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“Representation of Women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by William Shakespeare: Subversion of Genre, Witchcraft, and Symbols”

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Abstract

This research analyzes the main characteristics and identity of the female characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, with the purpose of studying the representation of women in the play through the subversion of gender roles, the association between women and witchcraft, and symbolic motifs in the play between women and witchcraft, and the symbolism of the texts.

The work emphasizes Lady Macbeth and the three sisters in relation with the male characters. The study focuses on the androgynous figure of women in the play and the ambivalence and rejection of femininity, which each character develops in similar and different forms. The witchcraft and the three witches as figures associated with evilness and supernatural forces. And all the symbolism present in the play and their association with the characters and the events of the story.

Key words: representation, women, witchcraft, femininity, genre, subversion.

Resumen

Esta investigación analiza las principales características e identidad de los personajes femeninos en «La tragedia de Macbeth», con el propósito de estudiar la representación de la mujer en la obra a través de la subversión de los roles de género, la asociación entre la mujer y la brujería, los motivos simbólicos presentes relacionados con la mujer y la brujería, y el simbolismo en el texto.

El trabajo se centra en Lady Macbeth y las tres hermanas en relación con los personajes masculinos. El estudio se enfoca en la figura andrógina de la mujer en la obra y la ambivalencia y el rechazo de la feminidad que cada personaje desarrolla de formas diferentes. La brujería y las tres brujas se asocian con la maldad y las fuerzas sobrenaturales. Se analiza además todo el simbolismo presente en la obra y su relación con los personajes y los eventos de la historia.

Palabras clave: representación, mujer, brujería, feminidad, género, subversión.

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Dedicatoria

A las grandes mujeres en la historia cuya representación en las formas artísticas y la literatura se mantuvo paralelo a sociedades incapaces de comprenderlas.

Chapter I

Introductory framework

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is widely recognized in literary studies most strongly when speaking about literature and writers. He developed himself as a poet, writer, and actor. At the end of his days, he came back to Stratford-upon-Avon, the place where he was born, to die at the age of 52 (Gray and Clifford, 2018, p. 1). During the 16th and 17th centuries, Shakespeare published a variety of plays and poems. Decades later, most of them became classics of literature, and they are still remembered as a base for tragedy and comedy. According to Gray and Clifford (2018) “Thirty-seven of Shakespeare’s plays survive, as well as 154 sonnets, two epyllia, and a few other short poems. Prominent literary influences on Shakespeare’s work include Roman comedy, Senecan tragedy, Virgil’s Aeneid, and Ovid’s Metamorphoses” (p. 2). The way the author was inspired by his predecessors fit the artistic and literary movement at the time.

Shakespeare and his work were situated in the Renaissance, one of the most important movements in History. This movement “was characterised by a renewed interest in ancient languages, the recovery of antique manuscripts, and a revival of the classical ideals that underpinned the defining intellectual movement of the age” (Hurtado, 2021, p. 3). Shakespeare, with many others great authors and intellectuals at that time, were the representation of taking the classical characteristics of ancient literature and art and using them in their texts, having as a result, innovative works that would stay as classics in the future. Part of the renaissance of the classic art and literature was due to the arrival of foreigners who brought their culture and knowledge. Hurtado (2021) explains that:

The refugees who arrived included grammarians, humanists, poets, writers, printers, lecturers, musicians, astronomers, architects, scribes, philosophers, and more. They brought knowledge and precious manuscripts from the classical period provided humanists with a better understanding of the culture of antiquity. This event transformed the intellectual climate in Italy, giving humanism a significant boost, giving rise to a

greater understanding of the ancient Greek language and lore in the fields of philosophy, culture and Renaissance science (p. 5).

The innovation and creativity presented by the writers and poets during the Renaissance was placed through their works. “Macbeth”, is part of the groups of plays considered as classics. Written in 1606, this play contains a variety of characters and themes. As indicated by Naranjo (2016), Shakespeare’s plays possess different historic and cultural traditions, in “Macbeth” specifically, this is represented by characters such as the witches or Hecate and their connection with religion and God (p. 21). Before the Renaissance, the literature of the Middle Ages used to focus more on the religious field. It was common to have texts and literature related to Christian and Catholic traditions; however, the arrival of the Renaissance brought a new perspective and vision over the world. The center was not the church anymore, by humankind. Every form of art was improved, and literature started to become more complex and deeper than it was before.

The play illustrates very well the complexity of Shakespeare and the Renaissance characteristics by how the characters and the world are constructed. It is a play which contains many spaces, characters, and discourses. The plot of the story connects with the development of the events and progress of the main characters. Shakespeare made a significant literary work regarding the relationships and conflicts between Macbeth, the witches, Lady Macbeth, the king, and other characters. In this way, it is possible to see in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” a complex, complete, and deep work, representation of his era.

1.1. Problem Statement and Research Questions

One of the main dynamics in literature is the way women are represented through the female characters because they have been objects of a certain pattern of portrayals in novels, plays, and other texts. Studies on the representation of women have led to an increase in scholarly literature in the last decades with the creation of new methods and theories of genre and feminist analysis. The studies of women in literature worked and are still working as a pair of lenses through which it is possible to analyze the positions in which the female characters are, how their development works, and many other ideologies and levels that can be seen in the literature text and play.

The analysis of the representation of women has caused specific types of positions regarding certain texts and authors, and in addition, it allows to have a broader and better perspective of the construction of female characters and all the elements that constructs their portrayal. In the case of William Shakespeare, the academia has found very interesting and peculiar analysis of his female characters and their development, and some divided opinions have appeared regarding the particular way he represents them.

The main problem of this research is to identify in a detailed way all the aspects related to the representation of the female characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” in order to understand the vision of this group and the structure of the play in regarding to the portrayal of women. The problem relies on studying if the representation of this group supports the construction of a negative connotation, or if on the other side, the play contains coherently developed characters that break certain pattern in the representation of women in the literature tradition.

The main question this study aims to answer is: How does Shakespeare construct the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”?

1.2. Objectives

1.2.1. *General Objective*

- To analyze Shakespeare's representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” through the subversion of genre, the connection between women and witchcraft, and the symbols.

1.2.2. *Specific Objectives*

- To examine the subversion of genre characteristics presented in the female characters of “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by Shakespeare from a feminist perspective.
- To investigate how women are associated with witchcraft in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by Shakespeare and how it constructs a negative connotation associated with evilness and tragedy.
- To interpret Shakespeare's symbols associated with women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” and their meaning.

1.3. Justification of the Study

William Shakespeare's plays have been the subject of literature analysis for centuries. However, the feminist approach has proposed topics that have created discussions in this field. "The Tragedy of Macbeth", one of his most important and famous plays, presents a variety of female characters who share but differ from each other in regard to their attitudes and characteristics. This has caused discussions and different opinions while analyzing the text from a feminist perspective.

