreters', surely, must be to try to grasp the whole design, and read *character* and *plot* in the understanding of this subterrene or submarine music.[234]

Interestingly, Eliot characterizes the common field between critics and interpreters to be that of grasping the whole design (the exterior frame?), through the comprehension of this "subterrene" music (a poem's interiority?).

> "Reading" a poem without interpreting it would be knowing what the poem is about, being able to describe it, and to understand its own language, as "I can tell nothing from the fact that you enjoy Shakespeare, unless I know exactly *how* you enjoy him."[235]

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[234] T. S. Eliot, *Ibid*, xxi.

[235] *Ibidem,* xvii.

For Eliot, learning *how* one enjoys Shakespeare is important, which leads to the importance of describing evidence and proof to support a line of reasoning, of using a poem's vocabulary to define it, and of being able to portray that set of relations within its structure, of comprehending "recurrences of mood and theme."[236] This is the reason Eliot claims to have benefited from Wilson Knight's book, as "his essays enlarged my understanding of the Shakespeare pattern," "which, after all, is quite the main thing".[237] Resisting interpretation would thus "limit his criticism of poetry to the appreciation of vocabulary and syntax, the analysis of line, metric and cadence; to stick as closely to the more trustworthy senses as possible".[238] In Eliot's essays, his own mode of reading is made clear and one notices how the argument is organized through an ostensive display of passages considered representative. Take, for example, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," where the author presents what he considers to be the resemblances between several critics' interpretations of Shakespeare and their personal views, to then propose a Shakespeare "under the influence of the Stoicism of Seneca".[239] Before quoting Othello's ultimate speech, Eliot comments how he "always felt that I have never read a more terrible exposure of human weakness – of universal human weakness – than the last great speech of Othello".[240] The monologue is then cited and followed by the commentary:

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[236] *Ibidem,* xx.

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

[238] *Ibidem,* xix.

[239] T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," 1927, *Selected Essays,* 1932. (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1980) 128-129.

[240] *Ibidem,* 130.

> What Othello seems to me to be doing in making this speech is *cheering himself up*. He is endeavoring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself.[241]

There is no appreciation of vocabulary or syntax, no commentary on metre or cadence. And, still, Eliot seems to have been able to stick closely to those trustworthy senses, in his exemplification of what may be considered true insightful criticism. In Othello's monologue, commonly understood as the expression of the utmost despair, Eliot finds unredeemed egotism. Some pages later, part of Hamlet's final speech is quoted, after which Eliot comments: "Antony says: 'I am Antony still,' and the Duchess, 'I am Duchess of Malfi still'; would either of them have said that unless Medea had said *Medea superest*?".[242] Again, metre and cadence, vocabulary and syntax are ignored, as the commentary concerning the quotation serves not only the purpose of grouping Hamlet's last words, and, thus, Othello's, with those of Antony and the Duchess of Malfi but also of showing their common model, Seneca's *Medea*. In this form of reading, as opposed to interpreting, one discovers Eliot as an Arnoldian, for whom part of the critic's skill consists in his ability to choose passages in a text. In *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism*, the author argues:

> But Arnold had real taste. His preoccupations, as I have said, make him too exclusively concerned *with the great* poetry, and with the greatness of it. His view of Milton is for this reason unsatisfying. But you cannot read his essay on *The Study of Poetry*

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241 *Ibidem,* 130.

242 *Ibidem,* 132.

> without being convinced by the felicity of his quotations: to be able to quote as Arnold could is the best evidence of taste.[243]

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

> There is a well-known comparison or simile in the great XVth canto of the Inferno, which Matthew Arnold singled out, rightly, for high praise; which is characteristic of the way in which Dante employs these figures.[244]

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[243] T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry & the Use of Criticism – Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England,* MCMXXXIII (London: Faber and Faber, MCMXLVIII), 118.

[244] T. S. Eliot, "Dante," 1929, *Selected Essays,* 1932 (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1980) 243.

The passage in question is one of Arnold's touchstones, which Eliot quotes to reveal the quality of Dante's imagery, the simile being applied "to make us *see more definitely* the scene which Dante has put before us in the preceding lines".[245] Singling out the passage, in this case, has the purpose of making us see what Dante desired, which involves understanding the technical use of the simile, but also of comprehending the reason why both Arnold and Eliot have highlighted it. A difference between both critics would theoretically reside in the fact that Eliot does not feel the need to theorize or to contrast golden passages and oppose them to the poetry being evaluated.

And, still, on occasion, and returning to Eliot's essay on *Othello*, one discovers his own appreciation for golden alloys:

> When Dante says
>
> *La sua voluntade e nostra pace*
>
> it is great poetry, and there is great philosophy behind it. When Shakespeare says
>
> *As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;*
> *They kill us for their sport*
>
> It is equally great poetry, though the philosophy behind it is not great.[246]

Here, one finds Eliot as a practical Arnoldian, contrasting touchstones. Quotation is a form of evidence, as if the citations are self-explanatory, which allows for general claims to be made about them. But only certain readers may perceive the lines' quality, or

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[245] *Ibidem*, 244.

[246] T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and The Stoicism of Seneca," *Ibid,* 136.

authenticity; in Eliot, acknowledgment is restricted to those able to understand other's quotations and to choose their own alloys.[247] The selection of quotations in Eliot shares the double nature of proof that is observable in polygraph examinations. On the one hand, both the quotations and the answers to relevant questions are described as evident. Something in their nature distinguishes these alloys from more mundane passages or replies, as if they clamour for attention. On the other hand, only experts may choose the citations or understand the relevant replies. This ability to select quotations shares characteristics with the capacity to detect interpretative faults: both are described as possessing an obvious character, but only experts may spot them.

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

> I do not think that Mr. Wilson Knight himself [...] has fallen into the error of presenting the work of Shakespeare as a series of mystical treatises in cryptogram, to be filed away once the cipher is read; poetry is poetry and the surface is as marvellous as the core.[248]

This passage, one of the most important in the essay, identifies interpretation as a term synonymous to words such as "to clarify" or "to enlighten," something to be applied to cases in which meaning is somehow lacking and must be illuminated: "To interpret, then,

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

[248] *Ibidem,* xxii.

or to seek to pounce upon the secret, to elucidate the pattern and pluck out the mystery, of a poet's work, is 'no less an instinct'".[249]

In her celebrated essay "Against Interpretation," Susan Sontag claims that "in place of a hermeneutics, we need an erotics of art."[250] Sontag's essay echoes T.S. Eliot's previously discussed philosophy of interpretation, like the rejection of the idea that a work of art has meaning – and that such meaning must be clarified. In her critique of hermeneutics, Sontag distinguishes Rabinic and Christian spiritual interpretations from a "modern style interpretation," one which "excavates, and as it excavates, destroys; it digs 'behind' the text, to find a subtext which is the true one".[251] This rejection of interpretation negates systems of hermeneutics such as those of Marx and Freud, in whose theories of interpretation "all observable phenomena are bracketed" and 'manifest content' is thought to symbolize 'latent content.'[252] Sontag refuses to distinguish between the interior and exterior of a text and to find in it secret or hidden explanations to a certain work of art. To Sontag, "to interpret is to impoverish," to refuse to leave the work of art alone, which "makes art into an article for use, for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories."[253] In this rejection of interpretation and the importance certain critics give to hidden meanings, Sontag seems close to Eliot.

Like Eliot, Sontag chooses touchstones to prove her point, but unlike this Eliot she does not focus on certain key passages: "(The best essays in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, like 'The Scar of Odysseus," are also of this type.) An example of formal analysis applied simultaneously to genre and author is Walter Benjamin's essay,

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[249] *Ibid,* xix.

[250] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, 1961 (London: Vintage Books, 2001) 14.

[251] *Ibidem*, 6.

[252] *Ibidem*, 7.

[253] *Ibidem*, 10.

"The Story Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov".[254] Sontag's touchstones, then, have the value of being exemplary, even if those wishing to understand her point must read the essays for themselves.

Instead of squeezing content out of a certain work, the critic should experience it and make others experience it as well: "We need to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more."[255] If the task of the critic is to make us "see the thing," "and, by analogy, our own experience of it" then Sontag's critique is a touchstone, which is the reason why instead of pointing to certain passages in a text or showing certain features of a painting, she is only able to recommend the essays of those who were able to also be a touchstone. This is the reason why "The function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means."[256]

Returning to Eliot, the expression "plucking out the mystery," which quotes Hamlet's rejection of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's attempts to sound him out, characterizes the need to decipher other entities.[257] Nonetheless, Hamlet reacts to his friends' lack of skill and comradeship and is not arguing, as his test to Claudius proves, against the existence of mysteries that need to be solved. Polygraph charts would thus be grouped with modes of interpreting Shakespeare as a treatise in cryptogram, methods of analysis sharing the assumption that unique solutions may be found in order to solve the problem at hand.

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[254] *Ibidem*, 13.

[255] *Ibidem*, 14.

[256] *Ibidem*, 14.

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

In Eliot's objection to interpretation as a means by which to solve mysteries, something favourably perceived by the aforementioned modes of proof, there is an important difference between literary criticism and, for example, the analysis of a polygraph chart. Criticism generally aims to describe a certain poem or narrative correctly, to find a suitable interpretation of a text, even if language is no longer believed to be the carrier of truth. On the contrary, the aforementioned methods of testing are expected to provide a true verdict; they require a definite solution. In fact, unless there are technical deficiencies with the apparatus, the data resulting from the polygraph test are portrayed as truthful. The title of James Allan Matte's book, the veritable polygraphist's Bible, reads as follows: *Forensic Psychophysiology Using the Polygraph, Scientific Truth Verification, Lie Detection.* Words such as "forensic" and "psychophysiology" lead us to a world of rational and accurate results. But it is the term "scientific truth verification" that characterizes the idea that the results obtained by the test correspond to the truth itself, verified and validated by scientific procedures.

The need for a knowledgeable examiner stems from the fact that mistakes might be made in the enunciation of the charts. This is the reason why those arguing in favour of the polygraph tend to sustain that personal interpretation, which could cause errors in the analysis of the data, is being controlled by a set of rigorous factors. The relationship between facts and their interpretations is rationalized, in an attempt to make them indistinguishable. This is not to imply, of course, that these examiners ignore the differentiation between facts and the judgment one makes about them, but acknowledges the pretension for uniformity between the data and its interpretation. Polygraphists appear to share Eliot's concerns about the impulse to interpret and the need to put a stop to it, thus theorizing, in scientific language, the importance of "empirical data," "conversion tables" and "validation studies." Notice

how, in polygraph examinations, clarification of a fault is possible when we point to the graphics, oppose them to the polygraph examiner's conclusions, and redescribe them.

> In chart interpretation, the forensic psychophysiologist (FP) must not allow a significant reaction in one tracing to influence his/her evaluation of that same relevant question in the other tracings.[258]

Being unable to see the charts as a whole pattern, allowing for a single trace to influence the outcome of the test, must be avoided. This is the reason why a system of numerical scoring was designed with the purpose to "attain an objective measure" in chart interpretation. Quantification results from the evaluation of "the relevant question versus the neighbouring control question," which produces a set of values going from the maximum truthful score to the maximum deception score.[259] The analysis of each chart is the first step in the evaluation, followed by the tallying of scores, allowing interpretation to be objective:

> when all scores are tallied, a conclusion regarding truth or deception must be made from this tally by means of a conversion (conclusion) table based upon empirical data supported and refined through validation studies.[260]

While analysing a poem was previously described as the capacity to explain it to others, reaching a conclusion in a polygraph test may be exposed as the aptitude to reach a truthful or untruthful

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[258] James Allan Matte, *Ibid,* 378.

[259] *Ibidem,* 398.

[260] *Ibidem,* 398.

verdict and being capable to justify it. Numerical quantification, therefore, is represented as the tool which allows interpretation to be systematic, conclusive and, most of all, restricted.

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

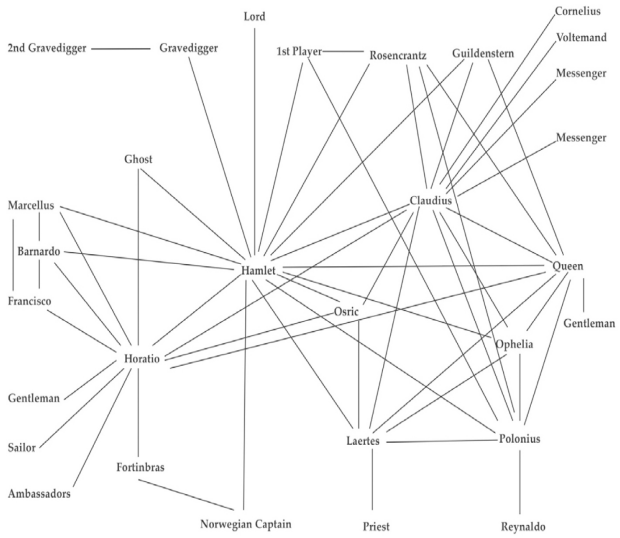

Figure 2

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

> once you make a network of a play, you stop working on the play proper, and work on a model instead: you reduce the text to characters and interactions, abstract them from everything else, and this process of reduction and abstraction makes the model obviously much less than the original object – just think of this: I am discussing Hamlet, and saying nothing about Shakespeare's words – but also, in another sense, much more than it, because a model allows you to see the underlying structures of a complex object. It's like an X-ray.[261]

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

Moretti's models relate to this book in more than one way. The author is implying that there is more to a play than its language, which is why ignoring, even if for a while, matters such as tone or style, allow us to focus on the text's "underlying structures." In this search for an X-ray, the author furthers the implications of T. S. Eliot's theory about Wilson Knight, as he seems to be able to detect a pattern in *Hamlet* (even though Eliot would probably object to the idea that Shakespeare's words could be ignored). It is assumed that without the excesses (i.e. language) the plot of the play and the relations between characters appear and may be described in a new light, which is why reducing the play to a model has the purpose of making matters simple and less enigmatic. The benefits of working on a model instead of in an actual play also brings to mind Glessner Lee's dioramas, as there is a distortion in the relation between the original object and the model that, as has been shown, also took place in Lee's nutshells. At the same time, in this aim for objectivity, the maps' use of data may equally be contrasted to the physiological records described in polygraph charts. In this case, an important difference between polygraph registers and the maps resides in the fact that while the charts have the purpose of obtaining the truth – *i.e.* to put an end to interpretation – these maps help us see the plays in a new light, they aim to generate new interpretations.[262] Another difference between polygraph charts and

[262] Regarding Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, it should perhaps be mentioned that someone observing the play on stage would obviously notice that they do not speak with each other (whether they would give it relevance or not would be a different question). When one considers, as the author does, that each speech represents an action (and seeing two of the studied works are theatre plays) then the similarity between these maps and actors' movements on stage acquires relevance. Moretti does mention it, when he claims that "when we watch a play, we are always in the present: what is on stage, is; and then it disappears. Here, nothing ever disappears. What is done cannot be undone". The difference between a stage play and the maps would consist on the fact that they allow us to look into the structure once and again, they remain as an interpretative tool to be used when necessary. Perhaps the same happens in the case of the records in a stage manager's prompt book (in the case

Moretti's essay has to do with the fact the polygraph registers are deemed a form of exteriorization of what lies inside the person. In the network theory, though, the idea of interior is rejected:

> Or take the protagonist. When discussing this figure, literary theory usually turns to concepts of "consciousness" and "interiority" – even Woloch's structural study takes this path. When a group of researchers applied network theory to the Marvel series, however, their view of the protagonist made no reference to interiority; the protagonist was simply "the character that minimized the sum of the distances to all other vertices"; in other words, the center of the network. (...) So, speaking of Shakespeare's characters "in general" is wrong, at least in the tragedies, because these characters-in-general don't exist: all there is, is this curve leading from one extreme to the other without any clear solution of continuity.[263]

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

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of stage directors who are keen on having the actors' movements well determined in space), where researchers also benefit from what the author calls "the advantage of thinking in terms of space rather than time." In fact, part of the stage director's work involves this ability to understand how do characters approach one another (moving closer or apart) during the play, who speaks to whom, etc.

[263] *Ibidem,* 4.

but is not identical to it".[264] This perspective is made clear when one observes figure number 3.

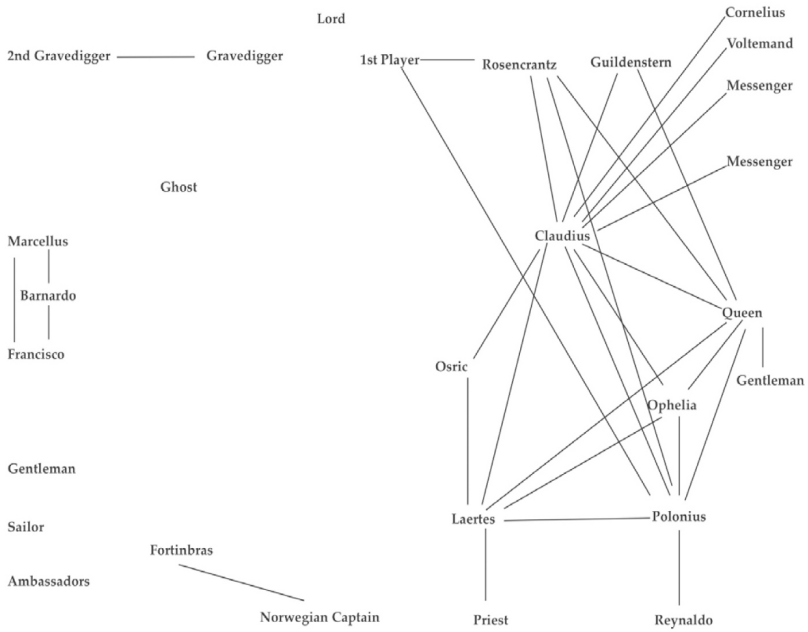

Figure 3

This figure appears in the context of a series (Figures 19 to 21), in which important characters are gradually removed. The maps are drawn to make us notice there are three central figures in *Hamlet*, as characters concentrate near Claudius, Hamlet, and Horatio. This is surprising to the author, in the sense that Horatio "has a function in the play, but not a motivation. No aim, no emotions – no language, really, worthy of Hamlet. I can think of no other character that is so central to a Shakespeare play, and so flat in its style."[265] When Hamlet or Claudius are removed, according to Moretti,

[264] *Ibidem,* 5.

[265] *Ibidem,* 7.

> (...) peripheral characters are affected, but the network as a whole not much (...) But if we remove, first Hamlet, and then Horatio (Figures 19-21), then the fragmentation is so radical that the Ghost and Fortinbras – which is to say, the beginning and the ending of the play – are completely severed from each other and from the rest of the plot. Hamlet no longer exists. And yet, Horatio is slightly less central than Claudius in quantitative terms (1.69 versus 1.62). Why is he so much more important in structural terms?[266]

The explanation for Horatio's importance, and even the flatness of his character, is related to Shakespeare's half-intuition about his importance in the play. Horatio represents the flatness of the State's discourse and his space is that of "ambassadors, messengers, sentinels, talk of foreign wars, and of course the transfer of sovereignty at the end – all this announces what will be soon called, not Court, but State".[267] Horatio therefore represents the new state, this being the reason for his importance. From this point of view, when Moretti's maps ignore Horatio's language and focuses on his relation with others, he discovers new things in the play. But, as is often observed by critics, and as was mentioned in the first chapter, Horatio is a central character, in the sense that it is up to him to properly narrate the story that took place. His is the main testimony for the narrative, so it makes sense to realize that without him there may not exist continuity between the beginning and ending of the play: without Horatio, there would be no play. The maps allow us to visualize Horatio's relations with others, but, obviously, a reader of the play alone can discover the same information. When replying

[266] *Ibidem,* 5.

[267] *Ibidem,* 7.

to other critics' objections about the necessity of a network theory, Moretti explains that:

> I did not need network theory; but probably needed networks. I had been thinking about Horatio for some time – but I had never 'seen' his position within Hamlet's field of forces until I looked at the network of the play. 'Seen' is the keyword here.[268]

The map is useful as it allows Moretti to make sense of ideas (intuitions) that he had been thinking about, without being able to fully give them meaning. One wonders, though, if this means they show Moretti what he was looking for, which is to say that they might simply clarify his previous thoughts on the subject.[269] If so, are these maps a useful tool for critics in general, or for those devising them? Will other critics find Moretti's maps enlightening and will they be able to find other sets of relations in them?

As has been shown, an ability to understand polygraph charts makes it possible to determine the truth. Matters are not, however, that simple. Part of the polygraphist's task involves the ability to understand if the guilty person is attempting to actively deceive the test, which, one would say, is an interpretation of the subject's intentions. In this case, the assessor aims to limit their personal views through the understanding of the subject's possible

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[268] *Ibidem,* 11.

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

techniques of countermeasure and the respective development of a group of countercountermeasures (a term experts use). Common physical mechanisms of deception include the contraction of the anal sphincter muscle, which may increase respiratory amplitude, "curling toes, right/left thigh contraction, right/left forearm push, right/left heel press, right /left palm press, right/left elbow pushed down," biting of the tongue, and tensing of the jaw.[270] This set of techniques aims to cause "distortion of the physiological tracing, or pain, which can cause a physiological reaction and / or distortion."[271] These countermeasures may invalidate accurate results or produce an inconclusive polygraph examination. The countermeasures employed by the guilty suspect are interesting because the deception is focused on the effort to disrupt the correspondence between facts and their interpretations. While the labour of the polygraph examiner resides mainly in the attempt to obtain interpretations close to the data, the deceitful suspect wishes to increase the divergence between the information in the charts and the possibility of interpreting them well. A subject deliberately attempting to distort results is said to "prevent the forensic psychophysiologist from obtaining interpretable charts" and inconclusive data is that which is taken as denying the possibility of interpretation, i.e. the ability to reach an accurate verdict.[272] The subject appears to be refusing the polygraphist's access to their interior, by using exterior factors such as muscle contraction in order to do so. In this case, the charts exemplify the subject's exterior action and not their inner reactions.

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[270] James Matte, *Ibid*, 538.

[271] *Ibidem*, 537. Other practices to deceive the test involve self-hypnosis, dissociation, use of drugs or alcohol. For each of these measures there are countercountermeasures, such as drugs tests.

[272] *Ibidem,* 379.