For one side, in deep research, some academics have stated that Lady Macbeth, for example, presents numerous feminist behaviors in the way she rejects her femininity. Shakespeare does this with many characters in his plays, where he often shows a woman who does not act as expected during that time, creating confusion in regard to their genre. The way the author breaks the pattern of representing women in a stereotypical manner has made some analysts believe that there are certain feminist attitudes in his works and characters.

On the contrary, other feminist studies have a clear position regarding this, discussing that although the author places in his characters some attitudes that differ from the femininity stereotype, in the end, the general representation of women is always associated with a negative connotation. This leads the woman to be guilty of a tragedy and fatal destiny, or at least to be part of a destructive ending. At the same time, the play keeps reproducing a system that contains the dominance of patriarchy and the submission of women.

This central problem has led to the investigation in a deep and detailed manner of the representation of women in "Macbeth." This study is essential and relevant, knowing that the representation of a specific group can create empathy or the rejection of this one. In the case of women, it is necessary to consider that historically, they have often been targets of hate and violence; however, it is essential to understand the context in which the text was written and the society in which the author lived in order to have better acknowledgment for the analysis.

This research aims to contribute to the expansion of feminist studies of "The Tragedy of Macbeth". At the same time, it embraces social studies by analyzing the identity and representation of women in literature.

1.4. Antecedents

For the antecedents, this investigation is going to provide an overview of women in literature and a brief historical review of witchcraft. Lastly, this paper is going to examine some of the main investigations and studies about “The Tragedy of Macbeth”.

1.4.1. *Woman in Literature: Archetypes*

Women have been present in literature since its beginnings, and they have represented not only the vision of author, but the perspective of society about them. Some of these representations have stayed in the social imaginary, developing the continuation of the same female stereotypes for decades and ages.

The archetypes of women in literature are repetitive, and they have been object of study by many academics and professionals. Some of the most common ones are the mother, the maid, the *femme fatale*, the witch... and others. Women in literature are almost always associated with one of these two characteristics: femininity or evilness. The former presents weak characters who are dependent on men who are dependent on men, they are often connected with softness. On the other hand, other women have a stretch relation with supernatural powers, evilness, witchcraft, sensuality, and fatality.

Dejniak (2009) mentions some archetypes of Carl Jung “The maiden uses her sexuality to gain power, the mother manipulates through guidance, and the crone utilizes her wisdom” (p. 61) and how they are represented in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by representing this evilness “Ultimately, the archetypal feminine manipulation of the male characters by the witches and Lady Macbeth indicates an unnatural or evil corruption in the natural hierarchy of society” (p. 61). In the case of the play, Shakespeare made a very amazing and complex work in the construction of the female characters, which represents a subversion or mix of the common archetypes in literature.

To understand better the construction of these female archetypes in William’s Shakespeare work, it is fundamental to study deeper how the archetypes changed and progressed during the Middle Ages to the archetypes in Shakespeare’s work.

1.4.1.1. Literature Female Archetypes during the Middle Ages to William Shakespeare

A fundamental antecedent before analyzing the archetypes in Shakespeare work, is the study how women were perceived in the Middle Ages literature. This period of time is crucial because it develop certain perspective of women in literature that in the future passed down to the Renaissance. Of course, the development of those archetypes is going to be different because of the change in society's mentality at that time.

The Middle Ages is known for having the church as the center of their ideologies, culture, and literature. The *humanism* was not important because the perspective at the time relied on humans as creation of God, for instance, God was the center of everything. In literature there were the *exempla*, texts used with didactic purposes as teaching the right christian morals and ethics. This new perspective was constructed by manuscripts of religious nature. Canet (2022) explains that one example of this was *De planctu Ecclesiae* (1330), in which the Franciscan Álvaro Pelayo wrote a series of vicious and evilness of women, using sources from the Bible. This supported the consolidation of the idea of women as an agent of satan (p. 41). This association of evilness and the female image increased because of the religious belief. Ruthanne (2021), explains that they were:

Symbols of the outsider, chaos, and evil, monsters are utilized to warn against subverting the social order. Throughout history, monsters have used as propaganda to define marginalized groups as subhuman. In the Middle Ages, this tactic was used against Jews, Moors, Muslims, and other groups to dehumanize and in some cases sanction violence against these groups. Living in a universe haunted by demons, the people of the Middle Ages often saw these social groups as aligned with the Devil. Women were one social group that became associated with the monstrous and demonic in the Middle Ages (p. 1).

The influence of the church in the society and literature develop that women's image was seeing from a biblical point of view. In this way it is possible that the archetypes developed during the Middle Ages could have a common past. Eve, in the Bible, is the first woman created by God, and the first sinner too. Could this be the beginning of the associating of women and

evilness? According to Özsert (2023) “The depiction of woman in The Bible as a sinful creature and the punishment given by God create the basement of misogynist views” (p. 9), God punished Eve for introducing the sin, in this way:

Eve’s act, then, is not just a mistake that alters the course of her life; it is a sin that alters the course of human history. It does not just result in her banishment from Eden; it closes off the gates of eternal life to all people until Jesus comes to open them again” (Kooseed, 2017, p. 48).

The sin of Eve in the Bible influenced the society’s perspective of women. This vision surrounded by evilness continued developing in literature by creating female characters whose purpose is leading men to their fatal destiny. The Bible was and keep being an important part and influence on literature, however, during the past ages, the relation between religion and cultural and artistic expressions was even deeper, and for instance, literature was very influenced by that religious and social movements and beliefs.

The relation between women and church was not only seen through evilness. The expectations of people were not women to be like Eve, but to have attitudes and behaviors which make them be closer to Holy Mary or any other example of role model from the Bible. This perspective was represented too in literature, where woman started to have certain patterns in regarding of their portrayal.

Lawton (2016) described that they were “Figures of vulnerability, the damsel in distress and the persecuted wife, together with figures of power, the nurturing mother and their dark doubles—wicked queens and devouring mothers—people the diegesis” (p. 3), and that “Generally it is the male experience which is the focus and it is the vulnerability of the woman—her role as “damsel in distress”—that gives him the opportunity to demonstrate his worthiness” (Lawton, 2016, p. 3). It is possible to see that the relation between man and women during the Middle Ages literature was constructed over a perspective of female characters following the role model of christian ethical behaviors and biblical women. In this way, they could be associated with agents of satan or women of God.

The Middle Ages' perspective was the base for the next period of time, in which, during the next centuries the church stopped being the center, but still maintained certain patterns in the representation of women in literature.

The archetypes from the Middle Ages changed with the arrival of the Renaissance. The world was not centered in the church anymore, but in humankind. The new perspectives of society and culture influenced the construction of literature at that time. Elizabethan theatre started to represent certain type of women, that might had similarities with the past, but still important differences. Shanti (2023) states:

During Shakespeare's time (late 16th and early 17th centuries), the roles of women in society were constrained by patriarchal structures. Women were expected to adhere to traditional roles as wives, daughters, and mothers, with limited agency and societal influence. Shakespeare's plays, such as "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Othello," depict a range of female characters, each navigating these societal constraints in unique ways. Some characters challenge the established norms, while others conform to them, providing rich material for analysis (p. 366).

The change in the period of time involves a change in the structure of literature and how it constructs its characters and stories. The rules and norms of Queen Elizabeth I influenced how the theater's companies and authors develop their work. In the case of Shakespeare it caused the creation of an amount of characters with diverse, similar, and particular characteristics between each other.

This set of expectations made possible the creation of tragic figures such as Ophelia and Desdemona, who are victims of male dominance, as well as strong, virtuous women like Lady Macbeth and Portia, who use their power in co-opted ways against these same patriarchal structures (Ghorpade and Samy, 2023, p. 4).

The female characters of the author had the adaptation for the specific context in which the plays were developed. Woman of his complete work went from representing a traditional archetype of submission and innocence, expected from certain moral behaviors. To the

introduction of challenging a dominant characters which placed into discussion the education and role of women into a society that was ruled by a patriarchal structure.

In this perspective, his characters have an extended and diverse types of archetypes, they could go “from the more subsumed like Ophelia and Desdemona to the out-and-out intelligent women such as Lady Macbeth, Portia, and Rosalind, who soar into the heavens and beyond the patriarchal shelf life as defined by their respective times (Ghorpade and Samy, 2023, p. 5). The topics and structure of his plays definitely fit the Elizabethan theater, yet some critics believe his female characters which contain a more reckless behavior might be a direct critic to this period of time and the stricture of society during Queen Elizabeth I.

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, blurs gender lines by acting similar to a man for personal gain. But, like Desdemona, her personality leads to her death. Shakespeare uses Desdemona and Lady Macbeth as important plot devices and to experiment with gender roles. His female characters then become subtle critics on Elizabethan society’s traditions and views of women (Tesch, 2011, p. 1).

Shakespeare used a specific archetype of women that represented a wide difference to what people were used to read and see for a female character. The ambivalence of genre and the denial of womanhood that some characters such as Lady Macbeth have, are a portrayal of a particular type of character which is constructed using a break of traditional patterns of women in literature. “This desire for power is a direct violation of what the Elizabethan audience believes because it involves performing actions that are strictly against the teachings of the church” (Tesch, 2011, p. 21)

In addition, “Lady Macbeth is an uncommonly intelligent woman who uses her intelligence to manipulate her husband. Therefore, she is a warning for the Elizabethan males in the audience that while societal standards for women are changing, they should not sway too far from the teachings of the Middle Ages” (Tesch, 2011, p. 20).

The type of women Shakespeare represented in his plays is a complex character, surrounded by characteristics which make her stand out between the rest of characters. The archetypes the author uses, besides following of course traditional roles from the past, break

other patterns and placed into the table a new discussion over the role of women in society in regarding education and social and political relations.

Even if it is possible to “identified recurring themes, archetypes, and character traits associated with women in Shakespearean plays, such as love, ambition, and the struggle for autonomy” (Shanti, 2023, p. 371), this introduction of a variety of archetypes is part of the extended and complex development and structures of Shakespeare in each one of his plays. In other words, the female archetypes of the author are proof of his standing work which influenced history and culture even from the 17th century until today.

Having and understanding of the female archetypes and the beginning of these, could help to acknowledge how Shakespeare represented women in their plays, especially in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”.

1.4.2. *Witchcraft*

The association of women and witchcraft in literature represents the ideologies and beliefs of the social imaginary in the seventeenth century. The spread of Christianity brought the idea of women as the human form of supernatural and demonic forces. From the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries thousands of women were persecuted and executed and killed because of their association with witchcraft. Kuras (2017) points out that misfortune was often blamed on witchcraft, this led to the punishment of those who were accused of practicing these evil actions, in addition, there were warnings and instructions of how to detect witches and know more about them (pp. 125-126). These whole series of actions were precisely adjudicated against women, and this society’s vision passes to literature too.

Witchcraft was seen as a direct opposition to God and Christianity, which at that time, was something impossible to ignore. By being the enemy of God “witches were the ultimate social “other:” evil, irreligious, animalistic, female, and cruel to the innocent” (MacLean, 2015, p. 164). Although this was the imaginary of them, it is more probably that they were just innocent woman that had knowledge in species and biology. The evil action of practicing witchcraft was also considered a way of murdering. During the 1500-1700 centuries women were accused not only of being witches, but of using the witchcraft to kill their husbands, this

murdering method was mainly used by women and not by men (Parker 2022, p. 17). From this perspective “Witchcraft, then, was by far the most common way that women were believed to have killed in the early modern period” (Parker 2022, p. 17). The connection of witchcraft was connected to women, this built a vision of this genre as, not only the root of sin as studied with Eve before, but the continuation of this evilness in the society.

The image of women as a harmful enemy of God was transferred and represented in literature. The actions of the Christianity and catholic church against them, produced a variety of female archetypes that many author uses in their works. Shakespeare, not being the exception, used witches and female characters in his plays, however, he represented them in a particular manner in his text “Macbeth”. Knowing the historical association of women and witchcraft allows this study to make a better analysis of the play.

1.4.3. Studies about “The Tragedy of Macbeth”

After understanding some historical antecedents related to the main topic of this investigation, it is fundamental to review other studies about the text and topic.

Regarding to national investigations, although women and “The Tragedy of Macbeth” are not very common objects of study in Costa Rica, Montenegro (2018) focused his research on it. In his article *Traditional and Non-traditional Masculine Representations in Macbeth (Shakespeare’s and Kurzel’s)*, he studies the representation and genre in the play. Montenegro focuses on the masculine representation of men and the development of these male characters. The author explores how there is evidence of a subversion in the genre behaviors of men and how Shakespeare breaks the traditional representation of this group. Although Montenegro (2018) embraces very similar genre aspects as the ones on this investigation, he does not focus on women and the feminist perspective.

Continuing with international works, Reyes and Kenny (2020), make a detailed analysis of Lady Macbeth in their work *Shakespeare’s Violent Women: A Feminist Analysis Of Lady Macbeth*. The main purpose of their work is to present evidence of how the character of Lady Macbeth is associated with violence. The authors affirm that genre roles in the play are broken and challenged by the violent actions of the woman. At the same time, they hold the belief that,

even though there is a separation of traditional roles, the patriarchal system is still constructed in the text. The article has Lady Macbeth as the only object of study, letting the other female characters apart of their focus. Reyes and Kenny (2020) use a feminist approach to analyze “The Tragedy of Macbeth” and the characters of Lady Macbeth. In addition, through their article, the authors examine some of the genre roles that society has created around women.