To prevent these physical attempts to deceive the test, a motion chair has been developed, which traces and records the subject's every move, so that the examiner may later associate the person's movements with the relevant questions, to see if there was an effort to deceive. In this case, the ability to accurately interpret the movements on the chair represents a capacity to determine the intention of the subject to deceive. The suspect's words do not have interpretative value, and saying truthful or untruthful things only matters in the sense that the answers allow for the appearance of physiological data. Interestingly, every aspect of the suspect's behaviour, except their words, is a subject of analysis, as the polygraphist attempts to measure involuntary reactions that are difficult to feign. However, as critics of the polygraph have accurately noticed, fear of the examination may give rise to the same movements as those appearing in countermeasure techniques. In this sense, interpretation is a matter of making a (subjective) choice, a deliberation concerning the intentions of the suspect and of avoiding the possibility of error.

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

Although both polygraph charts and quotations from poems seem self-evident, they ought to be distinguished. In order to understand a chart one must know, for example, that cardio thoracic pressure increases when one experiences fear of detection, contrary to what happens with respiratory patterns, which decrease. Polygraph registers, as seen, are only self-evident to those capable of understanding them. Quotations of poems, however, do not appear to require such expertise, in the sense that everyone may read them and understand their words (one does not necessarily have to know what metaphors or alliterations are in order to comprehend a certain poem – figures of style used in daily language). And, still, the capacity to interpret a poem accurately does result from technical knowledge, and from having read many poems and their interpretations before, a point to which I will return.

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

Touchstone in *As You Like It*

Arguing in favour of the technical sense of interpretation in cases in which a rigorous set of protocols has been established seems simpler than when discussing authors for whom procedures have a certain degree of vagueness. Recognizing a problem, knowing what to ask, understanding how and when to do it, and applying or creating a specific vocabulary could, in fact, be described as either specialized or general interpretative skills. Everybody may accept the need to conduct an inquiry in order to clarify something, and to keep repeating and reformulating questions until the required information has been found. Nonetheless, it will be shown how particular interpreters distinguish themselves through their ability to confront the studied entities and to pose accurate questions about them. In order to do so, they must possess a particular insight into the object of knowledge, which one does not generally find in non-specialized exegetists. This capacity to ask is accompanied by the development and systematization of a particular vocabulary, which will be learnt by other interpreters aiming to reach a similar outcome.

With this in mind, another of Shakespeare's Touchstone – the court fool in *As You Like It* – is called to mind. The thought that expert modes of proof require adequate judges is problematized by Touchstone, a figure who, albeit irrational, is able to "speak'st wiser than thou art aware of" (II, iv, 53).[273] The fact that Touchstone, a character that has no counterpart in Shakespeare's main sources, is a fool would explain his lack of reasoning, but his name denotes the object capable of verifying the authenticity of pure metals.[274]

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[273] William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Arden Shakespeare, Thomson Learning: 2007). Quotations follow this edition.

[274] Most critical editions argue that Robert Armin, and not William Kemp, played Touchstone in the play. This would help to justify the differentiation between this articulate fool and previous clowns, a creation that would find its peak in *King*

The jester's thoughtlessness is highlighted in the play during scenes in which he is given an unrestrained opportunity to explain his view of the world, such as in his conversation with Corin, the shepherd. Touchstone's lesson about good morals in the court and in the country is indicative of his inaptitude in dealing with a specific vocabulary, while showing the limits of his skills as an expert.

> Corin: Besides, our hands are hard.
>
> Touchstone: Your lips will feel them the sooner – shallow again. A more sounder instance, come.
>
> Corin: And they are often tarred over with the surgery of our sheep, and would you have us kiss tar? The courtier's hands are perfumed with civet.
>
> Touchstone: Most shallow man! Thou worm's meat in respect of a good piece of flesh indeed! Learn of the wise and perpend. Civet is of a baser birth than tar, the very unclean flux of a cat. Mend the instance, shepherd.
>
> Corin: You have a too courtly wit for me, I'll rest.
>
> (*As You Like It*, III, ii, 57-58)

When Corin tries to show that Touchstone's judgment might be erroneous – shepherds have dirty, greasy hands, so it is unclean to kiss them – the fool replies that courtiers' hands also sweat. Corin attempts to contrast both types of hands, but Touchstone is always able to find, in what appears to be a triumph of logical reasoning, the courtly equivalence to the shepherd's objections. Opposing

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Lear. Nick De Somogyi, in his introduction to the play, notices that Robert Armin was both a trained goldsmith and a comic dramatist, who had written for himself the part of Tutch, the clown in *Two Maids of More-Clark*. This would explain the choice of name for the character. See Shakespeare, *As You Like It,* Nick De Somogyi (intr) (London: Nick Hern Books, 2003), xxx.

'civet' to 'tar' does not appear to be an example of a discussion that promotes a multiplicity of meanings, and Corin's protests seem reasonable to all except Touchstone. Pointing to faulty conclusions, in this case, does not help the shepherd; Corin is not an experienced critic and is, therefore, only able to notice the inconsistencies in Touchstone's reasoning. Had Corin been a literary expert, in Eliot's sense, he might have been able to notice, for example, Touchstone's use of legal terms in lines such as "Shallow, shallow. A better instance, I say. Come" (III, ii, 54-55). The repeated allusion to the word 'shallow' has the purpose of showing Corin's superficial character, as well as his lack of depth in reasoning. But, as noticed in the Arden edition, 'shallow' is also "a lawyer's term for unsound proof".[275] The same happens with the term 'instance,' which is used to portray Corin's inability to find what Touchstone considers to be serious and persuasive proof.[276] It appears that Corin is receiving not only a lesson on good morals, but also one on how to argue well, as may be perceived in the use of expressions such as "Mend the instance, shepherd" (III, ii, 65). And still, the conversation presents the contrast between someone who is able to apply legal terms, but reasons in an illogical form, and someone who presents his ideas in a simple, but sensible, way. In this case, and despite Touchstone's patronizing tone towards Corin, error does not seem to be a product of a misunderstanding of words or expressions, but of the fool's inability to accept that the shepherd's arguments may be valid. At the same time, Corin's inability to recognize Touchstone's terms and mode of reasoning makes him unable to ask questions and impugn the fool's reasoning. After this discussion, one could hardly argue in favour of either Touchstone or Corin as being specialized

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[275] Juliet Dusinberre *in* William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Juliet Dusinberre (London: Arden Shakespeare, Thomson Learning: 2007) 239, n.54.

[276] Michael Hattaway, *in* William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Michael Hattaway (ed.) (Cambridge: New Cambridge Edition, 2000) 130, n. 34.

interpreters. Asking something to others appears to require a sort of understanding that neither of them possess.

Such a grand debate seems to show that, contrary to what Touchstone sometimes assumes, he is not a wise man, but merely someone who spent enough time in the company of knowledgeable people to parrot a certain way of saying things. Acquiring a specialized vocabulary without understanding how to use it is not, however, representative of an interpretative skill.[277] One is tempted to argue that the fool is only repeating ideas he has heard before when listening to Celia's and Rosalind's discussions; indeed, Touchstone's presence during the young ladies' debate about the relation between Fortune and Nature, in the second scene of the first act, would be an example. If most of Touchstone's philosophical notions reproduce previous conversations, without advancing them in any significant fashion, this is the reason why they always appear to be foolish, even if partially correct. At this point, although the jester is named Touchstone, he does not appear to be a specialized interpreter, but merely someone who is making general, and for the most part erroneous, interpretations about the world.

Critics have neglected or diminished the importance of Touchstone's capacity to accurately value other entities. For example, Harold Bloom, who considers Touchstone to be a minor figure, and "the least likeable of Shakespeare's clowns," noticed the disparity between the fool's wit and that of Rosalind:

> That harmony extends even to her presence in *As You Like It*, since she is too strong for the play. Touchstone and Jaques are

[277] The Arden editors contend that this discussion, as well as others in the play, suggests that the comedy was to be represented for an audience familiar with legal terms, such as the students of law at the Inns of Court. For a detailed account of Shakespeare's use of legal terms see: B. J. Sokol, Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare's legal language: a dictionary* (NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).

> poor wits compared to her, and Touchstone truly is more rancid even than Jaques. Neither is capable of this wise splendor, typical of Rosalind's glory.
>
> [...]
>
> I suspect that the dramatic point of both Jaques and Touchstone is how unoriginal they are in contrast to Rosalind's verve and splendor, or simply her extraordinary originality.[278]

To Bloom, Rosalind exceeds all of the other characters in the play. This judgment is a good starting point, as it allows us to consider Touchstone's importance as the instrument used to acknowledge Rosalind's originality. It is a fact that, when in her presence, Touchstone's aptitude to make truthful commentaries about those surrounding him is recognized. For example, at the beginning of the play, Rosalind threatens him: "Speak no more of him; you'll be whipped for taxation one of these days" (I, ii, 67). Here, Rosalind is referring to Touchstone's remark about a knight who swears by his honour without having it, a depiction of Celia's father and the way he unlawfully banished Rosalind's progenitor.[279] The accuracy of the characterization, which annoys Rosalind and leads her to defend her cousin, makes Touchstone reply: "The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly" (I, ii 85-86). In this commentary, he seems to be showing he has some idea that he was right, and has been unfairly cautioned.

One could assume Touchstone to be more insightful than he shows, but his ability to notice the truth in others seems to be accompanied by the mistaken idea that this is an intellectual, and

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[278] Harold Bloom, "Introduction," *William Shakespeare's As You Like It*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004) 3; *Ibidem,* 1; *Ibidem,* 12.

[279] "No more was this knight swearing by his/ honour, for he never had any; or if he had, he had sworn it away before ever he saw those pancakes or that mustard" [I, ii, 75-78].

not an intuitive, capacity. Although Touchstone would like to be a wise man, he appears to be merely in possession of the capacity of an irrational piece of quartz. In response to Touchstone, Rosalind replies "By my troth, thou sayst true. For since the little / wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show" (I, ii, 87-89). It does not, however, make much sense – as the Arden edition recognizes – to consider that Rosalind is now defending Touchstone, although she seems to pity the fact that fools have been silenced. The point of interest here, however, lies in her own characterization of the little wit of fools, which contradicts Touchstone's self-portrait as an unacknowledged wise man. Although unable, in a lengthy discussion, to be sensible, Touchstone is considered accomplished at identifying bad poems. Consider the episode in which Rosalind appears reading Orlando's lines. Touchstone mocks her, makes up rhymes of his own, and then comments:

> This is the very false gallop of verses: why do you
> infect yourself with them?
> (*As You Like It*, III, ii, 110-111)

Rosalind accurately perceives the substance of Touchstone's judgment of Orlando's unsophisticated rhymes, which leads us to believe that he is not only an able authority of the character of others, but also very capable at estimating poetry. This is a skill Rosalind recognizes, thus apologizing: "Peace, you dull fool, I found them on a tree" (III, ii, 112). The fact that Touchstone judges the lines immediately after hearing them, and that Rosalind was enthusiastically quoting them, contrasts with his recycling of contents in previous discussions. Although he is an inaccurate theorist, Touchstone appears to be a good evaluator, efficient at identifying that "Truly, the tree yields

bad fruit" (III, ii, 113). At this point, Touchstone's judgments, when in the presence of Rosalind, have twice proved accurate. Duke senior was indeed dishonest and Orlando's poems are not what Arnold would consider to be Shakespearean golden passages. To Rosalind's reply, Touchstone comments: "You have said, but whether wisely or no, let the forest judge" (III, ii, 118--119). Here, as the editors of the play make clear, Touchstone's observation is directed towards the audience, as he effectively asks them to judge who is the funnier, whether him or Rosalind. But it also represents Touchstone's knowledge that Rosalind's wit may be compared to his, and that although he is a fool, he is not a judge. Let me parenthetically acknowledge Dover Wilson's perspective. In his introduction to the Cambridge edition, the author comments Touchstone's function in the play:

> And in *As You Like It* as in *Lear* this part of the Fool is to help insanity or sentimentality back to sense: to be the 'touch-stone,' the test of normal, all the more effective for being presented in jest, under motley. 'Lord! what fools these mortals be!' Our Touchstone, transformed from a 'roynish clown' into a mundane philosopher from the moment he reaches the forest, knows what he knows and why he must mate with Audrey. He gives us his reasons none too delicately: but we have proved his character, his tenacity in faith, and his grossest reasons (they are not so gross, after all) help marvellously to unsentimentalise a play which might easily have lost itself in sentiment, to recall its waywardness, to give it to us for the thing it is, so bewitching and yet so forthright, so honest, so salutary.[280]

[280] John Dover Wilson, ed., "Introduction," *in* Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, 1926 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) xv.

Here, "Touchstone" is used in the sense of a "test of normal" and the author argues that the fool's purpose in the comedy is that of putting sentimentality into place. Touchstone's bawdy descriptions about the nature of love do, indeed, work to de-sentimentalise the narrative, and he may be portrayed as a test to other's normality – as Corin and Audrey – in the sense that his unreasonable words bring to light the authenticity of their characters. Still, touchstones were seldom used to test normality and, instead, were often applied to assess the genuineness of some entities, and there is no valid reason to suppose that Shakespeare was not applying the term in this restricted sense. Returning to the beginning of this chapter, Bloom is correct to assume that the jester's purpose is that of acting as Rosalind's foil, but fails to understand that a stone without someone to conduct and interpret the examination is unable to provide accurate judgments.

As such, a distinction must be made between certain interpreters, whose uncommon abilities make them particularly insightful, such as Rosalind or Hamlet, and an insentient object like a touchstone, which requires someone to administer the test and to observe the results of the process. One should not be misled into thinking that Touchstone knows what he is doing, as if, in this play, he is the polygraph, and Rosalind the examiner. This is the reason why Touchstone, when accompanied by Corin, is deemed to say nothing more than nonsense, and why Jaques is merely able to see in him a fool. In contrast, when he is near a shrewd interpreter, such as Rosalind, Touchstone is capable of providing valuable opinions about others. Observe how the young lady, in the aforementioned passage, may not like Touchstone's appreciation of her uncle's character, but recognizes his judgment to be accurate. Even the amount of dialogue varies in both situations: the episodes with Corin and Audrey are characterized by long passages of speech; the conversations in which Rosalind is present consist mostly of short exchanges of

words.[281] The content of Touchstone's sentences when in Rosalind's company is esteemed because she is able to understand and value his words, distinguishing the sense in his nonsense.

Being an intuitive, or just a lucky, interpreter – saying things others find truthful without knowing or understanding it – does not incorporate someone into the category of articulate exegetists. Touchstone appears to possess intuition, but not what Stanley Cavell or Michael Fried would call "conviction," this being the ability to judge that is a result of knowledge and education. Incidentally, pointing – in the modes of proof previously described – was deemed to be a way of showing evidence that restricts personal interpretation and allows interpreters to accurately share their judgments with other people. In contrast, an example given by Cavell helps to illustrate that pointing as a mode of proof has limitations even when perceptive critics are present, while also clarifying the notion of "conviction."

In "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," Stanley Cavell discusses an excerpt from *Don Quixote*, quoted by Hume in his essay "Of the Standard of Taste." In the episode, Sancho tells the story of two kinsmen with great knowledge of wine, who were called upon to give their judgment about a good vintage. They both taste the wine and reflect on the experience. One says the wine is good, even if he faintly recognizes the flavour of leather; the other, while also enjoying it, declares that the wine tasted of iron. They are both ridiculed on account of their opinions, but in the end an old key with a leather thong is found at the bottom of the

[281] When Celia, Rosalind and the jester enter the forest, for example, Touchstone's words are sensible, and short, remarks: "I care not for my spirits if my legs were not weary;" "For my part, I had rather bear with you than bear you. Yet I should bear no cross if I did bear you, for I think you have no money in your purse;" "Ay, now I am in Arden, the more fool I!, When I was at home I was in a better place, but travellers must be content" (II, iv, 2-16).

barrel. Cavell uses this story to explain the relationship between evidence discovered in a given text and criticism. For the author, either kinsman's point could have been verified even if the key had not been found at the bottom of the barrel, for it was up to each to prove they were right. The critic must make us see, hear, or taste the proof they are describing, they have to produce evidence about a given text, as well as show:

> his [the critic's] ability to produce for himself the thong and key of his response, and his vindication comes not from his pointing out that it is, or was, in the barrel, but in getting us to taste it there.[282]

> The philosopher appealing to everyday language turns to the reader not to convince him without proof but to get him to prove something, test something, against himself. He is saying: Look and find out whether you can see what I see, wish to say what I wish to say (...).[283]

This account, unlike others described, does not represent the critic's task as that of exteriorizing the work of art's concealed nature, and does not oppose or differentiate the interior from the exterior. They are not revealing an inner frame, or pointing to objective characteristics of the object, but rather describing what grounds their conviction. It does not even matter if the thong and key were actually in the barrel, as long as the critic is able to make us experience them. The author deems both kinsmen's interpretations correct, instead of portraying, for example, the case of a third individual who, after

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[282] Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, 1976 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 87.

[283] *Ibidem,* 95-96.

experiencing the wine, finds in it a flavour of both leather and iron. Such analysis, which to a polygraph examiner would be the truthful interpretation, is not considered. To Cavell, the purpose of the critic is to make the reader experience the test; for evidence to appear, the critic must have "conviction" regarding a given work of art, a concept of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell explains how it is not a mode of proof, "but my sense that I make sense" or a "way of discovery about certain things that we cannot fail to know in a given period".[284] Literary appreciation need not be factual, and aesthetic disputations may not be solved only by means of argumentation, they can also be determined by the critic's convictions, intuitions, and beliefs. Literary appreciation represents a type of knowledge that underlines the importance of a comprehension based on experience.

In "Must We Mean What We Say?," Cavell asserts that,

> The more one learns, so to speak, the hang of oneself, and mounts one's problems, the less one is able to say what one has learned; not because you have forgotten what it was, but because nothing you said would seem like an answer or a solution: there is no longer a question or a problem which your words would match. You have reached conviction, but not about a proposition; and consistency, but not in a theory. You are different, what you recognize as problems are different, your world is different.[285]

This passage appears in the essay after a discussion of Wittgenstein's comparison of methods and therapies, which – according to Cavell – made him ponder about "the progress of psychoanalytic therapy." The relevance of the quotation relates to its description of how

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[284] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 17, 20.

[285] Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, 86.

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

Such capacity is that of knowing what to ask a certain entity in order to understand the type of theoretical problems it gives rise to. Indeed, the importance of asking appropriate questions is seen in Psychophysiological Detection. Understanding the reasons leading to the formulation of interrogations in these examinations would be a book on its own, but it is relevant to refer to how part of the polygraphist's skill consists of their ability to devise the test. The interrogation and the analysis of it are intended to be objective but it has proven to be difficult to ask good questions. In fact, the lie detector's evolution was accompanied by the development and systematization of a group of queries aimed at diminishing the margins of error associated with the test and to avoid complex interrogations that lead to ambiguous results.

Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) was one of the first to use the technique of word association. In 1879, he presented a sequence of questions to a patient, who had to associate a thought to each

word. The premises of the test would be later used in methods such as the Control Question Test. Nowadays, polygraphists may choose from a number of different techniques when interrogating a suspect. The most common are the Relevant-Irrelevant Test, The Comparison Question Test or Control Question Test, and the Guilty Knowledge Test. William Moulton Marston first devised the Relevant-Irrelevant Test, later used by John Larson and Leornarde Keeler in crime investigation. While once popular, this method, often used, is no longer applied. The RIT uses a series of 10 to 15 questions, alternating relevant and irrelevant questions. The series of questions is twice presented in a different order, with a small pause between each group. The test was later deemed to be unreliable, due to the fact that innocent subjects, fearing an erroneous accusation, could react to the relevant and irrelevant questions in a similar way. The Comparison Question Test is often used in crime investigation, civil litigation, and in national security.

There are several variations to this model, such as the Control Question Technique, devised by John Reid in the forties; the Backster Zone Comparison Test, authored by Backster, who remodeled the Reid test in 1962; the Utah Probable-Lie Test and the Utah Directed-Lie Test. The CQT test is used to evaluate the suspect's reactions to relevant questions about the crime, as opposed to neutral questions. This is the reason the test may not be applied to people that lack knowledge of the crime (due to the fact that they were inebriated or experienced loss of consciousness, among other reasons). Questions are directly posed and require an affirmative or negative answer. The test includes typically two to four relevant questions in a sequence of ten to twelve questions containing other themes. Variations upon the sequence of questions depend on the model of test being used. The Concealed Information Test/Guilty Knowledge Test differs substantially from other techniques: it is not an attempt to realize if the suspect is telling the truth, but to understand if they have a

reaction to the mentioning of facts about the crime only a suspect could know. This test has two components. In the Peak of Tension Test, developed by Leonarde Keeler during the 1930s, the examiner asks a key question. The Guilty Knowledge Test uses a series of multiple choice, questions, and for each relevant question there are several neutral control questions. The main presupposition is that the subject will react physiologically to the relevant questions, which are not of public knowledge.

This test presupposes that, in order to commit the crime, the suspect must have knowledge that no one else does. The difficulty in asking appropriate questions results from the need to obtain what examiners call "the intended interpretation," which is to say an assurance that the suspect correctly understands what is being asked, and that the corresponding physiological reaction will take place. As such, the examiner must be objective regarding the procedure and ignore their personal interpretation or intuitions about the case, in order to be able to access the facts. In the Arther Technique, or Specific Accusation test, the suspect's behaviour is analysed during the examination and then contrasted with the reply to the relevant questions (in a process of analysis which follows the Reid technique). A specific trait of this method lies in its systematization of Four Golden Rules and Ten Commandments, which are worth analysing.

The Four Golden Rules

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

1. Should This Issue Even be Asked?

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

2. Is The Proposed Crime Question Properly Worded?

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

3. Every Crime Question Must be Emotionally Charged.

An emotionally charged crime question is obtained in two ways:

First: Using an explosive "Verb."

Second: Keeping the question short.

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

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

4. Never Count Upon My Fantastic Pre-test Interview to Make Up for a Poorly Worded Crime Question.[286]

Clarifying the interrogation is one of the purposes of the golden rules. Non-experts in polygraph examinations – regardless of their assumptions about the test – sometimes have the idea that, if the polygraph as an instrument is accurate, other factors are not important. Still, if one does not know what to ask – for example, if the case facts are erroneous – the examination will be unable to provide accurate test results. The golden rules epitomize two of the polygraphist's main concerns: identifying the relevance of what is being asked, and wording the questions properly, in order to make sure that the adequate physical reaction surfaces in the charts. Form and content are differentiated, as they entail two distinct apprehensions. What is being asked must be close to the facts, preferably in a way that eliminates eventual differentiations between the crime and the question, as if they were one and the same. How to ask or properly word the query must be clear and

[286] James Allan Matte, *Ibid,* 456.

straightforward so that the subject understands it without doubt (so that a correlation exists between question and answer). The formulation of short, direct questions shares the same objective. However, in this search for absolute correspondence, it is unclear if explosive verbs are being used due to the fact that they represent explosive crimes (thus the correspondence between facts and words, i.e. questions), or to the need to obtain equally explosive reactions. One is tempted to maintain that if all goes well and according to the rules, the explosive crime will be represented in the question, thus giving origin to the expected explosive reaction. The purpose is, of course, the creation of a line of continuity between crime, question, reply, and physiological response. This sequence is characterized by the progression from a complex or obscure situation that makes the polygraph evaluation necessary, to its illumination through clear questions and charts. Although an explosive verb may accurately characterize the crime, if the suspect is innocent the expected physical reaction will not be found, and this line of continuity will not take place.