On the other hand, *The Weird ‘Others’: An ‘Alternative’ Understanding of the Witches of Macbeth from Feminist Perspective* by Chakrabarti and Mamun Sarkar (2021) has as main object of study the witches of “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. Their work follows a feminist perspective and approach. For the authors, the witches fit the role of “other” by being placed in an inferior place in comparison to other women and characters in the play. Chakrabarti and Mamun Sarkar investigate the relegation of the witches to margins and the discrimination they suffer. By being represented as evil and rebels, witches are vulnerable and victims of a society and religion that judge them. At the end, these problems affect these women identity and the perception of the world about them. The main goal of the author is to explore a different understanding of the witches through their feminist approach.

In *Lady Macbeth as a Female Archetype of Negative Empathy: An Intermedial Exploration of the Alluring Power of Evil in the Aesthetic Domain*, Biz (2021-2022), makes a deep analysis of the character Lady Macbeth from a psychological approach. The author concentrates on the concept of *empathy* and how a character like Lady Macbeth can produce a negative respond due to her violent and disturbing acts and behaviors. Biz examines the archetypes of Shakespeare through this female character and the cruelty that is around her. In this work, it is also mentioned how this vision of Lady Macbeth has continued over time in all the different adaptations of the play. The study of Biz (2021-2022) focusses on only one character and the psychological understanding behind it.

Cheng (2023), in *Feminist Study of Lady Macbeth*, studies the female character of Lady Macbeth from a feminist perspective. The author makes a deep and detailed analysis on the vision of her as a witch and schemer. There is a comparison of Lady Macbeth with the other three witches, focusing on her evilness, and studying the words and phrases she says that connect

her to this spiritual image. Also, the schemer because of the perspective that Lady Macbeth manipulated Macbeth.

Bad women and “a spirit to resist”: the archetypes of female villainy in Shakespearean drama by Martin (2024), is a review of all the female villains of Shakespeare. The author looks over the evolution of women in Shakespeare’s work, and the connection of them with cruelty. For Martin (2024), the English author follows a pattern in the way he represents females. Most of his characters are women who lead to tragedy. The author of this thesis states that Shakespeare sexualizes and demonizes the characters in his plays, making them be seen as villains in each story. This study examines many works of Shakespeare and different characters including Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Cressida, Desdemona, and others.

Eubanks (2024) in the academic article *Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Macbeth*, examines how the witches, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth present a change in their social roles. Eubanks investigate how Macbeth denies his male’s attitudes and instead embrace stereotyped feminine characteristics. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth acts in what was consider a tough manner for a woman: with authority and violence. In addition, the author explains how the rejection of femininity by Lady Macbeth forms part of this change in the genre roles. The work also mentions the possible influence of Scotland’s history in Shakespeare’s inspiration for his work.

Lastly, Ahmed (2025) in his article *The Eternal Feminine: A Study of Women in Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, explores the concept of *eternal feminine* in Shakespeare’s plays. The author makes an overview of Lady Macbeth, Ophelia, Cleopatra, and Desdemona, to see if they fit this concept or not. Ahmed points out different attitudes and actions in each of these characters and how some of them represent a feminine vision of women, while others break this stereotyped conception of fragility and submission.

1.5. Scopes

The goals to achieve through this investigation are the following ones:

- To provide a detailed and deep analysis of the female characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”;
- to examine the physical and moral portrayal of Shakespeare regards women;
- to understand the vision that 17th century society had about women;
- to investigate the historical connection between women and witchcraft;
- to comprehend the symbols in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” that are associated with women and their connotation.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction to “The Tragedy of Macbeth”

William Shakespeare wrote a variety of plays and works, and most of them became part of the classic literature that we enjoy today. Although the most famous one could be “Romeo and Juliet”, it is not a secret that all of his work shows his talent and abilities as writer. The historical context of Shakespeare also played a big part in what he wrote. Tatipang (2022) explains:

Within the world of Shakespeare, there are generally accepted arrangements. Almost everyone in England is Christian. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the workers, above them the peasants and merchants, then the priests and guards, then up again the knights, landlords, archbishops, and viceroys (Row-Heyveld, 2018). The monarchy reigns at the top of the social order. In England, the monarch is Queen Elizabeth I (who was succeeded by her nephew, James I). The class system in Shakespeare's time may have had arrangements, but they were not static (p. 62).

The world and society in which Shakespeare lived was represented very well in his plays, also in many of them he added some interesting and supernatural characters or events. This study focuses on one of his greatest plays: “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, also known as “Macbeth”. Cheng (2023) explains that:

is one of William Shakespeare’s shorter tragedies, and was most likely composed between 1599 and 1606. During the reign of James VI, who is a sponsor of Shakespeare’s performing troupe, Shakespeare writes the play. Macbeth, more than any other of Shakespeare’s works, may better (p. 1).

“The Tragedy of Macbeth” tell us the story about a Scottish general called Macbeth. He received the prophecy that he will be the king of Scotland by three sister witches. Because of the prophecies and the encouragement that his wife Lady Macbeth gave him, he ends up killing the king and other people to achieve his goal, however this led to a civil problem and war, which

causes him a fatal fate and his death. The play is constructed by many complex relations between the characters and the events of the story, including the development of particular female characters that have an essential role on the plot and destiny of Macbeth.

Macbeth is surrounded by many impressive and amazing characters, context, and story. For many years it has been the object of many studies and investigations, all of this due to the great way in which Shakespeare constructed his play. From analysis of the war, linguistics aspects, and politics and social or cultural studies, the amount of research of this play is part of the evidence of the amazing writing that Shakespeare had:

William Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth was performed for the first time at Hampton Court in 1606, while its first printed version appeared in the First Folio in 1623. Many scholars agree that Shakespeare composed Macbeth to compliment King James after his accession to the English throne (Risicato, 2021, p. 64).

William Shakespeare also was very influenced by the Scotland, Ireland, and England history and events. Many of his plays are settled in those contexts:

Shakespeare's principal source of information for the plot of Macbeth were the Chronicles, written by Raphael Holinshed and published in 1577, which collected the histories of pre and post-conquest England, Scotland and Ireland. Essentially, the Shakespearean tragedy focuses on the effects of the political ambition of Macbeth (p. 64).

Between all the topics that could be analyzed on Shakespeare's play, one of the most important ones that has increasing in the last years is the representation of women. Taking this object of study it is not a coincidence because especially on "The Tragedy of Macbeth" Shakespeare has a very interesting and peculiar way of representing women. The author breaks a pattern that was very common for other writers at that time and is how female characters in his play act and behave. This has caused many academics to become interested on analyzing how are women represented and why the author represented them in that specific way.

If there is something that Macbeth has, is a variety of female characters that are completely interested to study. Each one of them represents a different perspective of the author

and they are all related to different behaviors. While analyzing the female characters on Shakespeare it is possible to see the amazing world and characters that Shakespeare placed with his works. From Lady Macbeth that plays a fundamental role in this story and the actions of his husband Macbeth, to the witches that make the general believed that he could be the next king. Each one of these characters is surrounded by a lot of symbols and a great and particular development.