The Ten Commandments

1. Each crime question must deal with only one issue. Never use the words **and** or **or**.

2. Regardless of how the person answers, never ask a question that implies guilt. That is, never use as a crime question a "Are you still beating your wife?" type of question.

3. Never unintentionally ask a crime question that gives away the key to a good Know-Solution Peak-of-Tension test.

4. Remember that very likely at least some of the case facts may be wrong.

5. Is it possible that the liar can answer this crime question truthfully?

6. Is it possible that a truthful person will lie to one of the proposed crime questions? If, so, NEVER ask it! The reason is that some truthful… have tried to "beat the lie detector" when such a question is asked, thus misleading the expert into thinking the person was lying.

7. Ask only four crime questions during any one session.

8. Word the questions so that they flow smoothly.

9. Make sure that even if the person had a minor part in the crime, he will be lying to at least one of the crime questions.

10. Each word used in every question must be completely understood by the person. The best way to assure that he understands is to use the very terms and verbs he used.[287]

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

To these commandments, one would add the concern over the reasons that lead a subject to answer. The polygraphist should, therefore, also be aware of 'why' a suspect is answering in a certain way, as truthful subjects attempt to lie and guilty subjects may reply truthfully to some particularity of the crime – either because they did not participate in that aspect of it, or because the question was not worded properly. The polygraphist must therefore be prepared

[287] *Ibidem*, 457.

to understand and attribute intentions of deceit or innocence to the subject, which do not solely depend on the replies given or the ability to read the charts. To these worries, one may add the concern over the sequence and number of questions posed, previously systematized in the test, and to which the polygraphist must obey. Wording the questions smoothly – which is a subjective task – is portrayed as a straightforward undertaking. This effort to structure what to ask and how to ask it, as well as in what sequence, appears to be an attempt to rationalize the appearance of surprise, either in the form of the suspects' replies, or of their behaviour.

Questioning has been described as the specialized capacity to know what and how to ask someone so that it is possible to obtain a verdict. But another interesting particularity in these investigations was left unmentioned, namely the fact that the subject's own vocabulary must be used in order to assure the highest degree of comprehension during the inquiry. On the one hand, those concerned with polygraph evaluations develop a complex terminology, which, one presumes, is the best suited to name the various aspects of the procedure. This is the reason why one encounters symptomatic questions, super dampening effects, and tri-zone indication remedy tables which "detect and remedy any zone comparison technique defect."[288] On the other, for the sake of clarity, questions must respect the subject's vocabulary, which means that, in order to devise the test, the examiner must have learned a complex terminology, but also be able to reproduce the suspect's language and to apply them to specific questions. Interrogation is, therefore, a form of comprehension, a way of understanding the facts of the case, as well as understanding the polygraph as an instrument and the subject's testimony in the pre-test interview.

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[288] *Ibidem*, 702.

Returning to Cavell, the importance of asking questions is a central concern in his philosophy and accompanies the development of his own particular terminology. Asking questions does not, evidently, appear in the form of the systematization seen in polygraph evaluations; there is not a sequence of questions to be followed, nor a strict distinction between what to ask and how to ask it. Sometimes, as mentioned in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, the question is not even clear at first, and the philosopher must ask himself repeatedly what is he looking for.[289] This Socratic thought – that certain entities, such as our bodies, hold a forgotten knowledge that may be brought to light if the proper questions are inquired – is portrayed as the illustration of philosophy itself.

At the end of *The Claim of Reason,* this mode of inquiry is made clear, first, in the enunciation of a series of questions about *Othello*, which the essay does not look forward to solving:

> Is Montaigne's attitude fully earned, itself without a tint of the wish for exemption from the human? Or is it Shakespeare's topic of the sheets and the handkerchief understandable as a rebuke to Montaigne, for refusing a further nook of honesty?[290]

Following the quoted passage, the author goes on to describe his hypothesis that certain key lines in *Othello* are explicit references to

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

[290] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 494.

the events in or stages of a witch trial: "two thoughts, or perspectives, with which to survey one's space of conviction in the reading I have started with Othello and from which perhaps to guide it further".[291] Conviction is what makes the discussion start. It may be seen as the exemplification of questions about a certain play, as well as the raising of conjectures about it, with the purpose of leading others to experience the possibility that the events in the play are as described. This is seen as the beginning of the discussion, and not its ending. From this perspective, getting to know something and recognizing it as a problem implies understanding what may be solicited from it, which specific challenges it gives rise to, and finding a way to describe it better, but not to solve it entirely. And it is not a coincidence, as Richard Elridge notices, that *The Claim of Reason* ends with the formulation of a question about the nature of philosophy itself, as well as of its relation to literature – "But can philosophy become literature and still know itself?" – a debate which calls for discussion but is finally left unsolved.[292] Returning to the concept of conviction:

> My conviction, or evidence, is in something of the reverse state. Given my intuition of the occurrence of skepticism in Shakespeare, it is from him that I would have to learn, were I an historian, what to look for to give his history. In calling my guiding theme an intuition I am distinguishing it from a hypothesis. Both intuitions and hypothesis require what may be called confirmation or continuation, but differently. A hypothesis requires evidence and it must say that it constitutes its evidence (...). An intuition, say that God is expressed in the world, does not

[291] *Ibidem*, 494.

[292] *Ibidem*, 496. See Richard Elridge, *Stanley Cavell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 109.

require, or tolerate, evidence, but rather, let us say, understanding of a particular sort.[293]

Here, 'conviction' and 'evidence' are, initially, used interchangeably, a mode of thinking which would lead to despair a polygraph examiner longing for scientific procedures. When conviction appears, it allows us to know what to look for (i.e. the sources of it) and to understand when it has been found.

The notion of 'conviction,' like any other of Cavell's stipulated terms, is rephrased in different books through time, an instance of the transformation of what Emerson calls 'intuitions' into 'tuitions'.[294] In the introduction to *Disowning Knowledge*, a collection of essays about Shakespeare, Cavell explains how it was not until the end of *The Claim of Reason*, a book which concludes with a description of *Othello*, that he was able to "claim that tragedy is the working out of a response to skepticism."[295] The author further explains that in *The Claim of Reason* he touches "a certain vision of film comedy," a vision that will be later converted in books on film comedies and melodramas.[296] This is the reason why, gradually, in his books and in the work of a lifetime, Cavell's intuitions on skepticism, films, plays and philosophy are progressively transformed into tuitions in each new book. And, more importantly, why Cavell ends up creating his own technical terms, thus redefining, in the context of his books, words such as 'acknowledge,' 'skepticism' and, of course, 'conviction'."

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[293] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*, 4.

[294] See Lawrence F. Rhu, *Stanley Cavell's American Dream – Shakespeare, Philosophy and Hollywood Movies* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006) 140.

[295] Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason,* 1979 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 5.

[296] Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare,* 1983 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 6.

To an examiner, on the contrary, hypotheses require and constitute evidence itself. Thus, conviction is a form of proof, which results from intuition, and which is expressed in the comprehension of a given work. But it does not excuse the critic from having to explain what they see; on the contrary, it allows them to perceive what others do not: "The best critic will know the best points. Because if you do not see something, without explanation, then there is nothing further to discuss".[297] Moreover, it is interesting to note that, unlike what happens in the other cases, explanation must appear *post festum*, which is to say after forming a conviction in response to a certain work of art; nevertheless, to ostensively point to something is not deemed a way of knowing. Someone making an aesthetic judgment has to be prepared to "say in its support: don't you see, don't you hear, don't you dig?".[298] This hint is, one would argue, a form of ostension, but one in which it is not important to have a specific referent. Showing is a way of making us see, hear, and appreciate the sources of one's conviction. This presupposes a privileged relationship between the critic and the object of art.

A point of contact between Touchstone's appreciation of Orlando's lines, and both Cavell's and Fried's essays resides in the fact that they are all required to make a decision about recent works of art (in the mentioned essay, as well as in "Music Discomposed," Cavell attempts to comprehend atonal music, while Fried's book aims to judge contemporary paintings). The fact that one is assessing modern poems, music, or paintings implies that there is not a differential of correction, a valuable criteria with which to judge. The way Michael Fried, avowedly drawing on Cavell, defines the way that certain works "compel conviction,"

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[297] Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*,93.

[298] *Ibidem*.

is of interest here. A footnote in the essay "Art and Objecthood" clarifies his view on the subject:

> Moreover, seeing something as painting in the sense that one sees the tacked-up canvas as a painting, and being convinced that a particular work can stand comparison with the painting of the past whose quality is not in doubt, are altogether different experiences: it is, I want to say, as though unless something compels conviction as to its quality it is no more than trivially or nominally a painting. That suggests that flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as "the irreducible essence of pictorial art", [...] but rather as what, at a given moment, is capable of compelling conviction, of succeeding as painting.[299]

A mutual relationship of understanding is represented in the evaluation of the work of authors such as Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, and Frank Stella. Fried argues against the idea that characteristics such as flatness and its delimitation should matter when deciding whether to include a work in the category of paintings, while also criticizing those for whom a painting should be compared with other works in the past belonging to the canon, so as to make a choice concerning their quality. Paintings are characterized by their capacity to compel conviction, and this is the feature that settles upon their nature. This is a result of the observation of a given painting, as well as of those preceding it. The painting's nature of having the capability to compel conviction is not portrayed as an immutable essence, but as an essence "that

[299] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 169.

therefore changes continually in response to the vital work of the recent past."[300]

Most of the entities defined, if not all of them, have, up until now, been portrayed as wishing to disguise themselves. This is the reason why interpreters must uncover and systematize ways of bringing the true natures of the works of art to light. But the paintings Fried is describing "confront the beholder," and this is a condition to enable a conviction about them. Such capacity presupposes the object of art's wish to make itself known (its presence), as well as the critic's longing to discover it. A polygraphist, or any other examiner involved in the methods of proof studied in this book, would probably long for such entities' demand to be acknowledged, and argue that interpretation must be less complex when both interpreter and interpreted long to relate to each other. And, still, something in the nature of these evaluations makes it a complex type of judgment.

> Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously – and when the fulfilment of that demand consists simply in being aware of the work and, so to speak, in acting accordingly.[301]

In both Fried and Cavell's studies, conviction precedes the capacity to explain, even if it follows the observation of the work of art, and is derived from the understanding of a long line of works. Thus, when we are before a certain painting, we must decide if it has quality, but without following a model or having systematic criteria. From this perspective, it could equally be considered a form of conversation, of exchange of thoughts between both critics. There is

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[300] *Ibid,* 169.

[301] *Ibidem*, 155.

a subjective aspect to these appreciations that both Cavell and Fried embrace, but that examiners in other modes of proof would deem inappropriate. When these authors argue in favour of the capacity of both the work of art and its critic to experience presence, they are distinguishing themselves from other techniques aimed at revealing the nature of a certain entity. This is a relationship of empathy and common longing to know and be known.

But among the skills one may hope to master, it is difficult to understand how to acquire or cultivate conviction. Returning to Cavell, only some people possess conviction, and it is defined as a result of education, knowledge, and a particular sensibility that could perhaps be defined as the capacity to establish a relation of presence between the subject and the work of art, and which is defined as being a touchstone:

> But one could say that feeling functions as a touchstone: the mark left on the stone is out of the sight of others, but the result is one of knowledge – it is directed to an object, the object has been tested, the result is one of conviction.[302]

Feeling is the touchstone in the procedure. Interestingly, the mark left on the stone is out of sight, as would also be the case if the key and thong in the barrel could not be found, but had still been experienced by the critic. The fact that the author considers a test has taken place is equally important; the verification of authenticity takes place in the relationship between object and critic, the test is one of conviction, and the result is knowledge. In this touchstone – so different from others described – criticism has to create its own mode of persuasion, which has a temporal dimension, as is extended through time, and varies according to

[302] Stanley Cavell, *Must we Mean What we Say?*, 192.

the modern art being created. Both Cavell's and Fried's notion of a fidelity test presuppose a series of previous arguments in which the test works, but also a prospective use for it. What is asked is that those wishing to acknowledge a work of art be able to adapt their skills and use their past experience to detect what was hidden, whilst also bearing in mind the challenging nature of their object of investigation.

'Touchstone' has not acquired importance as a term of art in Cavell's books, and it may not be considered an expression with a similar value to that of 'conviction'. The word is referred to in many of the author's books in its common sense, as an exemplification of value. Nevertheless, in *Philosophy – The Day After Tomorrow*, the word is again paired with the term experience (Fred Astaire's sequence in Minelli's *The Bandwagon* is depicted as "a checkpoint, or touchstone, of experience").[303] And although there is no further reflection on the subject, one is left with the wistful hope that this intuition about the term might have been developed further, so as to make sense, for example, of what would the difference be between a "touchstone of feeling" and one of "experience," as well as if there was an evolution from one term to another.

To conclude, both the polygraph test and the concept of conviction stem from the idea that something is concealed in the studied entity, which may be revealed by the test. In the case of the polygraph examiner, there is an attempt to systematize interpretation, and examiners platonically assume that if a truth is concealed in the subject's body, and the correct questions are asked, then the truth must surface. In order to do so, interpretation, as will be seen, must be asymmetrical. On the contrary, to both Cavell and Fried, conviction is the result of a joint effort to know the entity, which also wishes

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[303] Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005) 22.

to reveal its identity as a work of art. The relationship between entities must be at the same level, which requires an effort from the interpreter, who must study and acquire indispensable knowledge allowing them to reach the entity. Conviction is possible when one recognizes certain things as problems, when the critic reaches the capacity to understand the type of questions a certain entity poses. This ability to interrogate the work of art is, therefore, both a result and an effect of conviction, which will be made clear in the critic's writings and in the elaboration of a particular vocabulary with which to describe the acknowledged entity. The studied Arnoldians have been defined as possessing a group of capacities, among which one finds the ability to observe, to point, and to identify mistakes. It may now be perceived how one may add the capacity to ask questions and an intuition that is, in fact, a conviction about the object, the result of education and an extensive process of learning.

The Touchstone of Touchstones: Isabel Archer and Madame Merle

In Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel Archer, "a young person of many theories," describes Madame Merle as a "rare, superior and pre-eminent" woman.[304] Isabel, dazzled by her friend and considering her a model of feminine intelligence, somehow has the (correct) intuition that others might not succumb to Madame Merle's charms.[305] For example, her friend Henrietta would certainly

[304] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady,* 1881 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 67; *Ibidem*, 209.

[305] On Isabel's use of Madame Merle as a model, Unitarianism, and her failure to understand herself, "that allow Isabel to fall victim to Osmond's and Madam Merle's machinations" see Laurel Bollinger. "'Poor Isabel, who had never been able to understand Unitarianism!': Denominational Identity and Moral Character in Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady." *The Henry James Review* 2 (2011): pp. 171-175.

not 'subscribe'[306] to her, for reasons Isabel cannot accurately explain. And yet, according to Isabel, the opposite reaction would be found on Madame Merle's part, which would certainly do justice to Henrietta in a unique tactful way, as "She appeared to have in her experience a touchstone for everything, and somewhere in the capacious pocket of her genial memory she would find the key to Henrietta's value."[307]

Isabel is not only envious of Madame Merle's talents and singular experience of life, but also of what seems to be her uncanny ability to evaluate others, a skill partly residing in the fact that she possesses the required qualities – such as intelligence and intuition – which allow one to be judicious. The allusion to the blackbird who names Madame Merle has been noticed, but perhaps it would be worthwhile to consider that a touchstone, as the *OED* clarifies, is "a very smooth, fine-grained, black or dark-coloured variety of quartz or jasper (also called *basanite* n.), used for testing the quality of gold and silver alloys by the colour of the streak produced by rubbing them upon it.[308] This is the particular (dark) quality Madame Merle seems to have, which distinguishes her from most human beings and makes her the more capable to assess them.

Isabel Archer's description seems to share the ambition for a touchstone that would allow us to distinguish the authenticity of these entities, she assumes that some of us may be understood if the proper key is found, and if we are in possession of the said key. The presupposition guiding Isabel is that different witnesses to Madame Merle's talent would reach equal conclusions, and validate her rulings, as she herself is doing. In this touchstone method there

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[306] *Ibidem*, 211.

[307] *Ibidem*, 211.

[308] See McCullough, Joseph B., "White Blackbird". *Papers on Language and Literature* (1975): 312-316. OED, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/203901?redirectedFrom=touchstone#eid

is no space for personal interpretation, as Isabel's companion is stating and analysing facts truthfully. Such autonomy means that Madame Merle relies mainly on herself and on the information she is able to gather, testing the evidence, and finding modes of proof that work.

This sovereignty in interpretation is accompanied by the fact that others, including Isabel, attest to her aptitudes. Madame Merle does not name herself a touchstone; others do it for her. Moreover, simple ocular inspection will not help those who are attempting to understand the whole scope of Madame Merle's verdicts. This is described as an interior process, made public only when, and if, she decides that it should be. Mary Jane King, in "The Touch of the Earth: a Word and a Theme in *The Portrait of a Lady,*" sees the numerous references to 'touch' as offering an important insight into the novel:

> 'Touch[ing] the piano with a discretion of her own' (149), the illustrious Madame Merle caresses quite as discreetly the lives of her companions – testing their value with her universal 'touchstone' (164), subtly manipulating their destinies with a 'touch' that affects even the 'heartless' Gilbert Osmond (204).[309]

Even though the author notices how, "According to Ralph Touchett, Isabel 'touches nothing that she doesn't adorn,'" she fails to see the relationship between the young apprentice and Madame Merle as the

[309] For an account of touch in *The Portrait of a Lady* see Mary Jane King, "The Touch of the Earth: A Word and a Theme in the Portrait of a Lady." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1974): 345. Also, in *Literature as Conduct – Speech Acts in Henry James*, J. Hillis Miller characterizes the importance of touch(ing) in *The Portrait of a Lady*. In order to do so, Miller relates Jacques Derrida's *Le Toucher* and Jean-Luc Nancy's *Touch, to Touch Him*, with the act of kissing in the novel, but does not mention Isabel's wish to become a touchstone, i.e. a form of standard.

touchstone Isabel wishes to be.[310] Critics such as Alwin Berland, in *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James*, consider Ralph to be the true touchstone in the novel:

> Ralph Touchett is necessary to the novel as representative of the real thing; his very name suggests the Arnoldian touchstone [...] But an equally important fact is that he is simply unavailable. That Ralph Touchett is an invalid, and thus prevented from playing a more active role, seems to me more than a convenience of plot, or a fortuitous accident.[311]

Ralph, as Berland argues, may indeed be the touchstone of the book, but Isabel ignores such particularity, and chooses Madame Merle as the standard she aims at.

If Madame Merle's experience is the touchstone, then it is the surface she allows others to scratch in an attempt to determine their value. People leave a visible mark on Madame Merle, which she will use to compare with other individuals in order to ascertain each person's authenticity. These impressions are stored in this interpreter's memory and her experience is improved with each encounter, meaning that her natural abilities are enhanced in time. Equally relevant is the faculty of being in a good position to recognize the value of others: "'That's the great thing,' Isabel solemnly pondered; 'that's the supreme good fortune: to be in a better position for appreciating people than they are for appreciating you'."[312]

Madame Merle places herself in a position where she enjoys a good perspective on the human condition. This, which Isabel relates

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[310] *Ibidem*.

[311] Alwin Berland, *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 123.

[312] Henry James, *Ibid*, 224.

to an aristocratic essence, makes for an asymmetrical relationship between Madame Merle and other individuals. She will evaluate others better than they will evaluate her. Part of Madame Merle's skill at testing others derives, as stated, from the fact that she maintains an asymmetrical rapport with them. This unequal relationship requires, conversely, that those being tested occasionally feel they are Madame Merle's equals, that she condescends in elevating them to her level, or in lowering herself to theirs, so that a proper conversation can be maintained. Isabel, for example, fears that, if Lord Warburton had been present, he would be unable to keep a secret of the fact that he had proposed to her, but that this proposal had not been accepted: "He had excellent ways, but she [Isabel] felt sure that if he had come to Gardencourt he would have seen Madame Merle, and that if he had seen her he would have liked her and betrayed to her that he was in love with her young friend."[313]

The point here is that these characters are more likely to disclose their secrets to those who appear to appreciate and are interested in them. Perhaps it could be argued that the tested subject is required to admire or fear those judging them, to recognize some sort of superiority, but also to have the illusion that, on occasion, a communion is possible that will make them relate to each other, and willingly reveal information about themselves. Madame Merle is evidence for the authenticity of others and the process of evaluation is characterized as if taking place in her body, scratched by others in order to obtain accurate judgments. It was mentioned that Madame Merle has the capacity to lead people to say things they would have preferred to keep to themselves. The technique to make Isabel loquacious, for example, may be perceived both in Madame Merle's meticulous and progressive handling of Isabel and on this heroine's failed attempt to resist it: "She preferred for the present to talk to

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[313] *Ibidem*, 224.

Isabel of Isabel, and exhibit the greatest interest in our heroine's history, sentiments, opinions, prospects. She made her chatter and listened to her chatter with infinite good nature".[314]

Compelling Isabel to be chatty implies a parsimonious choice and use of words on Madame Merle's part, who gladly relies on what the young lady is willing to tell her. This inclination to make Isabel a topic, which she appreciates, is Madame Merle's way of getting to know Isabel better than she does herself, of realizing her past, present and future hopes, and of training herself in the understanding of her character. Instead of being talkative, Isabel's companion assumes that it is always best to know more about others than letting them glean information about us. This is an example of how skill is required, and used, to make others fluent without having to say much oneself. That Isabel has the feeling she is being sounded may be perceived through her aversion to sharing relevant information, such as her relationship with Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton. That Madame Merle is accomplished at the task of making James' heroine conversational despite her best judgment is understood when "we have seen that at moments the girl had compunctions at having said so much," or:

> The gates of the girl's confidence were opened wider than they had ever been; she said things to this amiable auditress that she had not yet said to anyone. Sometimes, she took alarm at her candour: it was as if she had given to a comparative stranger the key to her cabinet of jewels. These spiritual gems were the only ones of any magnitude that Isabel possessed, but there was all the greater reason for their being carefully guarded.[315]

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[314] *Ibidem*, 215.

[315] *Ibidem*, 224; *Ibidem*, 208.

Madame Merle is indeed very able at obtaining the key to the character of other people. The relationship between Isabel and her companion is, however, complex: the young lady attempts to resist it; feels flattered that such a distinguished friend chose her as a theme; but never discloses her full story.[316] Isabel has a certain intuition that she is under scrutiny, but she does not realize entirely either the purpose or the consequences of such a test. Simultaneously, she does not understand – it would be impossible for her to know – that what she leaves unsaid Madame Merle is able to fully know, either because others told her so, because of her perceptiveness, or owing to the fact that she devised the plan herself. After an education through suffering takes place, Isabel becomes a standard, capable of adjudicating other entities' qualities and flaws.

It takes a long time for the heroine to comprehend that Madame Merle's show of sensibility is a way of taking advantage of other people, which means that understanding Isabel is knowing how to manipulate her, just as determining Henrietta's value was to discover her usefulness. Regarding Henrietta, Isabel avows that

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[316] The following quotations show Isabel's attempts at being careful: "I am bound to confess, though it may cast some discredit on the sketch I have given of the youthful loyalty practiced by our heroine toward this accomplished woman, that Isabel had said nothing whatever to her about Lord Warburton and had been equally reticent on the subject of Caspar Goodwood" (*PL* 223). Notice, also, the following passage: "She mentioned to this fortunate woman that Mr Osmond had asked her to take a look at his daughter, but didn't mention that he had also made her a declaration of love." (*PL* 339). At this point, Isabel does not realize that Madame Merle knows everything about Osmond's proposal. At the end, Isabel has at least the satisfaction of not having all revealed: "I certainly never told you anything of the sort.' \ 'You might have done so – so far as the opportunity went – when we were by way of being confidential with each other. But you really told me very little; I've often thought so since'. Isabel had thought so too, and sometimes with a certain satisfaction. But she didn't admit it now." (*PL* 443).

> Madame Merle was too humorous, too observant, not to do justice to Henrietta, and on becoming acquainted with her would probably give the measure of a tact which Miss Stackpole couldn't hope to emulate."[317]

The keyword here is, of course, "tact," which Isabel is applying in the sense of a faculty of perception, the diplomacy of knowing what to say and who to say it to; to those acquainted with Madame Merle, however, it indicates the way she handles others, as if an individual tactic was devised for each person.

In Madame Merle's technique, being insightful is not solely a matter of obtaining information about others, but also a form of making them instruments to one's pleasure or necessity. In a conversation with Gilbert Osmond, she contends: "'I don't pretend to know what people are meant for [...] I only know what I can do with them.'"[318] In contrast to what Isabel assumes, principled concerns are not to be found among the traits that characterize Madame Merle's clear discernment. Madame Merle's use for Isabel, as the Countess of Gemini conveys, may be explained in her wish to give Pansy both a mother and a dowry. Pleasing Osmond could equally be part of the plan, finding someone he could develop into another art form, in addition to his many objects. This is not, however, the full extent of Madame Merle's intentions. One could wonder whether Isabel, who has proved to be insightful, but immature, is being groomed so as to later become a standard; whether, when Madame Merle decides that Isabel is to suffer at the hands of Osmond, she has the purpose of giving her the experience in life that is, so far, lacking, which is the ability to

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[317] Henry James, *Ibid*, 211.

[318] *Ibidem*, 263.

discover things about people and objects that those who have not grieved are unable to understand.[319]

In this portrait of the intricate relationship between Madame Merle and Isabel, a mentor longs for a pupil. The rapport between them is, however, reciprocal, as Isabel often conveys the wish to become an interpreter modelled on Madame Merle. The story of Isabel's growth into adulthood depicts her drive to become a standard, the discovery of the implications of being so, and the suffering that accompanies it.

> She found herself desiring to emulate them, and in twenty such ways this lady presented herself as a model. 'I should like awfully to be *so*!' Isabel secretly exclaimed, more than once, as one after another of her friend's fine aspects caught the light, and before long she knew she had learned a lesson from a high authority. It took no great time indeed for her to feel, as the phrase is, under an influence.[320]

Isabel grants that not all aspects of her companion's talents may be simultaneously perceived, but she does not find this uncanny. In the mind of James's heroine, or at least in her description of Madame Merle's observant nature, the capacity to examine others is an aesthetic quality, associated with her general sensibility to all

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[319] That "suffering is fatally desirable to Isabel," is a point noted in Juliet McMaster's "The Portrait of Isabel Archer." As the author notices: "Much of Madame Merle's special appeal for Isabel is made evident in the curious compliment Isabel pays her early in their relation: "'I'm afraid you've suffered much,' she once found occasion to say to her friend… 'You sometimes say things that I think people who have always been happy wouldn't have found out'" (I, 274). Isabel admires and longs to be like her. Ironically, of course, she does follow in Madame Merle's footsteps, taking her place as Osmond's mate and as the step-mother of her daughter; and in doing so, reaps all and more of the woe she has found so attractive in her mentor. See: Juliet McMaster, "The Portrait of Isabel Archer." *American Literature* (1973): 50-66.

[320] Henry James, *Ibid*, 211.

matters, such as the gift of playing the piano or the knowledge of every important book. Those "superior spirits," as Isabel will later define Serena Merle and Gilbert Osmond, distinguish themselves from common people in this sensitivity that Isabel craves to acquire.[321] Isabel promptly acknowledges Gilbert Osmond, thus displaying her own intuition in the recognition of his value:

> She had never met a person of so fine a grain [...] such shyness as his – the shyness of ticklish nerves and fine perceptions – was perfectly consistent with the best breeding. Indeed it was almost a proof of standards and touchstones other than the vulgar: he must be so sure the vulgar would be first on the ground.[322]

To Isabel, standards and touchstones possess a fine perception, which is the reason why Osmond's nervousness seems to be a characteristic of his good intuition and "best breeding."[323] Daniel Mark Fogel explains how "Both James and Isabel succumb to the fascination of the difficult" and Lahoucine Ouzgane, in "Desire, Emulation, and Envy in the Portrait of a Lady," notices how Madame Merle, having understood that Isabel had previously rejected two

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[321] Ibidem, 269; that Isabel is acquainted with the notion of giving a use to others is made clear even before her marriage, in Rome, when Gilbert Osmond asks her how well does she know Lord Warburton, to which Isabel replies: "'Well enough for all the use I have for him'. [Gilbert Osmond] 'And how much of a use is that?' [Isabel] 'Well, I like to like him.' Ibidem, 325.

[322] Henry James, *Ibid*, 285-286.

[323] Joel Porte, in *New Essays on the Portrait of a Lady*, considers this passage to exemplify the way "Isabel inclines to the Arnoldian reading of Osmond, taking him as an example of 'standards and touchstones other than the vulgar.' And why not? Osmond is so perfect that only a connoisseur could be expected to tell the difference." The point, however, seems to be that Isabel recognizes in Osmond something she does not possess, a certain quality. Only after a process of learning through suffering takes place will she be able to fully comprehend other persons and to be a standard. Madame Merle being the true touchstone for Isabel (15). Joel Porte, ed., *New Essays on the Portrait of a Lady* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

suitors, describes Osmond "deliberately sketched to pique Isabel's interest."[324] As Ouzgane claims: "With Caspar Goodwood and Lord Warburton, Isabel was doing the judging; with Osmond, she is afraid of being found lacking."[325]

Isabel seems to share this insight into the value of objects and persons, which stands as proof of her culture and knowledge. The expertise is seen as the capacity to not be easily surprised, to have the sensibility to find quality in the objects others have ignored, and to judge severely entities that lack the appropriate standards. Although Isabel is observant when she notices Osmond's distaste of vulgarity, only later is she able to realize the disgust that accompanies it, how it is supplemented by the desire "to extract from it some sort of recognition of one's own superiority".[326] And even then Isabel will dwell upon how "On the one hand, it was despicable, but on the other it afforded a standard".[327] Acknowledging talent does not, by itself, brand Isabel as a good interpreter. We are often able to appreciate qualities in others without possessing them ourselves and valuing a skill does not imply the same degree of competence as executing it. For Isabel to be the touchstone of touchstones another set of conditions, which will be described, is required. For now, what distinguishes the young lady is the wish to become like her guardian, her training of particular skills, and, of course, the fact that she possesses an intuition waiting to be developed.

It is in this ambition for criteria and in the ignorance of the perils of leading an aesthetic life that, for Dorothea Krook, in *The Ordeal*

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[324] Henry James, *Ibid*, 123.

[325] Daniel Mark Fogel, "Framing James's Portrait: An Introduction." *The Henry James Review* (1986), 2. Lahoucine Ouzgane, "Desire, Emulation and Envy in the Portrait of a Lady." *Contagion*, *Journal of Violence, Mimesis and Culture* (2001): 123--124.

[326] Henry James, *Ibid*, 367.

[327] Henry James, *Ibid*, 461.

of Consciousness in Henry James, draws attention to the problem of Isabel's choices and the way she is corrupted by them. Krook's title seems only to be meant to illustrate, in a commonsensical fashion, that of a painful experience, the growth of consciousness in Henry James's characters. I would argue, however, that it is erroneous to deflect the possibility that an ordeal is indeed taking place in *The Portrait of a Lady*, one wherein pain and suffering are part of a test that has the purpose of distinguishing the authenticity of Isabel as a standard. Consider Krook's characterization of the term 'touchstone':

> Isabel herself never becomes fully conscious of this taint in herself; she does not to the end see it face to face, she knows it only by its effects. But the reader is expected to see it, and to give it the weight that is due to it. The sense of beauty is one thing, aestheticism, the 'touchstone of taste' (as James is to call it in a later work), is quite another thing. For aestheticism seeks always to substitute the appearance for the reality, the surface for the substance, the touchstone of taste for the touchstone of truth, that truth which in the life of man (Henry James comes more and more to insist) is in the first instance moral and only secondarily and derivatively aesthetic.[328]

While, here, the opposition between morals and taste is not our main concern, it is exposed in the novel. Isabel is influenced by her appreciation of what is beautiful and every so often she chooses it over what is good. Still, the author is using the idea of a "touchstone of taste" as mentioned in *The Golden Bowl.* One of the reasons Krook fails to understand the description of touchstone in *The Portrait of a Lady* derives from the fact that she does not analyse

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[328] Dorothea Krook-Gilead, *The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) 59.

the passages in which the concept appears, focusing on the relation between Isabel and those who court her, and ignoring her rapport with Madame Merle.[329] In *The Portrait*, the differentiation between a touchstone of taste and a touchstone of truth, perhaps exposed in the character of Madame Merle, cannot be found in Isabel. Even if the novel argues in favour of a moral, as opposed to an aesthetic life, the touchstone that the young lady seeks to reach is univocal; it is an appreciation of quality and of truth, both of which will be found at the end of her quest. The difference between Isabel and Madame Merle lies precisely in the fact that the young lady realizes, with Osmond and, later, with the revelations about her companion, that the criterion of taste is not enough for life.

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[329] Dorothea Krook's essay focuses on the relationship between Isabel and those who court her, describing in detail the reasons that lead her to ignore Lord Warburton and Caspar Goodwood, and to later choose Gilbert Osmond. On the one hand, such resolution is motivated by Isabel's wish to develop her mind and knowledge, while desiring that her money could favour someone as Osmond. On the other, her appreciation for the beautiful leads her to long for an exquisite husband. In this weakness for an aesthetic perfectionism lies the reason why Isabel will disappoint herself, as well as Osmond, and in it one may find her own responsibility for the course of events. For the author, neither character is entirely beast or angel, nor should one overlook the fact that both loved each other dearly before their married life began. In the failure to correspond to these great expectations lies their mutual disappointment. Isabel chose Osmond, ignoring that his aestheticism was a substitute for vanity. She also concealed the full extent of her own convictions, and the way she was not willing to abdicate them in his favor. In Krook's words, while Lord Warburton appreciated Isabel's remarkable mind, Osmond despises the moral and provincial upbringing of her ideas. So, although Osmond loved Isabel, he believed he would be able to suppress her thoughts. It is the inability to do so that will make him despise his wife, as the mere fact that Isabel disagrees with Osmond is an offense upon his person. Osmond was indeed looking for, in Isabel, a reflection of his own intellect, a supplement to his art of conversation and general knowledge, instead of someone with a mind of her own. For Osmond, Isabel's fine qualities would serve his purposes; she was meant to be the privileged interlocutor to his thoughts, encouraging them with keen remarks, mirroring his good taste in all matters. The point is not, I would sustain, so much the fact that Isabel goes against Osmond's standards, but the notion that she is not willing to abdicate the search for her own criteria. Although Isabel finds, in Osmond, qualities that would serve her own education, she soon discovers he is not the model to follow. She understands, at some point, that Osmond's egotism inhibits true understanding, that he is partial and invidious, which makes her ignore his advice, returning to Madame Merle as standard.

When considering Madame Merle, moreover, a distinction must be made between the life she chooses to lead, in which she seeks for the beautiful but ignores or despises ethical standards in her relationship with other people, and her own value as a touchstone. Madame Merle's appreciation of those surrounding her encompasses their entire beings, which is why she is such a consummate interpreter. Although Madame Merle does not lead an Arnoldian life, she is an Arnoldian, which is why it does not make sense to consider, after Krook, that her interpretations substitute appearance for reality, or the surface for the substance. On the contrary, her accurate evaluations illustrate the capacity to say things about others that they recognize as truthful.

Among the qualities Isabel appreciates in Madame Merle are, in fact, her general sensibility and appreciation of the character of others. But, as she ages, Isabel's reasons for being taught by Madame Merle differ and even if she will later impose a limit upon what Osmond is allowed to teach her, the aspiration to equal Madame Merle is maintained after the young lady marries:

> There were hours when Isabel would have given anything for lessons in this art; if her brilliant friend had been near she would have made an appeal to her. She had become aware more than before of the advantage of being like that – of having made one's self a firm surface, a sort of corselet of silver.[330]

Isabel's many theories, her enthusiasm for life, and her willingness to fulfil all things no longer inspire her. Troubles, the young lady decides, must be kept to herself, so as to avoid the pain of confession. She now longs for what is Madame Merle's mode of living through knowledge and wisdom: "The best way to profit

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[330] Henry James, *Ibid*, 432.

by her friend – this indeed Isabel had always thought – was to imitate her, to be as firm and bright as she."[331] At this point, she already knows better than to search for instruction in her friend and doubts as to whether she would be of use in "periods of refined embarrassment."[332] In addition, for someone now acquainted with disgusts and revulsions, the idea of possessing a corselet of silver is appealing. The garment – with the genuineness of silver, its brightness and firmness – exemplifies how Madame Merle was able to give herself an air of authenticity that has the further purpose of protecting her. In this Pygmalion narrative, therefore, Isabel gives the role of educator to Madame Merle who, carefully and progressively, settles upon Isabel's destiny.

In order to be a reliable barometer to others, Isabel would have to possess a set of characteristics that could be properly schooled. In fact, one way to characterize Madame Merle is to say that her perceptiveness is not an act of will, as being an insightful interpreter depends upon a combination of factors such as intuition, memory, education, the capacity to learn from experience, and to have suffered. The ability to recognize skill in others, as Isabel does in Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond, is the first indication of her perceptiveness. Another group of conditions, such as having that talent validated, as when Ralph sees her admiring the paintings at Gardencourt's gallery–"She was evidently a judge; she had a natural taste; he was struck with that" – would be the second requirement. Still, a specific experience of life is required:

> 'I judge more than I used to,' she said to Isabel, 'but it seems to me one has earned the right. One can't judge till one's forty; before that we're too eager, too hard, too ignorant. I'm sorry for

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331 *Ibidem*, 432.

332 *Ibid.*

> you; it will be a long time before you're forty. (...) I want to see what life makes of you. One thing's certain – it can't spoil you. It may pull you about horribly, but I defy it to break you up.[333]

The advice, which may at first seem banal, simultaneously encompasses a theory of life and a veiled threat. Supposedly, the right to evaluate others comes late in life, after one is softened by experience. The contradiction in Madame Merle's words resides in the fact that, both in Isabel's case and in her companion's, life will moderate eagerness and ignorance, but will also toughen them terribly. The authority to assess is accompanied by the necessity that, in order to be a standard, one must have grieved.

The affinity between the interpreter and the person being tested also leads the judged one to understand facts that the other would wish to conceal. Isabel, for example, is able to comprehend things about Madame Merle that she would have liked to suppress. In this case, Madame Merle's experience at changing subjects and Isabel's unworldliness render her incapable of realizing the full extent of her intuitions. One of them, however, reveals a characteristic that Isabel will share with Madame Merle:

> 'I'm afraid you've suffered much', she once found occasion to say to her friend in response to some allusion that had appeared to reach far.
>
> 'What makes you think that?' Madame Merle asked with the amused smile of a person seated at a game of guesses. 'I hope I haven't too much the droop of misunderstood.'
>
> 'No, but you sometimes say things that I think people who have always been happy wouldn't have found out.

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[333] *Ibidem*, 63; *Ibidem*, 209.

> 'I haven't always been happy,' said Madame Merle, smiling still, but with a mock of gravity, as if she were telling a child a secret. (...)
>
> I flatter myself that I'm rather stout, but if I must tell you the truth I've been shockingly chipped and cracked.[334]

As this passage reveals, Madame Merle had to suffer in order to notice life's complexities; indeed, her grievance precedes the moment in which she became an insightful interpreter and it is described as a necessary condition for her intuition to develop. If suffering is mandatory, then it is natural for Madame Merle to wish it for her pupil, hoping the vessel will hold, and not break entirely. In fact, there are recurrent allusions in the novel to Isabel's happiness and the way "that the unpleasant had been even too absent from her knowledge."[335] She was, as portrayed, "too young, too impatient to live, too unacquainted with pain."[336] Suffering is indispensable for one to grow as an interpreter and it is what enables Isabel to possess the discernment of both a judge of people and of objects, and to become the evaluator she wished to be in the first place. Observe how the ability to read others was a form of art not entirely mastered by the young lady until the very end of her education:

> she had not read him right. A certain combination of features had touched her, and in them she had seen the most striking of figures.[337]

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[334] *Ibidem*, 214.

[335] *Ibidem*, 49.

[336] *Ibidem*, 71.

[337] *Ibidem*, 458.

> Isabel read all this as she would have read the hour on the clock-face; she was perfectly aware that the sight of interest in her cousin stirred her husband's rage as if Osmond had locked her into her room – which she was sure he wanted to do.[338]

The reason why Isabel's insight failed when evaluating Gilbert Osmond for the first time may only be understood in her lack of experience as an interpreter, in the fact that she had the facility to assess taste, but not the capacity to understand an evil she had not yet experienced. She is able to identify and to acknowledge Osmond's delicate mind, his refinement, but not his loathing of others. Marriage provides that understanding, and she is now able to apprehend Osmond as if he were a clock, to comprehend the set of emotions he reveals, as well as those he attempts to conceal, to make sense of their relationship, and to fear him for it. She recognizes not only his visible emotions, but also the intentions that he conceals, as what he would do to her if he could. Perhaps unwillingly, the young lady becomes very much like her tutor.

> She [Isabel] liked her [Madame Merle] as much as ever, but there was a corner of the curtain that never was lifted; it was as if she remained after all something of a public performer, condemned to emerge only in character and in costume.[339]

> And thus it seemed to her [Isabel] an act of devotion to conceal her misery from him. She concealed it elaborately; she was

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[338] *Ibidem*, 465.

[339] *Ibidem*, 350. See also: "With all her love for knowledge she had a natural shrinking from raising curtains and looking into unlighted corners. The love of knowledge in her mind coexisted with the finest capacity for ignorance" (*PL*, 220).

> perpetually, in their talk, hanging out curtains and arranging screens.[340]

Although Isabel is perceptive in realizing that she is observing a show whose curtain is never fully drawn, she does not, at first, understand the need or purpose of the representation. The way Madame Merle has perfected herself, to the extent that she appears to be faultless, is admired. Later, when Isabel's friends come to visit and she must veil the truth about her married life, hanging curtains and arranging screens proves to be an elaborate and exhausting task. Caspar Goodwood sadly notices that she is now "imperturbable, inscrutable, impenetrable."[341] His characterization reveals Isabel's accomplishment at building her own silver corselet: "you're somehow so still, so smooth, so hard. You're completely changed, you conceal everything."[342] Isabel has become a touchstone, a being apart from others, which is why she may not be entirely understood or assessed. This is the narrative of how one, possessing fine talents, longed to be instructed and to become a standard. It is equally the story of how, after the education process has been completed, Isabel is finally able to give meaning to a group of first impressions she had failed to comprehend fully. The young lady will be able to return to what had seemed to be Madame Merle's ambiguous remarks, "a note that sounded false," the sensation that the ties connecting her friend and her husband were more profound than she had thought, to the way Osmond hates her, to the realization of who her benefactor was (Madame Merle's final lesson).[343] Although she will understand, as the Countess of Gemini suggests, that she is "a woman who has been made used of," I would say

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[340] *Ibidem*, 466.

[341] *Ibidem*, 541.

[342] *Ibidem*, 545.

[343] *Ibidem*, 340.

that Isabel is able to obtain, as she had wished, the ability to accurately comprehend other people and to be a valuable judge of character.[344] Being an Arnoldian, in this particular case, means to be the right adjudicator of other entities' qualities and flaws, to possess particular talents, to improve with experience, and to be in a good position to judge.[345] In *Portrait of a Lady*, therefore, embodying a criterion implies the ability to redefine – after an education through suffering has taken place – our thoughts about others. Initial impressions are merely partially accurate and may not be fully comprehended before the interpreter has time to mature. Explanation is seen as the relinquishment of a personal point of view, which occurs when one is finally at a better station for appreciating others and has gained a comprehensive perspective. Critics such as William T. Stafford have noticed how "we see developed a kind of interchanging coalescence, Isabel becoming something of a Serena Merle, Serena Merle becoming something of an Isabel Archer".[346] After an education through suffering takes place, Isabel becomes a standard, capable of adjudicating other entities' qualities and flaws.

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[344] *Ibidem*, 582.

[345] Djwa's essay insightfully relates Isabel's later knowledge in life with Pater: "The education of Isabel Archer – and James's portrait – is now all but complete. Isabel knows from experience that the larger metaphysical questions dismissed by the aesthetic critic – questions of good and evil – cannot be dismissed in human life. She knows the danger of divorcing 'impressions' from 'truth' and 'experience'" (83). It would be difficult not to agree with this perspective, I would just like to highlight the idea that Djwa's sentence is also a good description of an Arnoldian touchstone. Sandra Djwa, "Ut Picture Poesis: The Making of a Lady." *The Henry James Review* 7 (1986): pp. 72-85.