The reason why “The Tragedy of Macbeth” has caught the attention of many academics is because Shakespeare represents some characters as Lady Macbeth in a way they reject their femininity, which was very strange in comparison to other works of other authors. The representation of women in literature was always focused on reproducing a particular picture of females: good wife, innocent, and passive. The characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, are all the opposite to that perspective.

Lady Macbeth and the sisters are smart and manipulative women, who take a position of dominants instead of men. Lady Macbeth is a strange case, she even rejects her own sexuality in order to have the power and ambition of the crown. In addition, other female characters such as the witches are surrounded by very deep connotations and symbolisms which are great to analyze and require a very detailed analysis:

the ambitious Lady of Macbeth (1606) has become a symbol for tyrannical wives, feminine villains, and – especially since the Women’s Movement and growth of feminist studies in conversation with Shakespeare’s oeuvre – women seeking agency in male dominated spaces, typically through the adoption of traditionally masculine means. Her infamous “unsex me here” soliloquy has become synonymous with feminist criticism in Shakespeare, inspiring countless feminist stage adaptations and perhaps even more academic articles (Martin, 2024, p. 3).

The play’s female characters are very suitable for analysis, each one of them contains rich connotations, symbols, and stories. Lady Macbeth is the main female character and a great one to study, however, all the others are worthy to analyze.

One aspect that makes this play unique in comparison to other works is the variation in the female characters. In many literary works, it is very common to have the same archetype of women in every character, however, Shakespeare wrote each one of the women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” in a way that, even though it is possible to find similarities, they all have a deep, unique, and amazing development and story. Lady Macbeth and the witches may share some similar characteristics in regarding to the break of the women archetype in literature, however, they are all created with a very particular structure and symbolism.

The aim of this study is to analyze the female characters, and in order to do so, is important to clarify some of the main concepts that are related with representation, feminist criticism, and important aspects that surrounds the female characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” such as witchcraft and symbols.

2.2.Overview of “Representation”, Feminist Literary Criticism, and its Application to Shakespeare’s Work

In order to analyze the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, it is important to understand a group of concepts associated with literature analysis. First, the terms of *representation* and *identity* are going to be defined, then, there is going to be an overview of the main aspects of feminist literary criticism, and finally, an explanation of how these concepts are fundamental to apply them in this study of Shakespeare’s work.

2.2.1. Representation and Identity

If a study is going to analyze the representation of a specific group or community, it is completely fundamental to understand what *representation* means and what aspects it embraces. The concept of representation can include some variations depending on which sources are used to define it. A common dictionary gives a main, but very general idea of the term. For example, Cambridge (n.d., definition 3) says it is “the way that someone or something is shown or described”, Merriam-Webster (n.d., definition 2, d) points out to “the action of presenting or describing a person or thing especially in a particular way”, and Oxford Languages (n.d., definition 2) define it as “the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature”. In all those three definitions it is possible to see repeated

words or phrases as *described, someone or a particular way*. They might give a base of what representation is, however, while analyzing specific groups or literature, the term is connected not only with descriptions, but with cultural associations, and historical contexts. Thus, it is important to know how *representation* is described by sociocultural and literary theories in literature.

According to Stuart Hall (2010), “Representación significa usar el lenguaje para decir algo con sentido sobre el mundo, o para representarlo de manera significativa a otras personas” (p. 447). This means that representing someone or something is a process related to subjectiveness. At first, this definition could be seen similar to the other ones from the dictionary, however, there are a few things that are important to point out. First of all, the representation that Hall describes the action of saying or representing something to someone. In this way, we have the one who represents and the one who is represented, but there is another fundamental aspect of this concept: the language:

According to Hall (2010, p. 448), representation appears right there, and it can be defined as the production of *sense*, when the concepts and images that we have in our minds go to the language. The connection between concepts and language is what we use to refer to the external world. When we use the language to describe people, places, and objects, we represent them. We are representing our reality. It is possible to represent the real world or fictional worlds. In this case representation is a process that is done by using the language, for example by writing something about someone or a certain situation, we are representing them with our own words and our own perspective.

The language can be seen as the bridge to represent someone or something, but how does this work and how is this related to literature? Producing sense through the language could go from talking (orally) to writing (text), in the case of literature is the second one. The action of representing is not done in a direct way, so when an author writes a text (novel, poetry, tales...) is using the language (written words) to describe or represent many things. The writers portrayal their society, animals, people, objects... to the readers. Someone is representing something through the language.

It is important to mention that the language is very subjective, and it is not neutral. Every time someone writes or tells something about someone is doing it from their own perspective and their own position. That position could be related to many stereotypes or different representations that people have about others.

Another important aspect that is worth mentioning is identity. Many academics such as Hall, affirm that while representing people, the authors are placing their vision and perception because they are using the language to represent their reality. For example, authors like Shakespeare represented part of their society and vision of certain people in their works. That leads us to *identity* because when someone placed their perception of another one, they are constructing an image of that person: an identity.

For Hall (2010), the thought or the position which claims that the identity is external and does not have any relation with representation is invalid. The identity is inside the speech and language. When we refer to someone or something we talk and express ourselves using our knowledge about the *other*. We create the identity of the *other person*, but of course, their identity is subjective because we are talking from our position (p. 345). In this way representing is creating an identity for the other person, that identity or representation is made from our own perspective and her own position, and it could contain cultural associations that we have of certain groups.

Of course this identity is changing and is not completely accurate in reality because every person has a different vision of the other ones. Some people might think certain groups or communities are beautiful, while others might think they are evil or dangerous. That is why representation is always subjective, and while representing, the authors are placing their vision of the world, a vision that might be constructed by stereotypes, beliefs, racism, and many other ideologies. This is why representation is crucial because through this process there is a possibility to notice the perception that someone has about the other person whether it is negative or positive.

All of that leads us to one truth: representation is never going to be objective. For better understanding, I am going to use an example that a professor once told me. We can imagine this

process of representing as a pair of lenses. The lenses are used to see the reality: a house for example, but those lenses could be dirty or broken, and the way we are observing the house is not accurate of how the house really is. The pair of lenses are the language that uses stereotypes and subjective ideologies which build the image we have about the house (people).

Representation in this case is a subjective process that we use and see depending on our own context and perspectives that we have about other people or communities.

When analyzing literature is important to recognize how the authors have different lenses that change how they see women, men, society, politics, socioeconomically elements, others, and more that judge them, the main purpose is trying to discover what lead them to have this perspective and vision, and if it could be related to the society in which they lived in during that time. This last statement is important because we need to take into consideration that ages and decades are different and they change the same way society and culture do it. Literature at the end of the day is representation of society itself. If that society had certain perspective of women, literature is going to represent them in the same way. For this reason it is important to know in which context the author was writing the work.

Is not any secret that literature represents a reality, and this reality includes groups such as women. This is part of the importance of this analysis, and the connection of women with the representation.