[346] William T. Stafford, "The Enigma of Serena Merle," *The Henry James Review*, vol. 7, Number 2-3, 1986, 121.

Elyot's catalyst and Lady Macbeth's "accustom'd actions"

> Every command leaves behind a painful sting in the person who is forced to carry it out.
>
> – Elias Canneti, *Crowds and Power*[347]

When the set of Arnoldians was described in the preceding pages, an important aspect of the relationship between these interpreters and their elected entities was overlooked. This rapport between parties, often prolonged through time and occasionally the result of a subtle negotiation, may affect the interpreter and result in them acquiring the particularities of their objects of study. When such experience occurs, the analysed entities seem to be the source of a series of secondary effects, for lack of a better expression, on their assessors. In what follows, it will be seen how some interpreters intentionally seek such a bodily rapport, in the hope that it will help to enhance comprehension. At other times, however, the consequences of the test distress interpreters; they are an involuntary side effect, which are difficult to prevent, even years after the examination is over. Such relationships illustrate a bond between the evaluator and those being analysed that may help to improve or inhibit interpretation, but they also make it an extraordinarily difficult task to perform. In this regard, Arnoldians differ among themselves. Each skilled activity gives origin to a series of distinct traces in their interpreters, some more pleasant than others, a result of the technical procedures they perform through time.

In the preceding pages, interpretation was characterized as a technical tool and the possibility of having conviction regarding a particular object was deemed a way of knowing it. In what follows,

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[347] Elias Canneti, *Crowds and Power* (NY: Continuum, 1962) 58.

however, the relationship between entities may be difficult to include in such a technical argument. For instance, in the case of those who appear to acquire features of their studied entities, it is crucial to understand if this enhances their interpretive skills, if there is a required degree of engagement, and, finally, how the process works. Furthermore, it is also necessary to comprehend whether this negotiation between entities has a public or a private dimension. To introduce the topic, a recent review in *The New Yorker* helps to clarify the simple, but also questionable though that technical interpreters may absorb features of their objects of knowledge:

> When he is not taking on trends on modern thought, Professor X is shrewd about the reasons it's hard to teach underprepared students how to write. 'I have come to think,' he says, 'that the two most crucial ingredients in the mysterious mix that makes a good writer may be (1) having read enough throughout a lifetime to have internalized the rhythms of the written word, and (2) refining the ability to mimic those rhythms.' This makes sense. If you read a lot of sentences, then you start to think in sentences, and if you think in sentences, then you can write sentences, because you know what a sentence sounds like.[348]

Here, 'internalize' is an important word, but one which will not be literally understood. The important presumption is the description of how one who reads a lot of phrases ends up thinking in sentences, and is eventually able to write them. In literary criticism, this type of gradual acquisition, which is arguably similar to some examiner's increasing capacity to judge other people,

[348] Louis Menand, "Why We Have College," *The New Yorker*, June 6, 2011, 79.

does not mean that critics embody certain phrases or that these are engraved in their minds. It does mean, however, that those who have had a particular practice of reading will be able to show their writing skills, as opposed to those who had a limited experience and may have difficulties in writing. This is a case in which comprehension requires both protracted experience of what is being studied, and the capacity to reproduce aspects of it. It could, of course, be sustained that this case merely exemplifies a unidirectional relation between readers and their books, and perhaps this is true. However, it is unclear, in many of the cases discussed, whether this type of acquisition derives from the entities being evaluated or from the way each interpreter projects their own image onto their subject. Some of these secondary effects appear to be entirely personal and subjective, in which case one should attempt to comprehend if these interpreters are evaluating their own emotions or stipulating a state of affairs.

There are, of course, those who appear to be immune to such a type of relationship. Would T. S. Eliot's explanation about how the poet may be compared to a filament of platinum be representative of a different species of Arnoldian? "Tradition and Individual Talent," which in so many ways precedes Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*, focuses on the relationship between the work of a certain poet and the art that existed before them. The arrival of the new work of art transforms "the existing monuments" and creates "conformity between the old and the new," while feelings and emotions influence poets; as Eliot explains, the poet

> must be aware that the mind of Europe – the mind of his own country – a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind – is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development that abandons nothing en

> route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen.[349]

Magdalenian draughtsmen, a reference to the Palaeolithic caves in Dordogne where Eliot spent a Summer in 1919, appears side by side with Shakespeare and Homer, monuments representing the mind of Europe.[350] A point of interest in this description is related with the idea that the mind of the canon maintains its strength through the acquisition of particular works. This collective intellect, modified by each new work of art, supersedes that of the individual artist, changing continually in order to acquire new pieces of knowledge without leaving others behind. In this case, there is no distinction between the supposed interpreter and their entity of choice, as a progressive accumulation takes place which transforms the pre-existing order of things. As will be shown, such a mind – unlike the poet's – is not immune to the relationship between works of art; it has a public nature, visible in its various instances. At first sight, this denial of an interiorized collective mind finds its equivalent in the refusal of "the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul" of the poet. [351] Poetry is not the result of a specific and interior personality. This would mean that what one may presumably call the mind of the canon, composed of its various works of excellence, finds its parallel in the mind of the poet, made public through his work. But Eliot rejects this notion, favouring the notion that the poet is the medium in which "impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected

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[349] T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, Frank Kermode (ed) (London: Faber and Faber, 1975) 39.

[350] Cf. *Modernism – An Anthology*, Lawrence Rainey (ed) (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 153.

[351] Eliot, *Ibid,* 42.

ways."[352] This "peculiar and unexpected" blending is, therefore, an internal process:

> we are to remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism.[353]

In this description (the citation follows a brief discussion, which introduces the essay on the nature of French criticism) lies an unrecognized relation of continuity between poets and those who are responsible for understanding and placing artistic creations amidst the mind of the canon. Criticism is characterized as being something which "passes through our minds" when one reads a book or feels an emotion about it. Both thoughts and emotions possess an interior nature, in a process that appears to be more similar to that of the individual poet than to the public mind of the canon. But one can only suppose that the mind of the critic must progressively acquire, through extensive reading, some of the particulars of the mind of the canon.

While the critic's specific activity will be examined, for now, the well-known argument favouring the depersonalization of the poet, and their relation to the sense of tradition needs to be explored:

> The analogy was that of the catalyst. When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form a sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly

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[352] *Ibidem*, 42.

[353] *Ibidem*, 37.

> former acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected: has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man itself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.[354]

The poet is the touchstone that undergoes the test, but they remain unaffected. In this impersonal theory of poetry, the focus is "the relation of the poem with other poems;" the poet is the vessel wherein the process takes place, but which is left "inert, neutral and unchanged." Eliot compares the catalyst, a substance that increases or diminishes the rate of a chemical reaction without undergoing a change, to what happens in the mind of the artist. The poet is the receptacle, or the filament, while their feelings and emotions constitute the gases that will be combined into the "new compound" which composes the work of art. Without the poet, the chemical reaction may not take place. A peculiar and somewhat contradictory divorce occurs between the private experiences of the individual who suffers and the creating mind. Such separation does not, however, correspond to a strict division between experiences (corresponding to the body) and poems (those belonging to the activity of the mind). On the contrary, the organism of the poet functions as a whole, one in which passions are transmuted and digested in the mind able to separate private experiences from poetical growth. The fact that Eliot uses the catalyst as a metaphor, though, leaves it unclear whether the poet is a technical reader of the work of others. Implicit in

[354] *Ibidem*, 41.

the description is the idea that not everyone possesses the ideal characteristics to become a catalyst. The fact that only some may be vessels for the creation of poetry appears to suggest that they require the type of characteristics portrayed (knowledge of the writings of others, intuition, and, in this particular case, the capacity to be a filament of platinum).

The visible repercussion of the process is the existence of a work of art, representative of the chemical reaction. The catalyst must empty themself, and not be affected by previous works of art. An interesting particularity of Eliot's catalyst resides precisely in this rejection of the centrality of experience of life:

> The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two kinds: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in any kind from any experience not of art.[355]

Here, it is not the poet's private affairs or their daily life that are at stake, but their ability to experience previous works in a combination of emotions and feelings, made visible in a particular use of phrases or images, used to compose that final result.

> The last quadrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which 'came,' which did not develop simply out of that precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to. The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until

[355] *Ibidem*, 48.

> all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.[356]

Although the poet remains neutral, they do, after all, incorporate characteristics of the diverse particulars at their disposal, and this acquisition is fundamental for the process to be successful. The assimilation of particulars, which lie dormant until the moment of the fusion, is only momentary and is outdone once the reaction has taken place. Unlike the mind of the canon, entities that work through the accumulation of other works or particular judgments, the poet stores impressions until the reaction takes place. When Eliot distinguishes the poet's personal experiences from this acquisition of particulars, he is making clear that the poet is not projecting their personal views on the phrases or images at their disposal. On the contrary, they must appropriate and rework things exterior to themselves. There is a difference between these particulars, which must be momentarily stored, and the test itself, which leaves the interpreter unharmed.

At the same time, the acquired phrases and sentences must not be faithfully reproduced; they only have the function of serving the chemical reaction. Interestingly, an asymmetry now appears to exist, but one which is a result of the importance of the fusion over the poet's mind, and the reason why this depersonalization is defined, in a sentence that reminds us of Henry James's characterization of the critic, as "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality".[357]

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[356] *Ibidem*, 41.

[357] In "The Art of Criticism" Henry James states that "[w]hen one thinks of the outfit required for free work in this spirit, one is ready to pay almost any homage to the intelligence that has put it on, when one considers the noble figure completely equipped – armed cap-à-pie in curiosity and sympathy – one falls in love with the apparition. It certainly represents the knight who has knelt through his long vigil and who has the piety of his office. For there is something sacrificial in his function, inasmuch as he offers himself as a general touchstone." Cf. Henry James, *Literary Criticism*, vol. 1. (New York: The Library of America, 1984) 98.

It could, of course, be asked if this sacrifice could be depicted as a negative effect of the fusion, i.e. of the procedure itself, whether the gradual extinction of one's personality is, or not, a positive thing. To some, it could be a necessary side effect, a requirement if one wants to be a creator and, in this case, the ending would justify the means. From this perspective, poets would be those willing to sacrifice their personalities in order to be vessels to their works.

A difference between catalysts and touchstones concerns the fact that those using quartz to evaluate the authenticity of gold are conducting an external process, whereas the catalytic chemical reaction is internal, in the sense that it takes place within the poet's mind. But, just as the alloy is made visible on the stone, the results of the test may be perceived by those examining results, which is to say in the poet's writing as a product of their individual mind. At the same time, both touchstones and catalysts require someone to observe and judge the results of the process. This assessment, undertaken by critics or specialized readers, presumes the Arnoldian ability to value the artist: "you must set for him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead."[358] The poet must know that they will be judged, although not amputated, by the standards of the past: "It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other".[359] This comparison, Eliot's test of value, has an obvious relationship with the evaluator's task in a touchstone test. However, the critic must also be able to understand that

> If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity, of

[358] *Ibidem*, 38.

[359] *Ibidem*, 39

> the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts.[360]

Those who appreciate this moment of fusion, recognizing both technical excellence and the emotion in the life of the poem, are the specialized readers. Instead of judging through criteria of sublimity, one should be able to perceive the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure under which the fusion takes place. Therefore, a good critic is able, when they read a particular poem, to perceive that moment of fusion, to recover what has taken place. It is the access to that hidden reaction which is brought to light in the critical activity. A such, they are the examiner in the touchstone process who is able to return to the moment of the test, to see the alloys, and to justify the result of the procedure. The line of continuity, previously described, between the poet's mind and the critic's may now be understood, as they must have access to that moment of fusion.

In the case of Eliot's catalyst, although the poet remains unchanged after the reaction takes place, it may now be understood how they had to acquire – even if only momentarily – a group of particulars to be used in the reaction. Without them, a successful fusion would not have been possible. Simultaneously, the critic's skill lies in this capacity to understand the moment in which the fusion took place, and to give it meaning. Now, picture, instead, a therapist who starts experiencing bodily symptoms as a result of his professional activity, the most common reactions being muscle tension, sleepiness, yawning and tearfulness, but also stomach disturbance, loss of voice, nausea and so forth. Would the acquisition of these symptoms be a signal that the therapist had gained insight into their patient? And would this mean that therapy was progressing and that the

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[360] *Ibidem*, 41.

patient was on their way to being cured? In a situation of bodily-centred counter-transference, the second illustration of this rapport between interpreters, contrary to what happens with the catalyst, the therapist's acquisition of somatic symptoms does not necessarily entail therapeutic success. It may, however, be representative of the particular knowledge of the person in need of interpretation. The following quotation, which summarizes the state of the art of current investigations, introduces this issue:

> "Bodily-centred" counter-transference is a little-discussed manifestation of counter-transference where the therapist is spontaneously aroused by the client material through a physical medium (Field, 1989). There is little documentation about these somatic reactions to client material. Therefore, the processes underlying body-centred counter-transference are not fully understood. Stone (2006) and Wosket (1999) described the therapist as having a "tuning fork" vibrating with the client's psychic material through the unconscious to describe the process of somatic reactions. It is suggested that the use of the therapeutic tool, or "self" via postural mirroring, can induce body-centred counter-transference. Postural mirroring of clients is the result of a therapist's unconscious automatic somatic counter-transference (Rothschild & Rand, 2006). Postural mirroring and the resulting body-centred counter--transference can be a very useful way to gain insight into the client's emotional and physical processes. Mohacsy (1995) explored the idea that non-verbal behaviour could give a greater insight into the internal world of the client.[361]

[361] Ailbhe Booth, Timothy Trimble & Jonathan Egan, "Body-Centred Counter-Transference in a Sample of Irish Clinical Psychologists," *The Irish Psycologist*, volume 36, Issue 12, October 2010, 289.

Associated, literature on the subject accepts that such manifestations must be further studied, in order to systematize specific problems that derive from this type of counter-transference. Researchers need to understand, for example, whether these symptoms occur more in some therapists than others, due to factors such as age, gender, or the counsellor's experience. So far, body-centred counter-transference appears to be more severe in therapists treating serious trauma patients, such as victims of abuse. Differences in the personal meaning of body-centred counter-transference must equally be evaluated, as well as the degree of assistance that supervisors may provide. Nonetheless, an important premise in this research deals with the idea that verbal communication leaves much of what is important in a therapeutic process unsaid. During the interaction between patient and therapist knowledge is gained, from the perspective of both interlocutors, in the evaluation of bodily reactions. As in other cases discussed in the previous pages, the body's responses are deemed more truthful than verbal communication, as they are not subject to the "unpremeditated manipulation of language that we use in everyday negotiation between outside reality and our inner emotional life.[362] The patient pays attention to their therapist's behaviour, in order to learn if they are bored, and to discern if the session has reached its conclusion. Likewise, the counsellor must acquire information from their patient's behaviour in order to attain what Mohacsy calls the "states of the body," which "can go beyond internal "states of mind" and provide a better comprehension of the patient's inner feelings.[363]

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[362] Ildiko Mohacsy, "Nonverbal communication and its place in the therapy session," *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, n.º 22(1), 1995, 31-38.

[363] *Ibidem*.

An unmentioned presumption of this phenomenon as a form of knowledge is the idea that the attempt to get into someone's interior may be more successful if my own interior experiences the same. Indeed, common sense dictates that when we experience something we are better able to comprehend it. There is, however, a pretension to truthfulness in some descriptions of the phenomenon that must be evaluated, as the resulting arguments do not appear to result from common sense, but from the idea that one's interior experiences may be more meaningful than words, as they allow us to restrain personal interpretation. The discourse about intentionality, discussed in previous chapters, is substituted here for the dichotomy between conscious and unconscious. Therefore, whereas one's words are subject to manipulation and deceit – they are conscious – interior feelings and their respective bodily representation, because they are unconscious, are potentially truthful.

In the case of Lady Macbeth, the body appears to be unintentionally reliable, as demonstrated by her interaction with the Doctor. Returning briefly to the beginning of act V, the physician depicts his patient the following way: "A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once / the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching" (V, i, 9-10). A few moments later he claims that "Her eyes are open," while the Waiting-Gentlewoman concurs: "Ay, but her senses are shut" (V, i, 23-24). If Lady Macbeth was once able to conceal the crime (to shut her moral eyes), while her senses were alert to the various possibilities of the crime's discovery, she is now sick from the effort; with her eyes wide open, but her senses locked, Lady Macbeth's body repeatedly reenacts the crime, as if she was a "walking shadow."[364] The visible aspects of the crime are Lady

[364] Subha Mukerji analyses this scene, considering "the sleep walking scene, lit by a taper – often a stage symbol for the approach to the bed chamber – communicates a sense of vulnerability ('frailties') in offereing a view of private guilt, associated with items of intimate use: … infected minds / to their deaf pillows will discharge

Macbeth's enunciations and, more importantly, what the Freudian Waiting-Gentlewoman portrays as being "an accustom'd action" (V, i, 27), which manifests as her repeated hand washing. For the doctor, this corresponds to a perturbation in nature, a sentence that can mean that it is in her constitution to be sick, or that her character's faults produced an unbalanced nature, which could not cope with the horrors of the done deeds:

> Unnatural deeds
> Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
> To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
>
> (*Macbeth*, V, i, 68-76)

After hearing Lady Macbeth's confessions, the Doctor's mind understands how unnatural deeds, such as murder, cause abnormal problems, like a mind dissociated from the body.[365] The infected mind is unable to confess and has to discharge its secrets to "deaf pillows," objects that will not denounce the crime, but will also not allow for cure. Lady Macbeth has an excess of unmediated secrets, emotions that were not properly formulated and the impossibility to bring them forward.[366] She abhors the idea of discussing her story and of submitting it to interpretation; her aim is that of concealing emotions, burying them, and not appeasing them over a conversation. Still, the Doctor, through observation, the analysis of

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secrets' (V, I, 73-4). Subha Mukerji, *Law and Representation in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 79.

[365] Several critics have underlined the unnaturalness of the play. See, for example, L. C. Knights, *Some Shakespearean Themes - An Approach to Hamlet*, 1959. London: Penguin Books, 1960.

[366] Marjorie Garber briefly analyses this scene and considers that: "Oppressed by nightmares, she herself becomes the belated author of *Macbeth*. Here is the scene in which her astonished audience, a doctor and a gentlewoman, describe her as she writes, seals, and performs the play – repeatedly, night after night". Marjorie Garber, *Profiling Shakespeare* (NY: Routledge, 2008) 76.

her public behaviour, and the repetition of the night of the murder, has unmediated access to the crime itself. Lady Macbeth's body appears to speak a truth that its owner is determined to conceal. More importantly, the play illustrates, *avant la lettre,* a concern over the therapist's own body. Lady Macbeth's illness exemplifies the effects the interpreted entity may provoke on those endeavouring to understand her and the negative consequences a patient may have on the Doctor, an often-neglected victim of the couple's evil doings:

> My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight.
> I think, but dare not speak.
> (V, i, 68-76)

This Doctor, whose mind has been "mated," sight amazed, and who "dare[s] not speak," could perhaps be portrayed as an illustration of bodily counter-transference, an episode in the life of the analyst as "deaf pillow." Lady Macbeth's deeds provoked a transformation in the Physician, which alters his senses. Others could, with good reason, argue that the Doctor's incapacity to speak is due to practical reasons, as he could be put on trial for treason. Still, he is burdened by her secrets and portrays that ailment by describing physical symptoms.

Here is presented an important differentiation to the present book, which concerns the distinction between understanding something and being able to solve it. In previous cases, to comprehend and to make a verdict, for example, were deemed one and the same thing. Failure to provide a sentence was an indication that something had been left untold and it would not be considered an accurate form of comprehension. Similarly, Eliot's poet was thought of as being accomplished when the fusion took place. With Macbeth's Doctor, and in bodily counter-transference in general, one may comprehend a patient, which is to say be able to make a diagnosis,

but this does not necessarily mean curing them. The Doctor's case is more troublesome, as Lady Macbeth's reenactment of the crime helps him understand the cause of her illness, but the knowledge at his disposal does not allow for the type of diagnosis that would help to choose a course of treatment. In *Macbeth*, the interpreted entity refuses to be understood and the one making the verdict fears what he has found and does not know enough to provide the diagnosis and respective treatment. Secondary effects are unwanted, but nevertheless occur.

If this Doctor were a modern psychoanalyst, he would be able to rely on recent research about the effects that therapy may have on those practicing it. Firstly, it should be noted that, in the case of therapy, physical bodily symptoms are the result of the relationship between patient and therapist, i.e. of an agreement made between interpreters with the purpose to heal one of them. Neither party, we may suppose, is being forced into therapy and the counsellor has the choice to end the sessions if they find they are being harmful (this is a relevant difference from other cases which will be portrayed). The fact that the therapist starts suffering from a series of somatic bodily symptoms is the result of their interpretative activity, which may derive from what the patient is consciously or unconsciously projecting, and from what the therapist is also consciously or unconsciously absorbing. An important particularity lies in the fact that researchers portray these symptoms as being of potential benefit for the therapeutic process, as they allow the therapist insight into their patient. The negative aspect of this bodily relation consists, of course, in the fact that, if not properly controlled, it may lead the counsellor to suffering and even burnout.

According to these studies, the reason why such effects appear is due to the special relationship between the doctor and the patient, which presupposes that there is a connection – psychological or physical – between both entities. Such connection

has taken place when, somehow, the therapist realizes he or she is different or reacting singularly to the test itself. It could, of course, be questioned if the therapist previously possessed those symptoms, and the extent to which these preexisting symptoms are aggravated during the sessions. What matters here, nonetheless, is the fact that therapists consider these physical sensations to be either a reproduction of their patient's bodily symptoms or of therapy itself.

Susie Orbach's books characterize this type of experience, described as an important part of the process of the cure, as it may help to inform the therapist about their patient. The idea that the subconscious of two people may communicate through their bodies, and without their full knowledge, is anthropologically interesting. Herta, a German musicologist born in 1942, grew up with a series of eating disorders, which were a constant source of concern for her family. Her mother categorized her as *Jude*, due to the fact that she was very skinny, with the implications of the term only being acknowledged by Herta years later. Susie Orbach, whom she looked for in New York after hearing one of her conferences, characterizes her as being "deeply somatic and her career and her mothering was hampered by chronic pains caused by ulcerated colitis".[367] Herta had experienced an early menopause in her late 30s, which contributed towards making her uncomfortable in her own body, which was a source of pain and grief. From time to time, however, she had periods of "well-being in her body but these felt to her to have a quality of unreality about them".[368] In her article, Orbach claims that "the aspect of her therapy I want to highlight centers

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[367] Susie Orbach, "Countertransference and the False Body," *in Winnicott Studies: The Journal of Squiggle Foundation,* ed. Laurence Spurling, Spring 1995, 8.