2.2.2. Physical and Moral Representation/Portrayal.

Once it is known what representation means, it is fundamental to be aware of two ways in which it can be studied. The representation of characters in a novel or text can be shown through a physical description or moral description. To define these terms I am going to use the help of some dictionaries, not the common ones, but specialized literature dictionaries.

I consider important to first of all state that the concept of portrayal comes originally from painting. In the past, artists used paintings to make portrayals of people, however, this concept today is used as a synonym of representation, that, as it was explained at the beginning

of the theoretical framework, it implies descriptions and sense of certain groups in literature in relation with their cultural and social context.

Estébanez (2016) defined portrayal as the description of someone else, this could be physical characteristics or psychological and moral ones. At the same time he explains that during the 16th and 17th centuries this concept was related with painting specifically European painting with artists such as Rafael Leonardo, Velázquez, etc. It was during the 17th centuries when the term starts to be used in literature especially with fiction literature and in the future with the realistic literature of the 19th century. At the beginning the portrayal of a character who in literature was the description of the physical life aspect of a character but making a crucial connection with the personality and moral elements (p. 1151).

This dichotomy between the body and the moral descriptions became important because the physical characteristics and aspect that a character could have, become a sign to see other elements such as ethnicity and social status (Estébanez, 2016, p. 1152).

At this point it is important to make a relation between this portrayal and the representation because although sometimes they could be used as synonyms portrayal is part of representation, and not the whole process. As it was explained before, the physical or moral characteristics of someone come from the perception that the one who represents them has about them.

For this reason it is fundamental to pay attention not only to the physical and moral description in a separate way, but to the association between these two descriptions. Now that it is known that they are very related, the constructions of the characters and identities of communities and people, I consider essential to dig a little bit more into what aspects of the physical and moral descriptions are important to this analysis.

When we are talking about physical descriptions, we can also refer to this term as *prosopography*. Some elements that are included in this concept could be the description of parts of the body such as nose, height, weight, face features, and other, however there are more elements to consider. Estébanez (2016), puts an emphasis on the fact that external aspects of a character also include his physical context which can be related with his house and personal

objects which at the end is part of what construct or built the identity of the character and who they are (p. 1152).

In relation with the *prosopography*, Estébanez (2016) points out a decisive detail when he explains that the physical description depends on the esthetic canon that is accepted during a specific cultural context (p. 1180). This is fundamental because the esthetic canon of beauty is associated with society and all the values and thoughts and mentality that they have. Of course all of this means beauty perception depends on the ideologies of society. For instance, the perception and beauty and the acceptance of a group could vary and change through the years and decades.

How is this related to the representation of women? Well this canon has helped to build the superiority of certain groups above others. It is very common that in literature the physical description of subaltern groups is seen as grotesque. On the other hand, in the case of women, their physical appearance could be seen as beautiful, but it could turn out to construct a submissive vision of them or an evil vision of them, as it is explained with the classic and ambivalent sexism in the next part.

It is very common that in literature the physical appearance of women is very connected with their moral status. By the way women are described physically, it is easier to notice the stereotypes or perspectives that people have about them too. Physical appearance is also a description of ideologies or social aspects. For example, a woman who belongs to a lower class is usually going to wear certain type of clothes. On the opposite, a female character who is from a higher class could be described as clean and with good clothing.

On the other hand, the moral aspect is also known as *etopeia*. In this case, it embraces the personality of a character, but at the same time his temperament his psychological and moral characteristic, his habits and his behaviors. In addition, in a more global aspect, this system of values taste and everything that somehow helps to build coherence to the internal personality of the character (Estébanez, 2016, p. 1152). This could also include any source of flashback to the past of the character or anything that helps to build his moral description.

Estébanez (2016) explains that Etopeia comes from the Greek concept *ethopoia*, *ethos* (habit) and *poieo* (to do), in the past it was used to refer to the description of habits, temperament, and values of people. The concept also includes behaviors and attitudes from people. Something important that Estébanez explains is its connection with time and space (p. 450). The moral portrayal is fundamental because it shows the perspective that other characters or the author have in regarding certain groups.

Lastly, I consider fundamental to mention that both physical and moral portrayal, or representation, should be analyzed together. It is very common that both of them appear in a text. Usually when a character is described they give us both physical and the moral one. It is important to take into consideration the two of them and not separate them because they help to build a construction of this image of groups, in this case women.

In the specific case of women in literature is important to notice that they usually have certain physical descriptions or moral ones. As it was explained in the introduction, most women are associated with an image of holiness and biblical good behavior, or in an opposite way, as traitors in a very similar way than Eve. This whole representation is analyzed through both physical and moral perspectives. In the case of this study it is fundamental to take both of them into account vanilla ice the female characters that are highly complex ones.

Physical description could lead us to know more about how the characters are inside and what was the author's perspective was about them. In addition, the process of physical and moral analysis and representation is a sign of how that characters behave and the context they are surrounded by. With this I mean there is a social status and other aspects.

The physical and moral portrayal are completely fundamental to start this analysis of the representation of women in "The Tragedy of Macbeth".

2.2.3. *Feminist Literary Criticism*

In order to make an approach to feminist literary criticism, it is fundamental to study the history of feminist approach, the concept and elements which it study, and the intersectionality.

2.2.3.1. History of the Feminist Literary Criticism

The feminist literary criticism is a term introduced in the last decades to refer to all of the literature studies from a specific and innovative position where it is questioned the roles, developments, and the women figure in literature. This movement has changed throughout the years and has reinvented itself, for this is decisive to start studying the beginnings of it. Although in the Middle Ages and the past were women who were already having certain opinions regarding the women's role in society, this research focuses on specific events and people which worked as an example of the development of feminist literary criticism.

During the Renaissance, some women writers began to publish and circulate their works in England, or better said to let people know their work. Wilcox (2007) stated the female writers started to publish their texts, which included plays, narratives, poems, letters... In addition, the social and political context changed in England and the arrival of two queens influenced society. Mary Tudor who was queen in 1553, and queen Elizabeth I (p. 27). In this way "Elizabeth's female subjects began to publish defences of their own sex, even though they often did so under the protection of a pseudonym. 'Jane Anger', for example, proclaimed the grace, wisdom and wit of women in 1589" (Wilcox, 2007, p. 27).

A common topic of those women literature was a critique of certain behaviors from society. Some of them wrote about their position as women, and others created new perspectives from the characters and their literature. Women such as Esther Sowernam who wrote about women's dignity, Anne Finch whose poems were about women's positions, or others like Mary Wroth who were ridiculed and judge for their works (Wilcox, 2007, pp. 28-31). The work of these writers could be seen as a proto feminist criticism.