[368] *Ibidem,* 8.

around the work on her body and my body."[369] While rationalizing Herta's case, the author comments:

> But while I was thinking this [...] I simultaneously had the experience of becoming deeply and comfortably into awareness into my own body and how very much at ease I feel with it. I was quite struck by this [...] But beyond this unusual and rather pleasurable with my own body awareness in the session, it was as though Herta – in her desperate need to create a body ego for herself that could take on the functions she needed in order to deconstruct her False body – had created for herself, via me, a stable contented body that was in the room.[370]

Secondary effects are pleasurable, as the therapist suddenly feels quite comfortable in her own body. In another book, where the same case is discussed, Orbach characterizes this feeling as "a deep physical pleasure, as though I were a purring cat".[371] This process, which is neither considered entirely rational or irrational, is believed to be induced by the patient being in need of a secure body. Herta, without her recognition, projects an "unconscious transmission" which is absorbed by the therapist's body. Orbach's interior will then find itself needing to exteriorize, or just communicate, these feelings, so that she is able to intellectualize them, thus applying them in therapy: "her [the therapist's] body, her emotional state,

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[369] *Ibidem,* 8. In this case, Orbach followed Winnicott in considering that "before the True Self can come to analysis, the therapist must talk with the False Self about the True Self." Winnicott's notion of true and false selves considers that, for example, in a somatic patient, the true self may come to light in therapy, recognize the existence of a false body, that with which the patient is uncomfortable, in an attempt to make true self and painless body coexist.

[370] *Ibidem,* 9.

[371] Susie Orbach, *Bodies: Big Ideas, Small Books*. NY: Picador, 2003, 63. [Kindle edition]

become a stethoscope-like instrument for hearing what might be askew."[372] Consequently, during therapy, both women discuss this projection of an exterior body in the therapist, which proved that Herta was capable of construction and not only of destruction, which provided a hope that she would be able to rebuilt her own body in the future.

Interestingly, Orbach does not contemplate the possibility that she, as the therapist, could be construing a secure space for her patient. Other reasons leading the author to experience positive feelings about herself are also not taken into consideration, as such feelings are deemed the result of a causal relation between patient and therapist with the purpose to help the patient. This would not be a case in which the therapist acquires features of the patient, but one in which they absorb a feeling of well-being that the patient would like to have. Indeed, one cannot help but question if Orbach's sensations are a result of the therapeutic process or a consequence of her own particular mode of describing affairs. Put another way, it is not unusual for someone who accompanies a depressive friend for a prolonged period of time to find themselves depressed after a while, or why certain people make us feel secure, joyful, or irritated. Ultimately, this is the reason why we choose and are chosen by others as friends and companions. But the attempt to find a causal explanation for our feelings when others are present, and one that depends mainly on unconscious forces, appears peculiar.

Orbach could, of course, claim that the validation of the procedure takes place when the patient gets better. Although the process may be described as interior – inner feelings are transmitted from the patient to the therapist – it is validated when both the interior and exterior signs of disease disappear. At the same time, although the chapter that portrays Herta's case is called "Speaking Bodies,"

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[372] *Ibidem,* 62.

Orbach's description helps to show how this type of talkative entity requires a skilled interpreter in order to be fully understood. In this point resides, perhaps, the strangeness of the description, as Orbach's therapeutic method appears to rely on the idea that one may found in "Orbach 1," a skilled interpreter who is able to talk with Herta and to give meaning to her problems. "Orbach 2"'s body presents a skilled but unconscious interpreter which is capable of helping her patient be cured. In this instance, only some of the strategies of interpretation previously surveyed may be applied. One of the reasons is due to the fact that these feelings are entirely personal, since although both women discuss them in therapy, only one of them experiences them:

> When that occurs, I know there is a fair chance that I am receiving an unconscious transmission of some physical state that cannot be easily felt by the person I am working with.[373]

If the other person cannot experience Orbach's emotions and, ultimately, if pointing as a way of showing is not required, then one may doubt if a subconscious transmission really takes place. As such, in this relationship between entities, interpreters appear to seek a particular moment in which comprehension is made clear. Both conscious beings (or bodies, in Orbach's language) are in a struggle for self-recognition, with the therapist attempting to understand their own body, and the patient trying to overcome their diseased self, in a rapport that will transform both. The understanding between parties is described as either provoking pleasure or some degree of pain. This type of conflict between selves, without therapeutic purposes, is exemplified in the third illustration of this problem, which represents the bond between the torturer and his victim.

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[373] *Ibidem,* 62.

In torture, bodies turn, swirl, and contort in order to make the truth appear. The torturer's task, which they often share with an accomplice physician, is to be able to extend pain for a long period of time, without killing the victim. As long as the correct amount of pain is inflicted, truth will supposedly become visible from inside the body. It was seen before how the Greek word *basanos* (βάσανος) means touchstone, test, ordeal, and torture. But the word was equally applied to designate torturers. To assume the torturer is the touchstone means the test occurs in their body, and not only in the victim's. The torturer's body is scratched with the test, and this is how they, and those who observe the process, are supposedly able to distinguish true confessions from false ones. In torture, unlike other modes of proof, there is not a previous agreement between parties regarding the necessity for proof. One of the entities knows they will have to provide a judgment about the other, who fears both the test and its executant. Moreover, this type of negotiation may result from a choice made by the torturer, due to their elected line of work, or be the consequence of a selection made by others. When this is the case, both the torturer and the tortured enter into a relationship against their will, having to perform a role they did not necessarily wish for, and which has no constructive results.

Torturers may therefore be described as those who, like Madame Merle, seem to be in a better position to appreciate others, a feature which, as shall be seen, ultimately contributes to their burnout.[374] This

[374] An important particularity in this form of test derives from the idea, important in some modes of indoctrination, and different from the previous description of therapy, that interpretation is improved if my outside experiences the same as the outside of those under torture. A brief excursus on this subject helps to understand how the torturer's education requires a group of conditions in which the infliction of pain plays an important role. The case of torture in Greece has been often studied, since it was one of few in which torturers (both officers and soldiers) were taken to court and testified. In his important book, Mika Haritos-Fatouros' interviews sixteen former military policemen who worked during the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974). The author evaluates the indoctrination of torturers, contending that

asymmetry between torturer and victim, a condition that is necessary for such procedures to take place, leads to the notion that torturers are autonomous in their interpretations. They consider themselves a necessary instrument to find the truth about a given state of affairs and assume they are self-sufficient interpreters. The ambition of being autonomous in interpretation, of providing verdicts or judgments that do not need further commentary or interpretation, is best described by Bruno (a false name), a civil policeman and former warden in a prison during the latter part of Brazil's military period, who was known to have overseen and participated in torture:

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it was a complex process in which natural cruelty had but a small role, whereas willingness to obey was violently taught. Future officers and soldiers were not chosen arbitrarily, but among those who came from conservative and nationalist families. Their training was designed to inculcate a conservative ideology and the sense that they belonged to a selected elite, the "greater" Greeks by opposition to the "lesser" Greeks. At the same time, they were chosen from poor families, to whom financial benefits and social privileges were encouraging. Then, the training began. The indoctrination had the purpose to modify each recruit's behaviour and was painfully taught. Recruits were trained to obey without question to illogical or violent orders ("overlearning"). They would be tortured so that it became an everyday act (torture began in the cars which took them to the training camp), and they would watch others torture prisoners, being occasionally asked to take part in the beatings (a process named "desensitization"). Simultaneously, older servicemen flogged and degraded the freshmen in a practice known as "role modeling." Soldiers were subjected to intimidation and punishment ("negative reinforcement"), but also to material and social gain, meant as "positive reinforcement". Indoctrination appears to have the purpose of serving to eliminate or to diminish the degree of engagement between subjects, so that the enjoyment of the master is highlighted, while his understanding of the dependence upon the tortured is diminished. Paradoxically, this attempt to eliminate the degree of engagement between subjects is accompanied by the necessity of a negotiation between parties. Torture, itself, is a relation between two persons, a factor that has always implications for the interpretative activity and which ultimately causes this type of secondary effects. A somewhat philosophical presumption appears to lie behind this indoctrination process, namely, if the torturer learns to understand (through his pains and those of his colleagues) the moment in which the he can no longer endure suffering, he will be able to pinpoint that instant in others. The identification of a truthful confession would require the comprehension of the moment of fusion, that in which the suspect could no longer endure pain and would thus tell the truth. Pointing to that moment, in some cases that in which the subject signs a confession, and having something to show for it, would represent the torturer's interpretative success, which would mean that the procedures would have worked. Cf. Mika Haritos-Fatouros, *The Psychological Origins of Institutionalized Torture* (NY: Routledge Univ. Press, 2003).

> in operations 'sometimes we'd get intoxicated from our work' and do things that should not be done. Bruno says he 'felt like a demigod,' a kind of high that came from 'dictating the rules.' Bruno says that he now realizes that 'all such intoxication is negative' because it causes the policemen to be 'irritable, aggressive, prone to having problems at home and drinking.'[375]

Here, "intoxication" is blamed for Bruno's wrongdoings, like torture and murder, that should not have been done and which Bruno never mentions. He illustrates a "sense of high" and the feeling of being a demigod. Curiously, the feelings that are held responsible for torture are also to blame for the policemen's family and drinking problems. Bruno is describing the sensation of autonomy and self-sufficiency that comes with being a touchstone. However, this autonomy has implications: the sense of supremacy and empowerment frequently brings torturers or members of death squads together, but it also has side effects, namely, isolation from society and from family. Although torturers enjoy a sense of autonomy, they also suffer from it, and they have to deal with the difficulty of being alone in interpretation and with a relation of dependence towards the tortured subjects. Therefore, this sense of supremacy has the negative side of bringing with it feelings of loneliness and the desire to be liked. It is not a coincidence that the degree of burnout is diminished in cases where torturers have a consistent network of family and friends. But the fact that their job is more often than not secretive makes them unable to share the burden of their daily tasks.

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[375] Martha K. Huggins, Mika Haritos-Fatouros, Philip G. Zimbardo, *Violence Workers – Police Torturers and Murderers Reconstruct Brazilian Atrocities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 221.

A famous section in Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* titled "Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness," characterizes the struggle for self-recognition between conscious selves, which were equal prior to the test. Desire for self-assertion, which motivates both consciousness to fight each other, is the "union of the 'I' with itself;" both I's see their reflection in each other, and thus depend on each other for their own recognition.[376] Out of what Hegel calls a "trial by death"[377] two entities emerge:

> The one is independent, and its essential nature is to be for itself; the other is dependent, and its essence is life or existence for another. The former is the Master, or Lord, the latter, the Bondsman.[378]

In this struggle for independence, both conscious selves gain their identity: the master seemingly independent and existing for themselves, while the slave appears to exist for the master and thus dependant on them. Death is not the result of this "trial by death," due to the fact that the master needs the slave to acknowledge them as winner and as an independent consciousness, while the slave prefers subjugation to death. As Hegel maintains, "a form of recognition has arisen that is one sided and unequal."[379] This is a (first) difference between the master/slave dialectic and torture procedures, as torture automatically distinguishes those conducting the evaluation from those who will be judged. The asymmetry between subjects does not result from the "trial by death," as both

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[376] Leo Raush, David Sherman, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-consciousness: Text and Commentary* (Albany: Suny Press, 1999), 89.

[377] George W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* transl. J. B. Baillie (transl) (N. p.Digireads Publishing, 2009) 51.

[378] *Ibidem*, 89.

[379] *Ibidem,* 89.

individuals were equal as free subjects. Moreover, unlike the master/slave "trial by death," the torturer knows before the test takes place that they will have to avoid the death of the tortured subject. Their identity as a conscious self, therefore, is not acquired after the procedure, it has been initiated during the indoctrination process, and will be developed and transformed each time the test takes place. From this perspective, the torturer resembles Sisyphus, as each time they overcome a new self during the struggle, another appears, and they see themselves in the position of having to repeat the procedure all over again. In this particularity, they find both enjoyment and pain.

After the struggle takes place, Hegel's slave is portrayed as "a consciousness whose nature is to be connected to thinghood, to independent objects, the things it will be working on;" whereas the master, having the slave as intermediary between things and himself, is able to fully enjoy them:

> To the master, on the other hand, by means of this mediating process, belongs the immediate relation, in the sense of the pure negation of it, in other words he gets the enjoyment. What mere desire did not attain, he now succeeds in attaining, viz. to have done with the thing, and find satisfaction in enjoyment. Desire alone did not get the length of this, because of the independence of the thing. The master, however, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, thereby relates himself merely to the dependence of the thing, and enjoys it without qualification and without reserve.[380]

The enjoyment of the master differs from that of the torturer, in the sense that the master is able to relish their relation with

[380] *Ibidem*, 96; *Ibidem,* 90.

things and their negation after the struggle has been conducted and they have won it. On the contrary, the torturer's intoxication is a result of the activity of torturing: their pleasure is derived from this struggle between consciousness, as they find enjoyment in the activity of dominating the other. Another possibility is to consider that, as both subjects are unequal prior to the test, through the perpetration of pain the torturer is exercising their power as master, finding enjoyment in their own independence as opposed to the dependence of the tortured.

At the same time, Hegel's idea that the two entities are struggling for their self-assertion captures something that is applicable to the dynamic between torturer and tortured. In the Brazilian case, in which torture was used to identify and annihilate the opposition to the dictatorship, this struggle between consciousnesses represents opposite sides of the political spectrum. At the same time, the master's enjoyment is the result of the fact that they were able to interpose the slave between things and their own self. Through the mediation of objects, such as the chains used for the enslavement, the master/slave relationship finds its equivalent in the objects used to torture the victim, which not only interpose a distance between the torturer and the tortured, but also avoid the master's own personal injuries, as without objects the torturer would have to rely on modes of inflicting pain such as beating.[381] In this enjoyment the master will also find pain:

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[381] Steve McQueen's movie *Hunger* illustrates how torturers also suffer the physical effects of their job's violence. McQueen's movie depicts the story of Bobby Sands, an IRA volunteer who was arrested by the British authorities and led the Irish prisoners hunger strike in 1981. The film begins by portraying one of the prison officers, Lohan, and the way his hands' knuckles are injured. Lohan appears frequently throughout the movie and his hands are shown at different occasions, always bloody and injured, an evidence of the prison's violence towards IRA prisoners, but also to those who apply the punishments and which find themselves with a body unable to heal. Interestingly, Lohan is surrounded by silence throughout the movie (he never speaks): his pain being the invisible side of this procedure. In McQueen's movie

> In all this, the unessential consciousness is, for the master, the object which embodies the truth of his certainty of himself. But it is evident that this object does not correspond to its notion; for, just where the master has effectively achieved lordship, he really finds that something has come about quite different from an independent consciousness. It is not an independent but rather a dependent consciousness that he has achieved. He is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness.[382]

When the slave is able to overcome fear (described as inward and mute) they will be able to understand their own essential nature, as well as to know spiritual freedom, as "the truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsmen."[383] While the master's consciousness exists always in his mediation with things, the slave is able to relate with the things themselves without intermediaries. In the slave, "through work and labour [...] this consciousness of the bondsmen comes to itself."[384] The master's consciousness, thus, realizes at some point that it exists only in relation to the bondsman, which is the reason why it will never be fully self-sufficient. They understand that the power of controlling this state of existence is something negative, as it implies dominating the other and keeping them as their subordinate. It is

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the torturer's open wounds contrast the previous examples of clear torture. The prison guard is presented as a person doing a particular difficult job, which requires him, for example, to check out his car for hidden bombs each morning, but also as someone responsible for the violence taking place. Yet, violence also occurs in his own body, leaving scars difficult to heal. Cf. *Hunger*, dir. Steve McQueen. Icon Entertainment, 2008. DVD

[382] *Ibidem*, 90.

[383] *Ibidem,* 90.

[384] *Ibidem,* 90.

this recognition that their existence is linked with the tortured self that leads the torturer to feel the aforementioned secondary effects.

Whereas the master has to keep a slave imprisoned, the torturer, as Sisyphus, lives a constant struggle with a multiplicity of other selves (the various tortured subjects), whom they have to battle in order to maintain their status and remain an independent consciousness. Collateral effects derive not only from the necessity of having to perpetually dominate another consciousness, but from the realization of the dependence between beings. This enslavement is highlighted when the torturer realizes that their body is replicating the subject's pains, something that may happen both during the procedure and after it. This type of collateral effect, that derive from torture, may have serious implications on the torturer's health. In Rithy Pahn's extraordinary documentary *S21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine,* torturers are interviewed by one of the camp's survivors, reenacting their experiences as guards, torturers, and members of the killing squads. Houy, one of the guards, testifies that he currently feels shame and on two different occasions mentions physical signs. In the beginning of the documentary he claims that

> I wanted to return to the army. I'd rather have died. Death was certain there. Better to die at the front. But they wouldn't let me go [...] Stop it I have a headache. I'm sick all day long. I can't eat a thing.[385]

Later, he affirms:

> I was young at the time. I didn't think so far ahead. I was hot--blooded. I did what I was told. I was told to compete, so I did, to

[385] *S21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine*, dir. Rithy Pahn (First Run Features, 2003). DVD.

> take someone to be killed, I did. As long as was obeying Angkar. Today when I think about it, it was against the law. I'm ashamed of myself. But I don't think about it. When I think about that, I get a headache. So when someone comes to get me to go out to eat and drink, I get drunk, come home, go to sleep.[386]

Although it is unclear, in this case and in so many others, whether the shame felt by the torturer would be the same if the political regime had not changed, the main point appears to be the fact that these symptoms are neither desired nor controllable. Bruno's intoxication is here substituted by the term "hot-blooded," a synonymous expression that characterises the master's enjoyment, which is accompanied by the previously mentioned pain. In fact, as Edward Peters claims: "So often have the effects of torture on the victims been the focus of discussion that its effects on the torturers have been neglected".[387] Job burnout, the emotional response to chronic stress at work, may be analysed according to the following characteristics: emotional exhaustion; depersonalization, considered a "negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people and the job," a "sense of ineffectiveness and failure."[388] Although Houy's interpretative activity is no longer maintained, collateral effects still appear and the only recognized way to make them momentarily disappear is through alcohol, which numbs the conscience, or depersonalization (as if the master was wishing to annihilate itself). It could now be understood how the torturer's consciousness, unable to sustain the pain resulting from torture, anesthetizes itself so as to avoid the confrontation with the other

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[386] *Ibidem*. DVD.

[387] Edward Peters, *Torture* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985) 179.

[388] *S21: The Kmer Rouge Killing Machine*, dir. Rithy Pahn (First Run Features, 2003). DVD.

consciousness (during torture) and the regrets imposed by it (after torture has taken place). This process that affects the torturer's body and makes them suffer the negative and degrading consequences of being a touchstone for others is a relevant argument against official applications of torture by the State and a powerful objection to those who argue in favour of the legal uses of torture.

The fact that the victims were submitted to pain and that this type of suffering was mandatory during the procedure is represented by the torturer's acquisition of elements of the test itself. In this case, they do not absorb characteristics of the subject under evaluation, but gain pain, which could be portrayed as the main feature of the test itself. From this perspective, torturers share, with the Doctor in *Macbeth*, the negative effects of their interpretative activity. They are, as Freud would say regarding Lady Macbeth, wrecked by success.[389] The moment in which they fulfil the desire of annihilating the subject brings them both a short-term pleasure and an enduring pain, with which it is difficult to cope.

To conclude, it should be noted that in the aforementioned cases, the identification of what Eliot names the moment of fusion, which I consider to be another important particularity for interpretative success, is always a justification, *a posteriori*, of something that happened before. From this perspective, although interpreters believe this discovery is important, the moment itself may never be fully understood, given that they end up determining the reasons that justify their particular interpretations of affairs. This does not mean, however, that these descriptions are necessarily erroneous. On the contrary, in all of these modes of proof, a moment of intuition or insight seems to take place, which plays an important role in the

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

determination of the proof's outcome and which, ultimately, helps to explain why some examiners are so much better than others. This insight, or conviction, is accompanied by education, which may take the form of experience, or with specific training. Such preparation may teach interpreters to apply certain techniques, as happens with the polygraph or with torture, or may have the purpose of making them acquainted with methods used for the interpretation of literary texts. Thus, techniques are used with the purpose of describing, translating, or justifying each interpreter's insight. Consequently, there is a relationship between each interpreter's conviction, their education, the technology at their disposal, and experience.

The idea that a moment of fusion has been identified and the belief in the procedure as a way of obtaining the truth give the impression that interpretative success may always be accomplished. Skilled interpreters may not see themselves as an exception to the rule, and assume that everyone following these technical procedures will be able to reach a similar outcome. Failure to distinguish skilled interpreters from those who follow a method but lack conviction establishes the difference between accurate interpretations and determinations of affairs. These methods do indeed promote results, in the sense that polygraph evaluations, torture procedures, and the medieval ordeal require a sentence, whereas literary critics see themselves in the position of having to justify their beliefs about a certain text. Interpreters are able to put an end to intricate problems, therefore concluding their quest for certainty. Their personal cost for doing so, not to mention ethical problems deriving from the use of some of these methods, as seen, varies.

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Final Remarks: Mousetrapping

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> Why do we put things together as we do? Why do we put ourselves together with just these things to make a world? What choices have we said farewell to? To put things differently, so that they quicken the heart, would demand their recollecting.
>
> – Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*

Freud *versus* Ryle

Throughout this study, the dichotomy between interior and exterior, inside versus outside, has been examined repeatedly, and each different interpreter's technique for understanding other entities has been depicted as a form of exteriorizing what these bodies appear to conceal.

Such capacity, which for the purpose of this discussion may be designated as "mousetrapping," names Hamlet's ability to devise the pantomime, allowing him to sound Claudius's conscience; Glessner Lee's police investigators' method to observe and to point to what others failed to perceive; Cavell's philosophical questioning regarding the sources of his conviction; the use of the polygraph; and the application of torture. As has been shown, to exteriorize is to bring something to light. This exteriorization, however, has a public nature. For Gilbert Ryle there is no hidden interiority, all interpreters can do is study visible bodily signs and determine a causal relationship between those signs and a certain interpretation of affairs. These interpreters' main talent lies in their capacity to observe others' public behaviour, saying, and rightly so, that Hamlet's

exercise consisted on the evaluation of Claudius's enraged face, that Lee's investigators scrutinize visible clues, and so on.