They developed literary spaces in which other women might read about their positions as females. Wilcox stated that "Implicit in the feminist political and social debates about women's strengths and rights, therefore, were assumptions about modes of speaking and writing— in other words, issues at the heart of feminist literary criticism" (2007, p. 33). In this way, although the concept of feminist literary criticism was not introduced in this era, it is possible to see women

who reinvented patterns in literature and added a new subjective perspective on the construction of texts:

Mary Wroth, for example, conscious of the constricting passivity and misrepresentation of the female object addressed by the typical sonnet sequence, turned the tables and wrote her own sonnets from the woman's perspective. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621) gives voice and interiority to the female subject, and represents the male as the cruel and inconstant partner (Wilcox, 2007, p. 34).

In this way the feminist literary criticism was beginning to appear, maybe not in its total representation, but with small steps from women in society that used their voices to write about their position as females. In the later decades and centuries many important women in history developed deeper the feminist perspective such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. According to Goldman (2007) "Woolf's room metaphor not only signifies the declaration of political and cultural space for women, private and public, but the intrusion of women into spaces previously considered the spheres of men" (p. 71). At that moment the society was under diverse social and political changes which influenced women to peak out.

In Woolf's era there were numerous literary magazines with a feminist slant, and feminist magazines with a literary slant, where one might chart the interpenetration of feminist and literary politics... There are, of course, many women writers among her contemporaries whom we may regard as feminist. Some wrote manifestos on (feminist/socialist/pacifist) politics (Alexandra Kollontai, Emma Goldman, Mina Loy, Storm Jameson, Rebecca West, Christina Stead) or on literary aesthetics (Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, May Sinclair, Marianne Moore), but Woolf stands out for her sustained attempts to combine both (Goldman, 2007, p. 67)

The feminist criticism was introduced even more when figures as Simone de Beauvoir not only wrote about women perspectives, but created theoretical material in regarding women's position in society. She proposed the identification of patterns in patriarchy, and included female archetypes and myths to refer about women's nature "myths are characterised as inevitably indefinable and contradictory by nature. Woman is both Mary and Eve, man's salvation and his

downfall: the purpose of myth is to represent woman according to patriarchy's needs" (Fallaize, 2007, p. 90)

The theorization of women's position and role in society opened an space for new perspectives in regarding to general and political topics related to women. Feminist criticism increased in many different ways after that. Over the next centuries other groups and communities of feminism and women would start to speak out and fight for a voice regarding to the representation of each one of them in literature. Black, indigenous, Latin American, and many other women opened a new path for their own theories and for the creation of a more extended feminist literary criticism. In this way it is possible to see that the creation of this criticism in literature was not fast but a sequence of different women in different societies, who in a long process of centuries stood out for the rights.

Once it was possible to see a brief perspective of how feminist literary criticism started and developed through the centuries, it is important to understand better the concept and how it is going to be used in this research.

2.2.3.2. What is Feminist Literary Criticism

To explain how feminist literary works and what aspects it takes into consideration, we need to start clarifying the concept. Feminist criticism embraces many perspectives and theories of analysis with the goal of studying the discriminated position of women in society.

Golubov (2012) explains that one of the main purposes of feminist criticism is to identify all the ways in which the speech and language help to the development of discrimination towards women. In this context the language (oral and written) carries a lot of signs and meanings that placed men in a higher position than women. At the same time, classifies the world names experience (p. 25).

Feminist theories and criticism follow the line in which there is no separation between texts and the social and cultural context in which the author and literature is develop, and those aspects always influence and have a position in the analysis. From a feminist perspective this plays a big role to explain the portrayal of many writers about certain groups and communities.

This approach cares about the literature field, but also about the personal lives of women and female writers:

Women writers were either suppressed or they don't get their due importance and recognition in the history of literature and literary criticism. The western literary theory and criticism was dominated by white, male theorists from the very beginning. Feminist criticism tries to subvert this male domination and patriarchal culture and theories regarding literary creation and criticism. It tries to create a suitable/ proper atmosphere for women writers and theorists (Mhamane, 2021, p. 112).

The feminist criticism includes many perspectives, however, some academics have divided it into two main categories. On the first side, we have *feminist critique*. This position is related with women as readers, and cares about ideologies that are portrayed through male writers and their texts, which include the representation and image of women from the point of view of men (Mhamane, 2021, p. 114). The object of study is the women in literature, and through it, it is possible to see the society's vision about them.

On the other hand, there is the *gynocriticism*, which focuses on women as writers and authors. This second line of the feminist criticism is not going to be used in this study, however, it is important to know the concept that forms part of this feminist approach.

According to Moreno-Lago (2021), the goal is revealing or answering some statements such as the amount of women in history have participated in the writing or co-writing of a text, but had to hide it using masculine names. In addition, the processes of censorship which include the editorials (p. 242).

This study is going to focus on the first perspective. First, because the author of "The Tragedy of Macbeth", William Shakespeare is not a woman. Second, the object of this study is representation of women in literature. Although the identity of Shakespeare as writer has started some discussion, the idea of him as the author we know today has been accepted. In this way, his investigation studies the female character on the play, and not related female writers and author during that century or near.

With a base of how the feminist criticism work, it is time to pass to what aspects does it consider. In the first part of the theoretical framework, the physical and moral portrayal was explained, which is going to be the first step of our analysis. However, I consider it fundamental to specify more the elements of the analysis.

It is important to clarify that of course feminist criticism comes from the feminist, so in order to see how to study women from this approach, it is necessary to know about this and other related terms.

The feminism and feminist thought could be explained as series of knowledge and political and critic positions which goal is to understand, analyze, and change the cultural genre order. In this way, the genre category in feminism explains how the system works. This system is the one who placed women in subordinated position in comparison to men, special in areas such as politics and socioeconomical fields (Chaparro, 2021, p. 4-5).

This movement comes because of the sexism, which is the “unequal treatment of individuals based on their sex” (Lorenzi-Cioldi and Kulich, 2015, p. 2). The sexism could be classic, also known as traditional or hostile, or ambivalent, benevolent:

hostile sexism (HS), a combative ideology that expresses antipathy toward women who are viewed as seeking to control men, coincides with benevolent sexism (BS), a seemingly favorable, chivalrous ideology that offers protection and admiration to women who are viewed as supportive (Bareket and Fiske, 2023, p. 638).

The main difference between these two categories is the perception of women. In the classic one women are seen as inferior, evil, and weak. This type of sexism includes three main components: the paternalist, which justify how men are superior to women; the differentiation of genre, explains that due to the inferiority of women, they cannot be in charge of social and economic roles; and the heterosexual hostility, that place women as sexually dangerous, meaning they manipulate men through sex (Ramos y Luzón, 2009, p. 13).

The ambivalent is more subtle and difficult to notice sometimes, and contains these main elements: first, the protective paternalism, which have the idea and belief that a man should take

care and protect women in the way a father must protect and take care of their family, children and wife; second, the complementary genre differentiation, that focus on positive characteristic of women that are made to complement men; and third, the heterosexual intimacy, that comes from the idea that a man is incomplete without a women (Ramos y Luzón, 2009, p. 14).