At this point, "mousetrapping" appears to designate two contradictory perspectives, which I will attempt to reconcile in the pages that follow. In order to do so, I will discuss Freud's "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading," and Ryle's last letter to Daniel Dennett, whose PhD thesis he had supervised years before. When asked to name ten good books, Freud states the following:

> You ask me to name "ten good books" for you, and refrain from adding to this any words of explanation. Thus you leave to me not only the choice of the books but also the interpretation of your request. Accustomed to paying attention to small signs, I must then trust the wording in which you couch your enigmatical demand.[390]

To the author, the wording of this request must be put on the couch so that the enigma may be solved, indeed, reading these words, one imagines Freud's interlocutor sharing T. S. Eliot's concern over the need to tame interpretation. Underneath this description lies the idea that requests, words, and bodily expressions are riddles waiting to be deciphered, and that a causal explanation may be found for every symptom of an individual's concealed desires or fears. Small signs, those which Freud regularly interprets in his patients, are the expression of what we are unable to acknowledge about ourselves, particularly when the body is understood as being a subject of its own mind. Trusting the wording of the request is considered a similar procedure to that of the interpretation of the body of a

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[390] Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading" (1907), in *Jensen's Gradiva and Other Works,* transl. James Strachey, vol. IX, Standard edition. (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho- Analysis, 1973) 245-246.

patient, a particularity that brings Dora's case – as described in "Fragment of An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" – to mind. It is impossible to thoroughly explain Freud's famous characterization of the failure to treat Ida Bauer, the eighteen-year old girl who ended her treatment eleven weeks after it had started. Nonetheless, due to its close relation with some of the aforementioned procedures, Freud's description of the analysis of the body's behaviour, illustrates his causal understanding of symptomatic acts:

> When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger--tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish.[391]

Here, the author exemplifies what has been portrayed as the difficult task of exteriorizing something out of a subject's body. Freud is attempting to deal with the technical difficulties originated by patient's inaccurate descriptions of themselves and the problems tormenting them (thus, a fragment of analysis). Their conscious and unconscious repressions, the loss of memory or its falsification, makes the task of the physician rather difficult, which is why procedures designed to make thoughts emerge must be found (an ambition shared by the practices problematized in this book). In

[391] Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1905), in *A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works,* transl. James Strachey, vol. VII, Standard edition (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973) 77-78.

this case, observation is deemed to be the faculty that allows the understanding of each person's hidden secrets. To Freud – unlike some of the situations portrayed in this study, such as Claudius' – these are cases in which the patient is not necessarily lying or concealing something, as body signs may unveil what the subject does not know or want to acknowledge about themselves. This is the reason why the signs of nervousness that betray the silent patient may be analysed:

> I give the name of symptomatic acts to those acts which people perform, as we say, automatically, unconsciously, without attending to them, or as if in a moment of distraction. They are actions to which people would like to deny any significance, and which, if questioned about them, they would explain as being indifferent and accidental. Closer observation, however, will show that these actions, about which consciousness knows nothing or wishes to know nothing, in fact give expression to unconscious thoughts and impulses, and are therefore most valuable and instructive as being manifestations of the unconscious which have been able to come to the surface.[392]

Things we do without knowing it, automatically, unconsciously or when distracted, those we tend to explain as being accidental or indifferent, are the expression of the unconscious, of its thoughts and impulses. As in the procedures discussed, the fact that the subject does not recognize them makes them valuable clues to understand their behaviour. To Freud, however, unintentional bodily signs and unintentional verbal enunciations (such as the slips of

[392] *Ibidem,* 76.

the tongue discussed in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life)* have the same importance.[393]

To Freud, the understanding of bodily behaviour takes place in therapy and must be interpreted in time:

> For on that day she wore at her waist – a thing she never did on any other occasion before or after – a small reticule of a shape which had just come into fashion; and, as she lay on the sofa and talked, she kept playing with it – opening it, putting a finger into it, shutting it again, and so on. I looked on for some time, and then explained to her the nature of a "symptomatic act."
>
> [...]
>
> They [symptomatic acts] are sometimes very easy to interpret. Dora's reticule, which came apart at the top in the usual way, was nothing but a representation of the genitals, and her playing with it, her opening it and putting her finger in it, was an entirely and unembarrassed yet unmistakable pantomimic announcement of what she would like to do with it – namely, masturbate.[394]

The fact that Dora had never worn a necklace is seen as unusual behaviour, to which an explanation may be found. The conclusion that her conduct is unusual is only possible because previous sessions have taken place. Freud's interpretation of Dora's behaviour has been exhaustively criticized, even though he considered it "very easy to interpret." Still, this example helps to illustrate how, for Freud, the symptomatic action is a symbol for something else. This is the reason why, in Freud's case, although everything may be

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[393] From this perspective, one could consider the confession of the Greek slave under torture to be a slip of the tongue, which would be the reason why it was deemed more valuable than other testimonies.

[394] *Ibidem*, 76; I*bidem*, 77.

analysed and have a meaning, Rieff highlights how in his method "it is not the thing itself, but a representation of it, that is being interpreted".[395] For example, events, jokes, and dreams are not to be considered in their original forms, but as daily events described by each of us or by patients in their sessions:

> In this light, the endless stream of talk on which psychoanalytic treatment is carried becomes the opposite of a liability, as some have urged; the value of therapy is just its prolonged opportunity for the patient to formulate his emotion. Mediated as talk, emotion may be brought before the tribunal of interpretation and appeased.[396]

In therapy, every bodily sign, every intentional word and slip of the tongue may identify one's visible or hidden intentions, emotions, or concerns; without treatment, however, their meaning may be difficult to understand. Rieff is pointing to a discrepancy between the emotions we feel and our ability to formulate them. As Rieff explains, time and a "stream of talk" are necessary for sentiments to appear before the patient and the doctor. If emotions are appropriately caught during therapy, then they appear before the tribunal of interpretation and may be pacified (a lesson Lady Macbeth would have benefited from). An important distinction between Freud and procedures such as torture or the medieval ordeal lies, therefore, in the fact that for Freud symptomatic acts acquire importance within a description, whereas for these modes of proof someone who flinches does it for an unequivocal reason, which the interpreter may immediately determine. In psychoanalysis

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[395] Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist,* 1959 (London: Methuen, 1965) 105.
[396] *Ibidem*, 106.

it is not the bodily sign itself, but its representation during therapy that gains significance.

However, a problem with this description lies in the fact that the causality of these symptomatic actions is prized as an expression of someone's subconscious, which at times ignores the possibility that some bodily signs may indeed happen without a reason. The idea that they may have a motive, although sometimes a concealed one, is predominant, even when Freud considers the possibility that "the existence of such an origin and the meaning attributed to the act cannot be exclusively established".[397] The thought that the subject may not know the reasons for their own troubles makes matters more troublesome to those attempting to refute such explanation for the appearance of bodily symptoms (something accentuated by the notion that a patient who does not accept their therapist's explanation may be resistant to treatment). These types of causal explanations may be extraordinarily persuasive and very difficult to object to, due to the fact that the analysis of every visible sign is understood as a representation of something that is well hidden in the recesses of the mind.

Freud's technique, his "tribunal of interpretation," as Rieff names it, shares with other methods the fact that an important part of its procedures consists in the attempt to make proof appear. These cases differ from ordinary courts, in the sense that the tribunal is not devised to provide a verdict after the defence and the prosecution present their cases, since the investigation and the sentence are frequently interchangeable. But, as has been shown, the understanding of proof depends on observation, the capacity to describe it, and the comprehension of a certain context. Freud's search for a meaning in each of his interlocutors' words exemplifies his interpretative method. Returning, once again, to the letter:

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[397] Sigmund Freud, "Fragment of Analysis of a Case of Hysteria," 77.

> You did not say "the ten most magnificent works (of world literature)," in which case I should have been obliged to reply, with so many others: Homer, the tragedies of Sophocles, Goethe's *Faust*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, etc. Nor did you say "the ten most significant books," among which scientific achievements like those of Copernicus, of the old physician Johann Weier on the belief in witches, Darwin's *Descent of Man*, and others, would then have found a place. You did not even ask for "favourite books," among which I should not have forgotten Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Heine's Lazarus.[398]

Interestingly, the author is interpreting his interlocutor's request as a literary critic would, analysing several possibilities concerning the meaning of "good books" in order to determine a single one. Magnificent works are thus distinguished from the most significant, which, of course, include scientific achievements, and differ from one's favourite books. This categorization consists of the attempt to thoroughly define a term in order to then circumscribe its use, thus validating a given interpretation. More importantly, the questionnaire exemplifies what Philip Rieff characterized as Freud's capacity to make interpretation independent from a therapeutic use. Everything is put to its disposition – dreams, memories, day-to-day events, relationships, etc. – as "the psychologically trained man (in or out of the therapeutic regimen) lives alert to the interpretative opportunity".[399] Thus, Freud's reply to the questionnaire does not merely exemplify the task of a psychologist occupied with the attribution of intentions to signs, words or expressions, but, as previously said, a form of interpretation that has spread, and according to which all may be subject to analysis. For those accepting

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[398] Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading", 245-246.

[399] Philip Rieff, *Ibid*, 105.

this description, we are constantly putting everything and everybody on the couch, searching for concealed causes in their visible actions (psychologists would be the specialists in the subject). The idea that all are subject to interpretation makes, as seen in previous pages, some interpreters look for entities or methods of analysis that allow them to reach accurate conclusions about something and to find entities which they consider to be touchstones to the comprehension of others.

Although Freud is not engaging in self-analysis, he does appear to be over-interpreting what could be considered a simple request, as well as his own reply to it:

> I think, therefore, that a particular stress falls on the "good" in your phrase, and that with this predicate you intend to designate books to which one stands in rather the same relationship as to "good" friends, to whom one owes a part of one's knowledge of life and view of the world – books which one has enjoyed oneself and gladly commends to others, but in connection with which the element of timid reverence, the feeling of one's smallness in the face of their greatness, is not particularly prominent.[400]

In his decision to consider that the word "good" must be highlighted, Freud finds the explanation for the riddling request. Notice how the procedure presents similarities with other methods portrayed in the book, in which quoting a passage was a form of giving it importance in a description. Choosing a term to define the request is a way of justifying Freud's uncanny choices. It would be interesting to question whether "good" has the value of the symptomatic actions previously portrayed, a word being unintentionally used and thus more valuable to the understanding

[400] Sigmund Freud, "Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading," 245-246.

of the request. Good books are thus depicted as being similar to a kind of friend, even though, when one thinks about it, this definition of a friend could appear peculiar and somewhat egotistical (those in which "the element of timid reverence, the feeling of one's smallness in the face of their greatness, is not particularly prominent").

Once the meaning of "good books" is determined, Freud claims to proceed to their enunciation: "I will therefore name such 'good' books for you which have come to my mind without a great deal of reflection."[401] Two different explanations could justify this decision. On the one hand, listing the books without overthinking could better express his inner appreciation for them (as if it were a type of automatic writing). Therefore, choosing some books over others reveals things about Freud that he might wish to conceal, allowing his (hidden) mind to be made clear and interpreted by others. But such choice is equally representative of what he aims to show, which is ultimately the reason why he decides to enumerate some books and not others. At the same time, the assumption that his interlocutor is using the adjective 'good' without a specific intention, that good could merely characterize relevant works, those one particularly likes or considers fundamental, is not contemplated. For Freud, although one may not have pondered about the term, it may nevertheless be representative (a presumption that a polygraph examiner would find accurate, when concerning the register of emotions appearing in the charts).

Ten works are listed: Multatuli, *Letters and Works;* Kipling, *Jungle Book;* Anatole France, *Sur la pierre blanche;* Zola, *Fécondité;* Merezhkovski, *Leonardo da Vinci;* G. Keller, *Leute von Seldwyla;* C. F. Meyer, *Huttens letzte Tage;* Macaulay, *Essays;* Gomperz, *Griechische Denker;* Mark Twain, *Sketches*. The first thing that comes to mind is the atypical nature of the list. After having been undecided between

[401] *Ibidem*, 245-246.

Homer, Shakespeare and the Greek tragedies, Freud appears to have chosen an eerie group of authors. Even in the case of Mark Twain, Freud opts for the *Sketches* instead of other more relevant books. Those that know the author used some of these works to write well-known essays, such as that on Leonardo da Vinci, could perhaps presume that good books for Freud are those useful as food for thought. The letter reaches its end with the conclusion that:

> You have touched on something, with your request to name for you "ten good books," on which an immeasurable amount could be said. And so I will conclude, in order not to become even more informative.[402]

Freud recognizes that his interlocutor made him ponder each choice, that he led him to discover things about his relation with the abovementioned books, and that this Questionnaire tells us things about him. Touching something, in this case, is not exactly portrayed as the result of a skilled activity; Freud's description represents the request as a hunch, which, when properly interpreted, allows his interlocutor to obtain some knowledge about him. In the aforementioned methods or interpreters, however, to touch is often used to reveal the skilled activities of observing something, accurately pointing to it, and being able to insightfully describe it. In this case, "to touch," or "to mousetrap," would thus name the skilled interpretative activity conducted by Freud's interlocutor, who – drawing on an insightful request and being equipped with the proper methods for comprehension – would retrieve the concealed meaning out of Freud's list.

The discussion of different examinations in previous chapters could point to this use of the term, in which case the objection that

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[402] *Ibidem*, 247.

these methods are indeed observing and commenting observable bodily proof is plausible. For example, if, for Freud, the interpretation of the list could help us discover concealed things about one's self, Gilbert Ryle would say that the items do not allow us access into some internal part of our beings. The choices we make represent things we like for specific reasons, which is why contemplating them requires understanding and the act of describing the motives which lead us to them (that immeasurable amount of talk). "Internal" and "inner" are terms the author particularly dislikes, as may be perceived in his writings:

> When Mozart was audibly and tentatively humming a new note--sequence, did his "mental" intentions, tastes, ingenuities, patience, ennuis, dodges, inventiveness, tactical and strategic savvy, etc. etc. not get exercised merely because (careless chap!) he was humming aloud and not as-if-humming in his head? Or can "mental" cover things that are overt? And then does "Mentalese" cover your and my chattings in English, calculating on the backs of envelopes, frowning, scratching our heads, toying with clay? (Incidentally, the idea of Fodor that we each do, or might, have our private "Mentaleses" (which Locke mildly rejects) is what L.W."s "private languages" offensive was an offensive on, though L.W. surely did not know his Locke. Knowing Russell would have been enough. Or his Fodor. But we are now in 1976![403]

Ryle's letter, the perfect counterpoint to Freud's Questionnaire, comments on a review on Fodor that Dennett had sent to *Mind*. Ryle claims to have liked it, even though, for reasons he has now

[403] Gilbert Ryle, "Letter to Daniel Dennett", 22 Feb. 1976, *The Electronic Journal of Analytical Philosophy,* University of Louisiana, accessed 25 July 2011, http://ejap.louisiana.edu/EJAP/2002/RyleLett.pdf.

forgotten, he is anti-Fodor. Ryle is rejecting, as described in his book *The Concept of Mind*, the assumption that we are vessels with hidden contents. For the author, bodies do not hold a hidden interiority, they do not contain one's secrets and do not lead a separate life from that of the mind. In fact, mind and body are indistinguishable, there is no ghost in the machine. This is the reason why there is no "inner life" and nothing going on in one's head, which exaplins his refutation of cognitive psychology. Paraphrasing Ryle's characterization of 'mentalese', if 'internal' is being used to name non-external things and events merely because they are "imagined-as-heard-seen-uttered," then Dennett, even though denying Descartes, is reproducing his notion of 'mental,' as that which takes place in someone's mind, such as mental images, soliloquies or humming a tune. Beliefs, desires, attitudes and intentions are not mental states, but a form of speaking about others. In his denial that 'mental' covers things that are overt, Ryle strikes a chord, as chatting in English, calculating and frowning may not be described in Mentalese. The argument, made clear in Ryle's writings, concerns the denial that frowning is something that takes place inside one's head:

> I hear and understand your conversational avowals, your interjections and your tones of voice; I see and understand your gestures and facial expressions. I say "understand" in no metaphorical sense, for even interjections, tones of voice, gestures and grimaces are modes of communication. We learn to produce them, not indeed from schooling, but from imitation. We know how to sham them by putting them on and we know, in some degree, how to avoid giving ourselves away by assuming masks.[404]

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[404] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, introd. Daniel C. Dennett, 1949 (London: Penguin Books, 2000) 111.

Ibidem, 111.

In the section on "Emotions," Ryle names and distinguishes feelings, moods, motives, inclinations, agitations, and so on. According to the author, we do understand things about others when we analyse their tones of voice and gestures, but we are able to make sense of what we see due to the fact that we have observed the way other people behave. Physical signs do not represent interior feelings or streams of consciousness, but rather reproduce a learning process, according to which we mimic the reactions of other people, which is to say that we learn about passions such as anger and sadness by observing those emotions in others. Therefore, as was examined in the second chapter of this book, if a police investigator wonders whether someone is guilty, they should observe the suspect's public behaviour, to conduct a proper investigation, interrogate friends and family, search for political convictions, etc. The explanation to our actions lies in what we say and do. Ryle is, of course, right when he argues that most of the things sometimes described as being hidden are, indeed, visible. To observe, to ostensively show something, to describe and to justify our thoughts, are all public forms of examination. Ryle denies, however, the possibility that we may conduct an inquiry regarding other peoples' inclinations, which represents the problem our examiners attempt to solve:

> I discover my or your motives in much, though not quite the same way as I discover your abilities. The big practical difference is that I cannot put the subject through his paces in my inquiries into his inclinations as I can in my inquiries into his competences. To discover how conceited or patriotic you are, I must still observe your conduct, remarks, demeanour, and tones of voice, but I cannot subject you to examination-tests or experiments which you recognize as such. You would have a special motive for responding to such experiments in a particular way. (...) The tests on whether

> a person is conceited are the actions he takes and the reactions he manifests in such circumstances.[405]

This passage puts the understanding of motives and abilities side by side, as both may be understood through the observation of someone's behaviour. In order to comprehend another person's inclinations, I must pay attention to their words, actions and tones of voice; whereas to appreciate competences I may conduct a similar type of observation but, in addition to it, I am able to test skills. This capacity to devise a series of examinations in order to assess competences is something we do on a daily basis: understanding if someone has learned to read, write, calculate or cook, involves testing them and observing the results. Particular descriptions of the polygraph, however, contradict the thought that we may test others' abilities, but not their inclinations.

Take, for example, a polygraph examiner wishing to realize whether a double agent is patriotic. Although the test's results are not without interpretation (they require the capacity to ask questions, to observe and to analyse the charts, as well as a certain amount of intuition), the examination may help to uncover things that the subject wishes to conceal. These may or may not be related to the examination, but are definitely inclinations. CIA polygraph examiners have argued that, in compulsory examinations of the Agency's employees, they have obtained more information about a subject's sexual inclinations and the use of forbidden substances than they have caught double agents. In such cases, the outcome of the test would not be the intended result, but it would be a way to test an inclination. Diplomats, spies, actors and, Ryle would say, hypocrites, are artful at deceiving others because they are trained to control and to feign emotions. But does the fact that they are able

[405] *Ibidem*, 111.

to mimic these sentiments, contrary to what Ryle maintains, point to a correlation between our feelings and their visible expressions?

> But though agitations, like other moods, are liability conditions, they are not propensities to act intentionally in certain ways. A woman wrings her hands in anguish, but we do not say that anguish is the motive from which she wrings her hands. Nor do we inquire with what object an embarrassed man blushes, stammers, squirms or fidgets. A keen walker walks because he wants to walk, but a perplexed man does not wrinkle his browns because he wants or means to wrinkle them, though the actor or hypocrite may wrinkle his brows because he wants to appear perplexed.[406]

Ryle sustains that it is difficult to attribute causes to agitations, namely to assert that a certain agitation had an interior cause, such as an itch or a qualm, etc. The fact that these are not intentional actions (only actors and hypocrites wrinkle their brows to appear perplexed) leads Ryle to consider that a causal relation may not be determined between anguish and the way a woman wrings her hands. The same happens with moods and feelings, in the sense that none may be described as motives and thus no causal explanation may be suited to portray them:

> Feelings, in other words, are not among the sorts of things of which it makes sense to ask from what motives they issue. The same is true, for the same reasons, of the other signs of agitations. Neither my twinges nor my winces, neither my squirming feelings nor my bodily squirming, neither my feelings of relief nor my signs of relief, are things which I do for a reason; nor in consequence, are they things which I can be said to do cleverly or

[406] *Ibidem*, 94.

> stupidly, successfully or unsuccessfully, carefully or carelessly – or indeed to at all. They are neither well managed or ill managed; they are not managed at all, though the actor's winces and the hypocrite's sighs are well or ill managed.[407]

Ryle's thesis (which would indeed be a good objection to those who argue in favour of the use of torture and the polygraph) sustains that, if feelings are not intentional, it does not make sense to describe them using the language of motives. If one is unable to manage bodily sensations and physical signs (instead of those deliberately faking them), then it makes no sense to claim that they appeared for a reason, or that they were skilfully managed. The same can be said for other expressions that we apply to characterize activities in which attention is required. In this context, we might think again about Hamlet's mousetrap. Hamlet's way of testing Claudius presumes that these bodily signs are not intentional is precisely what makes them accurate. As seen in this case, a twinge, a wince, or a bodily movement reveals hidden intentions, feelings that one does not wish others to discover, or uncovers things one does not know. What Claudius cannot manage in himself, Hamlet would say, is more truthful than what he controls. Although Hamlet would probably contradict the notion that body signs are always causal and unequivocal, the idea that none of them may be explained does not appear to be sensible. Reasons may indeed be credited to emotions; indeed, we do tend to find *a posteriori* explanations for feelings or emotions which we did not at first know how to formulate. The fact that something is not intentional does not necessarily mean that a cause may not be determined in order to later explain it.

Ryle himself provides the explanation we have been looking for, when he claims that some bodily pains have a reason, an argument

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[407] *Ibidem*, 102.

I would apply to the rest of the sensations, moods, and agitations which he was previously describing. As Ryle maintains:

> The answer is that we learn both to locate sensations and to give their crude physiological diagnoses from the rule of thumb experimental process, reinforced, normally, by lessons taught by others.[408]

This perspective agrees with what has been presented in this book, in the sense that, as the Ryle suggests, bodily feelings are not self-explanatory, we must test them and find an accurate way to describe them. Returning to Ryle's rejection of the idea that we may test inclinations, he maintains that sometimes an *experimentum crucis* may be needed in order to identify a hypocrite or a charlatan:

> All that we need, though we often cannot get it, is an *experimentum crucis*, just as the doctor often needs but cannot get an *experimentum crucis* to decide between two diagnoses. To establish hypocrisy and charlatanry is an inductive task which differs from the ordinary inductive tasks of assessing motives and capacities only by being a second order induction.[409]

However, I would argue that, although Ryle would most likely disagree with the thought, these procedures are a form of conducting the experiment he is describing. We do learn to identify charlatans and hypocrites with experience, through observation and in time, and the task of assessing their motives reproduces the strategies we use with other people. Still, skilled judges, as experts in this type of determination, are more efficient than most of us. Part of

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[408] *Ibidem*, 101.

[409] *Ibidem*, 165.

their talent consists of the capacity to devise small tests that will lead them to correct assumptions, in their capacity to learn with experience, to be suspicious, and to improve in time. In fact, Ryle's argument about examiners is in accordance with this perspective:

> It is a truism to say that the appreciations of character and the explanations of conduct given by critical, unprejudiced and humane observers, who have had a lot of experience and take a lot of interest, tend to be both swift and reliable; those of inferior judges tend to be slower and less reliable.[410]

Good observers are here portrayed as those who are critical but unprejudiced, who possess experience and take an interest (a feature which had not been described and yet is of extreme importance). In his distinction between unstudied and guarded talk, Ryle characterizes the problem that interpreters in this book are dealing with.

> No sleuth-like powers are required for me to find out from the words and tones of voice of your unstudied talk, the frame of mind of the talker. When talk is guarded – and often we do not know whether it is or not, even in the avowals we make to ourselves – sleuth-like qualities do have to be exercised. We now have to infer from what is said and done to what would have been said, if wariness had not been exercised, as well as to the motives of wariness. Finding out what is on the pages of an open book is a matter of simple reading; finding out what is in the pages of a sealed book requires hypothesis and evidence.[411]

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[410] *Ibidem*, 164.

[411] *Ibidem*, 176.

As the author maintains, we often are unable to determine the type of talk we are dealing with, which is why these sleuth-like qualities – and I argue that not everybody is in their possession – are used to differentiate types of people. "Frame of mind," an expression Ryle uses often but which is never fully characterized in his book, stands for something the author would deny being interior. But in this sentence, as in others, frame of mind could be substituted for what our other exegetists would claim to be someone's inner moods or intentions. In fact, despite themselves, Freud's portrait of Dora's public behaviour and Ryle's denial that sleuth-like powers are required for us to understand one another are very similar. Indeed, both Freud and Ryle would find, in a speaker's signs of wariness, the explanation for what is said and done. At the same time, Ryle's example of literature does not appear to be sensible in his argument that opening a book and reading its pages is sufficient for those wanting to describe it. It was seen, throughout this book, how characterizing the contents of a book also requires intuition, the formulation of hypotheses, and the gathering of evidence. At the same time, when the book is sealed, one may not understand what it is about, although we may indeed formulate hypotheses. Reading books and identifying charlatans is, from this perspective, very similar.

Freud and Ryle thus sit on opposite sides of the table. Skilled interpreters such as Hamlet, however, distinguish themselves in their capacity to understand when to attribute a causal intention to a bodily sign or a verbal enunciate. Comprehending and analysing physical signs and words is placed at the same level, as both articulate things we wish to say or to conceal, which may be expressive or have no particular importance. Certain bodily signs do indicate moods and, just like some of the things we say, are important to help us understand one another. It is not uncommon for one to be hearing another person's words while observing their face in order to see

if they mean what they says. But this does not imply, as Freud claims, that certain physical expressions may always be understood as symptomatic actions pointing to hidden intentions. And it does not indicate, as Ryle would maintain, that no justifications might be found for the things we do without a reason. Sometimes, I would say, we do have impulses and feelings that may be described as things that impel us to act, and the language of motives may describe not only our unintentional actions, but also our involuntary body signs.

As this study has shown, interpretative virtue is a mid-point between two extremes. All physical signs are interpretable, in the sense that they may be described and that we may find reasons for them. This does not, however, mean that all bodily signs are causally motivated. And it does not entail that all physical expressions are riddles waiting to be solved, although we may later attribute a single sense to explain the appearance of someone's sweaty hands, and that meaning may prove to be accurate. Simultaneously, even though a unique explanation may determine the sense of a visible expression, body signs do not have an unequivocal value. The appearance of a certain emotion, by itself, tells us nothing about a certain situation. This is the reason, I would claim, why polygraph examiners attempt to register multiple records in a chart, which they afterwards complement with a detailed description, a result of the comparison of the physiological results with other type of data (such as the subject's movement on the chair). As seen, only someone with lack of knowledge of the procedure would assert that the polygraph, as an instrument, is the centre of the procedure. The skill or the interpreters consists of learning how to differentiate relevant and irrelevant expressions, a somewhat similar activity to that of distinguishing what Ryle describes as unstudied and guarded talk.

At this point, a parenthesis is perhaps justified, in order to state that although these activities are interpretative techniques,

their procedures and skills are not interchangeable, at least in the sense that a literary critic does not possess a torturer's skill, that a polygraph examiner is not a torturer, and vice versa. Torture, its repellent nature notwithstanding, is a technical endeavour, one which is learnt by trial and error, and in which skill is required. Saying so implies that, as in other specialized interpretative activities, some torturers are better than others in their particular, and dismal, undertaking: more able at obtaining confessions, distinguishing authentic testimonies from false ones, and at punishing suspects without killing them (an important, but often ignored, aspect of torture). Under immense pressure, both before and during torture procedures, few are able to keep their thoughts to themselves (even if studies show that trained professionals and those with strong religious beliefs are able to resist torture for a prolonged period of time). Claiming that torturers may be deemed exegetists implies that truthful confessions may appear under torture. The ability to ask questions and to detect errors, the proficiency to know when to stop an examination, to determine for how long the suspect should rest before submitting them to the test again, is a highly specialized tool. Moreover, understanding when a suspect under torture is telling the torturer what they long to hear, and distinguishing such fabricated testimony from a truthful confession also entails skill.

It was equally seen how, like other interpreters, torturers acquire features of the test, be those feelings of pleasure or interpretative pains. Placing these procedures side-by-side with literary criticism does not equate to saying that critics are torturing their texts (even if some criticism does appear to torture its authors), submitting them to the polygraph or to the ordeal. Each practice involves particular skills, and the way each interpreter devises their mousetrap has been distinguished throughout this book. These practices are, nonetheless, comparable in the sense that they are expert techniques that depend mainly on the individual talent and knowledge of

their interpreters. Although some of these skills may be taught (acquiring a vocabulary, following an explanation and, in the case of the polygraph and torture, learning the basic workings of the instruments), talent depends largely on the development of a group of personal capacities. Gifted interpreters tend to be the exception and not the rule. This is the reason why using these modes of proof as a general method for comprehending the truth does not appear sensible. When in the hands of remarkable interpreters, they allow for the resolution of interpretative problems, which otherwise could go on forever. But, unfortunately or not, talent is the exception and not the rule.

Maintaining that these techniques are a form of exteriorizing reactions/emotions does not mean that all emotions are alike, that they are interior, or that the exterior is always revealing someone's interior. "Interior" includes hunches, dispositions, moods, as well as emotions and stuff we think but do not say. The term thus refers to things one feels and thinks, which may or may not be acknowledged at first, but that are not said out loud. These emotions or thoughts are invisible in the sense that someone will have to recognize or exteriorize them in order to give them meaning. The expression does not refer to what Susan Orbach considers to be the concealed behaviour of her body. I would claim that the moment she feels the sensation of wellbeing, the instant she finds a causal explanation for it and describes it to others, she has acknowledged something she did not know how to clarify and has, therefore, exteriorized it. Another example would be a hunch, which typifies something that may not be immediately explained, although one can later make sense of it in order to define it. Just like a physical sign, a hunch may impel us to act, and it is sometimes truthful, in the sense that it may help us reach an accurate conclusion about someone or something. A final illustration would be reading a book and knowing how to explain its story but, in the terms used by Eliot

when discussing Wilson Knight, failing to recognize its pattern. This would be to understand its "interior," but fail to understand or to be able to explain the book as a whole.

The cases exposed sometimes appear to characterize the unexpected behaviour of the body over the mind. This is the reason why a bleeding corpse, God's intentional object, was seen as an entity without a conscience but one that is capable of accusing its killer (something, a Freudian would say, its mind would approve). At the same time, in Haley's therapy, the dislike that the subject's body has for certain tasks appears to be a significant factor contributing to their cure, whereas examiners value unintentional body signs appearing in the polygraph charts. It has been shown that to describe a certain situation or a person through the concepts of mind and body is not sufficient. In cases representing a self with a divided conscience – such as a body trying to tell the truth about a crime its owner wishes to conceal – the mind seems to be a divided entity, with part of it wishing to protect the liar, and part of it feeling remorse and desiring to accuse itself. In such situations, two minds and two bodies appear to have contradictory impulses, which the person (the third entity in this divine trinity) struggles to control. Thus, "Exterior" is everything we may see and recognize: bodily signs, the polygraph charts, the confession obtained in torture, the visible signs of poison in a murder victim, the chosen quotations in a text, as well as public actions.

"Let the galled jade wince"

"Exteriorization" thus names the group of tests and techniques that enable exegetists to obtain a set of interpretable results, without which a verdict, a conclusion, or a justification would not be possible. It names activities that have the ability to make

visible things that previously appeared to be obscure. The way that Glessner Lee's police investigators learn the technique of observation was, for example, deemed a form of exteriorization of what had been unseen. I would, therefore, like to claim that "mousetrapping" is something similar to the technique of flexing the heel with a spur so that a horse starts to run. Spurring the horse (which in some methods would be equivalent to giving an incentive and in others to pure physical coercion) is a way of pressuring the subject so that physical reactions appear and may be registered. Although spurring the horse makes it run, it does not presuppose a hidden interiority or the revealing of an inner self. Spurring the horse would be, if one wishes to use Ryle's terms, a form of *experimentum crucis*, but one that denies Ryle's idea that we may not test inclinations.

Observe how, if taken literally, the previous comparison is a faulty one, in the sense that all horses, and not merely those who are guilty, run when they are spurred. This would mean, when translated to our procedures, that these methods would have the capacity to initiate a causal reaction, but that the results of each response would not differ among themselves. And it was, of course, seen that this is not the case. As such, "Mousetrapping" must be portrayed as a skilled form of provocation to which only some entities answer. Response varies immensely, depending on the form of testing and on its objectives. Every so often, interpreters wish to prove someone's culpability, in which case the test aims to identify a deceitful testimony, an inauthentic entity, or a charlatan. In other situations, authenticity is at stake. Identifying guilt and innocence, authentic *versus* inauthentic, could be deemed to be matching procedures, and in a certain sense, they are. What distinguishes them is the outcome they aim to obtain, whether spurring will make the guilty horse or the innocent one run.

Hamlet describes it best when, during *The Mousetrap*, he seeks Claudius' uneasy assent: "Let the galled jade wince, / our withers are / unwrung." (III, ii, 37-38). The Arden edition explains how "a galled jade is a horse which is rubbed sore, especially on the withers through an ill-fitting saddle," and directs us to the OED, in which 'wince' and 'winch' are considered different forms of the same word. [412] 'Wince' is defined as "2. To start or make an involuntary shrinking movement in consequence of or in order to avoid pain, or when alarmed and suddenly affected."[413] The Arden notes also quote Lyly's *Eupheus*: "None will winch excepte shee bee gawled, neither any bee offended vnless shee be guiltie."[414] Hamlet's characterization illustrates, obviously, his wish to deeply affect Claudius (whose guilt makes him sore). But it also helps us redescribe the example of the horse, and to understand that sore horses have reason to move, as they are impelled to avoid pain. Hamlet's remark highlights, as do our examples, the idea that a skilled interpreter must possess both the ability to realize if a horse is sore, due to an ill-fitting saddle, and to apply pain in the tickling point, thus making them move. Granting that 'mousetrapping' is being defined as the application of a method to which the analysis of results follows, but causing the reaction and interpreting its outcome are not, as will be seen, different procedures.

Before continuing, notice that if 'mousetrapping' may be seen as the equivalent to pinching somebody in order to obtain a physical reaction, although a polygraph examiner is under the impression that they are searching someone's inner soul, their capacity lies instead in the ability to start a causal reaction (which is a form

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[412] Cf. Harold Jenkins *in* Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins (ed) 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 302.

[413] *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, vol. XII (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961).

[414] Cf. Harold Jenkins *in* Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins (ed) 1982 (New York: Routledge, The Arden Shakespeare, 1990) 302.

of obtaining both physical signs and verbal enunciates). In this sense, 'mousetrapping' is a technical procedure, synonymous with putting someone or something to the test, which sometimes implies conceiving a form of evaluation, and at other times entails the application of a method or a form of understanding. At this point, it could be argued that if the interpreter's aptitude consists of producing causal reactions, then the skill of analysing these expressions does not appear to be required, in the sense that the interpreter does not need to distinguish causal signs from unmotivated ones (the test would do all the work). This is not, of course, the case.

Manipulating the stone, similar to the procedure of someone who wishes to test the quality of gold and uses quartz to do it, implies devising a test (or a series of tests), conducting it, observing and interpreting its results. The exteriorization described consists, therefore, in the elaboration of a form of evaluation, which, as has been shown, varies immensely, and which allows interpreters to gather the proof they need in order to obtain an interpretation. Nonetheless, conducting the test and interpreting its outcome may not be thought upon as distinct activities, in the sense that devising the examination already entails knowing where to search, how to point ostensively, and in what way to judge the results obtained. Spurring the "galled jade" involves knowing how to ride, how to spur, when to do it, as well as being able to predict how fast and in which direction will the horse run.[415] As seen, interpretation entails this set of activities (that are in fact one and the same), which require

[415] Dissent about the use of the whip in horseraces recently led the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) to regulate the number of times jockeys may use it. Let me briefly sum up the discussion. In "A Review of the use of the whip in Horseracing," the BHA imposed that: "a maximum of seven strokes in flat races and eight over jumps may be applied, whereas the whip may only be used five times after the last obstacle or in the final furlong". Severe penalties were to be enforced on those failing to comply with this new regulation. Jockeys threatened to strike. Christophe Soumillon was initially forced to forfeit his winner's percentage after winning the Qipco Champion Stakes at Ascot, for stroking his mount six times in

the final furlong; whereas Richard Hughes gave up his riding license in protest over the regulations.

Under pressure, on October the 21st, the BHA softened whip rules and lifted Soumillon's penalty. The new regulations read as follows: "jockeys can use the whip seven times in flat races and eight times over jumps; the additional restriction of a maximum of five strikes in the closing stages is lifted; jockeys exceeding the limit by one strike will be suspended, exceeding the limit by more than one strike will mean the jockey forfeits share of prize money". At first sight, these adjustments appeared to be a response to the jockeys" main objection regarding the limitations of the use of the whip in the final furlong. As jockeys need to push their horses on the final steps of the race, it makes no sense to regulate the use of the whip at this stage of the race. Although the BHA new policies would solve this problem, the issue is not yet solved, as jump jockeys threaten to keep protesting.

The jockeys' main argument is of a technical nature. What appear to be sensible rules, such as "showing the horse the whip and giving it time to respond before hitting it" are, jockeys claim, of difficult execution during the race. In order to win the race, they need to be able to use the whip, and to do so is more often than not an intuitive act. Taking the time to ponder the number of times one has used the whip before reaching the final furlong may actually lead the runners to lose the competition. Jockeys are arguing that knowing when to strike, how and where to do it (e. g. the BAH regulations claim the whip arm must be above shoulder height) should be professional decisions, based on experience and on intuition. Resolutions such as these are, naturally, what makes jockeys professionals and sometimes winners.

The BAH's attempt to adjust the use of the whip by counting the number of times it is being used, by determining how, where and when to do it, is an attempt to reply to the jockey's technical arguments with a set of procedural advices on their own. It is also, of course, the reason why angry jockeys claim they are being fined on technicalities. Jockeys probably know best what to do in order to win a race, so claiming their skills will not be undermined by this new set of rules will only have the obvious effect of making them angry. The problem here is that an ethical discussion on animal's rights is being debated as if the matter were a technical issue. Animal Aid (and the BAH's report) present evidence that the use of the whip is harmful and that jockeys have abused it in the past (as seen in the first chapter the whip is one of oldest instruments of torture, and it is difficult not to notice the uncanny similarities between rule (D)37 – Whip Specifications – and regulations for torture instruments). When Animal Aid claims the whip should be banned, the argument is of an ethical nature, and it may not be refuted through the use of technical terms (a good illustration of this is the article "A jockey whipped me 'as hard as I'd hit a horse' and it didn't hurt"). The BAH's attempts to rationalize the issue using the jockeys terms is, I suspect, bound to fail. The discussion should not be focused on whether and how does the whip work (it obviously does), or on the amount of pain it may provoke (reports prove horses are wounded), but on whether it is legitimate to strike a horse in order to win a race. "Responsible Regulation: A Review of the Use of the Whip in Horceracing," Bristish Horseracing Authority, September, 2011, accessed 26th October, http://www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/WhipReview.pdf.

"BHA Announces Adjustmens to Whip Rules," British Horseracing Authority, 21 st October, accessed 26st October, http://www.britishhorseracing.com/whip-review/

proper training and having conviction about given entities. This is the reason why this book considers 'mousetrapping' something or someone is more than making an entity visible, giving it importance in the context of a description. Although these procedures do seem to be a mode of obtaining visible reactions, they must be subject to analysis (i.e. to interpretation), for others may disagree with the results and validate them differently. Knowing how to spur the horse does not imply knowing one will win the race, even if that may sometimes happen. In this sense, a skilled interpreter may have accurate expectations regarding the consequences of their activity, but the result of the method is not determined *a priori*.

In addition to this description of 'mousetrapping,' the term also names the practice (pornographic websites are particularly hospitable to this type of device) of launching a series of pop up ads which prevents users from leaving the webpage:

> This practice is known as 'mousetrapping' (or "selling exist traffic" in the industry), and a mousetrapped user who tries to leave a sexually explicit site is automatically forwarded to another such site. (...) Technically, mousetrapping refers to a process enabled by Java script (a scripting language for Internet browsers) in which the closing of one window automatically directs the user to another Web page. The second Web page can do the same, so that attempting to exist the second page spawns a third page, and so on.[416]

Cf. "Anger over new whip rules leads to threat of protest at Towcester race course", *Northampton Chronicle*, 26 October, accessed 26 October, http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/news/local/anger_over_new_whip_rules_leads_to_threat_of_protest_at _towcester_race_course_1_3180688.

[416] Dick Thornburgh, Herbert Lin, National Research Council (U.S), *Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability*

In this technical sense, 'mousetrapping' is a way to lure the viewer of the site, so that they remain trapped and are unable to leave the page. One-time visitors will be bombarded with numerous banners and pay-per-click links (the presumption appears to be that the site will not be able to count with repeat visits from the same user, so it is more profitable to resort to deception). In this technique to entrap visitors, even though technical skill is a requirement and someone's exterior is being revealed, the purpose is not that of discovering something or of testing others. More importantly, the algorithm is neutral towards its users, who are arbitrarily chosen. Once the first step has been given, every user is randomly ensnared, which is the reason why this procedure differs from others previously mentioned. Remember how in the polygraph, for example, specific questions had to be devised in each evaluation: although the same general method was applied, each subject underwent a different inquiry.

Determining the truth in a nutshell is the capacity to find the entity, or the group of entities, that is capable of enlightening us, and of being the starting point for a discussion. These tests do not allow us to obtain irrefutable facts, but they do begin a process that, if properly conducted, will allow for understanding. This is the reason why 'mousetrapping' does not entail pinching someone arbitrarily, or in a random place. As mentioned, part of the interpreter's skill entails their conviction about where and how to make the scratch on the stone or to spur the horse. There are, as observed in this book, numerous differences between the aforementioned procedures and literary criticism, as critics do not generally need to formulate specific tests (even if a number of methods which are based on this assumption may be enunciated).

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to Other Inappropriate Internet Content, National Research Council (U.S.), *Youth, pornography and the Internet* (National Academic Press, 2002).

Conducting an experiment, in the case of literary criticism, implies having an intuition and contrasting it with the text so that a group of conclusions may ensue. Talent is, as seen, perceived in the ability to select a series of quotations in a text, which exemplify the critic's thoughts, afterwards systematized in a justification. In literary criticism, highlighting a passage does not necessarily mean that it was previously hidden, but it does imply that a certain critic saw in it what others failed to acknowledge, that they gave it importance, and knew how to find a justification for it. Highlighting a passage implies making it visible to others, but also letting them understand the implications of such a choice in an argument. Disagreeing with previous analysis and being able to spot mistakes are equally important parts of a critic's professional activity.

It may now be perceived how, in this discussion of the existence of self-explanatory proof, and of entities capable of diminishing our uncertainties and golden sentences, importance is gradually given to a group of technical procedures and particular interpreters. Arnoldians are, therefore, skilled exegetists, able to distinguish significant quotations, emotions, and words, capable of giving a meaning to each person's behaviour and enunciations. From this perspective, good interpreters, in possession of a series of particular talents, are those who are able to highlight meaningful signs, point to them, describe them, and justify the reasons for their claims. These interpreters and their methods tend to proceed by trial and error, gaining the evidence that will help them reach a certain verdict. This is the reason why better interpreters are more able at finding the truth, interpreting a text, understanding other persons' intentions. The skill of Arnoldians does not rely in the use of the method alone (as sometimes they wish us to believe), or solely in the capacity to produce a reaction, but in their intuition about someone, and the capacity to learn with experience. Being an Arnoldian, from this perspective, implies that one has acquired certain knowledge

about themself and other persons; that one's descriptions tend to be more accurate and to improve with time. 'Mousetrapping' is not, consequently, the mere act of scratching the stone, but the ability to do so knowingly.

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(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

Maria Sequeira Mendes é professora auxiliar na Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Lisboa. Estudou na Universidade Católica de Lisboa (L, 2000) e na Universidade de Lisboa (M, 2005; D, 2012). Entre 2005 e 2017 ensinou na Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema, do Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa. É investigadora na Universidade Católica (CECC), colabora com o projecto Global Shakespeare (MIT, Massachussets Institute of Technology) e co-edita o *site* Jogos Florais. Foi Beaufort Visiting Scholar em St John's College, na Universidade de Cambridge (2016). É co-autora de *O Desensino da Arte* (no prelo), publicou artigos na *Law and Literature* e *Law and Humanities*. Neste momento encontra-se a escrever um terceiro livro sobre lisonja e Shakespeare.

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