And with this comes the most important question: how is the sexism manifested in the language, thus, in literature? It can follow the same representations and elements of the classic or ambivalent sexism. The idea of female characters as evil and inferior, or necessary for men. Literature has a whole variety of women, some of them are describe as good and some other are all the opposite. It is possible to look for these characteristics in a text to find how they represent certain group, in this case women.

To analyze this in a text, through the language, it is essential to pay attention to linguistics details too, such as pronouns and adjectives. These words can help to describe the characters, and of course, to manifest discrimination towards them. Making an analysis of all the linguistics aspects is too extensive, however, it is possible to focus on the elements that are helpful for the study. These phrases or words, at first, could be seen as innocent, however, there are many studies that have confirmed how language in this context supports this idea of inferiority.

Goluvob (2012) explains that another way in which sexism could be noticed is through the linguistics, specially the semantic level. In this way, there are terms or words that when they are used in a women, have a different connotation than when a man uses them. For example, words in Spanish such as *zorro/zorra* have different meaning depending on which genre we are referring to. The semantic analysis tells us that the language has a pejorative and discrimination use of certain vocabulary when talking about women (p. 26).

The idea and main goal of this research is to analyze and study in a very deep level all the language and vocabulary, and for instance the connotation, in which women characters are represented in the play. The analysis of this language has deep connection with the portrayal and identity that was explained before. The physical and moral portrayal of women this part of how they are represented in the play. It is important to notice if they continue with certain stereotypes or if there is a change in the pattern of traditional representation of women in literature.

As it was mentioned on the representation, the language is the connector between the sexism and our study. In this way, the analysis remains on words, phrases, and descriptions of female characters in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. In addition, there is an essential necessity of embracing the more possible elements and details, which introduced us to a new concept: *intersectionality*.

There are plenty of studies of Shakespeare’s work that are analyzed from feminist perspective, however, most of them focus on specific and detailed aspects, sometimes studying them in separate ways from each other can caused issues to the analysis. For this reason is important to have an extended perspective of analysis, which leads to the concept of *intersectionality*.

2.2.3.3. Intersectionality

It is fundamental for a feminist study to embrace this concept with the purpose of having a deeper and more complex point of view for the study of women in literature. Intersectionality can be understood as:

The concept of intersectionality focuses on the interlocked effects of (analytically) different dimensions of power and oppression in everyday life (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991). Since its origin, it has been developed as a critical tool to shed light on the marginalization of minority women’s voices, both in the broader society and the feminist movements (L’epinard, 2014a, 2014b). Intersectional feminist movements aim to de-marginalize the voices of minority women and, at the same time, articulate different forms of inequality in political claims able to create solidarity (Giorgi, 2020, p. 2).

The intersectionality, when analyzing women, takes into consideration all the possible factors and elements, cultural or from context, that might affect them. For example, if the analysis focus on female characters, it is important to see the social status, ethnicity, and other elements that surrounds them. This is fundamental because the sexism used in women could vary depending on their positions.

Intersectionality is fundamental in every work that analyzes women because it helps to have a bigger view of the characters and all the context that surrounds them. At the same time, it includes all the women in the text, without making any sort of rejection to certain groups because of social status or ethnicity. For this reason, intersectionality is going to be part of the base to analyze women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”.

The aim of this study is to analyze aspects that feminist criticism considers important in the analysis of “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. Some of this include the physical and moral portrayal that was explained before, and elements such as phrases, thoughts, and actions of the female characters. The feminist criticism is essential and necessary to develop this analysis. It is understood that the tradition has represented women in certain ways through the years and through literature. For this reason it is essential to analyze very deep how William Shakespeare created his female characters and how they are developed through this story, considered the role female characters have and how important they are for the story and the development of the events. All of this using the feminist perspective and all the tools that the theory allowed us to use.

2.2.4. Application to Shakespeare's Work

The peculiar way in which Shakespeare represents women in his plays has caused a variety of discussions in the feminist criticism and academic critics. I already included part of this problematic in the problem statement, however, it is necessary to review it in order to know how the representation is analyzed in this study.

When we make a research on Shakespeare's work and critics regarding the feminist field, we might find some interesting but confusing positions and points of view. Rana (2014) says that “His portrayal of women as both empowered and oppressed has offered a rich source of reflection and reclamation for feminist authors and critics” (p. 97). In this way Shakespeare's work has found different analysis from the critics. Some people see a very deep and complex construction of characters and their relations, while others state that Shakespeare's works are just a continuation of a stereotyped picture or representation of women in society. This variety of

analysis could lead to the question: was the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” feminist?

If there is something that Shakespeare has caused today is the confusion regarding his female characters. “While some critics argue that Shakespeare's portrayal of women is limited by the constraints of his era, others contend that his female characters are among the most compelling and memorable in all of literature” (Khan, p. 146). The author definitely make history by representing women challenging the traditional roles, and there are many critics who praised that side “Shakespeare presents women who defy traditional gender roles and stereotypes, portraying them as multifaceted individuals with agency, intelligence, and emotional depth” (Khan, 2024, p. 146). The main example of this is Lady Macbeth who:

challenges traditional gender roles by taking on a more active and dominant role in the relationship, urging Macbeth to "look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under 't" (Act 1, Scene 5). Lady Macbeth's ambition and desire for power ultimately lead to her descent into madness, as she is consumed by guilt and haunted by the crimes she and her husband have committed. Her tragic end serves as a cautionary tale about the corrupting influence of power and ambition (Khan, 2024, p. 147).

However, others claim that he still projects the same roles, but in a different way. To reach a conclusion in this investigation it is important to know how to apply the theory to the text. To analyze the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” is fundamental to use the theory explained. In the case of this study the main goal is to analyze in a very deep and complex way all the resources that the author uses in the representation of women. The focus is on their identity, their portrayal, their characteristics and many other elements that are the base of the construction for their identity.

All of the theories of representation and the methods of feminist criticism are applied in this investigation with the goal of concluding how Shakespeare represents women in “Macbeth”. The analysis includes the examination of the physical and moral portrayal of the female characters, and all the elements associated to them such as witchcraft and symbols. All of this to discover the vision and perception that the author had about them.

2.2.5. *Witchcraft and Symbols*

I already develop some general antecedents of witchcraft, however, it is necessary to make a deeper research and explanation of the main concepts in order to have the basic knowledge required to develop the second and third objective of this investigation. The first element that is fundamental to let clear is the understanding of *witchcraft*.

At their common core, witchcraft beliefs represent the idea that some individuals ('witches', or sometimes traditional religious practitioners) inflict harm through supernatural means (Gershman, 2016). They are used to explain misfortune, illness, injury and death. Motivated by envy, spite and aggression, witches commit harmful acts that threaten communities (Peacey et al, 2024, p. 1-2).

This definition already gives us the meaning of the action, who practice it, and with what purpose, but let's explain each one of these better. The culture related to witchcraft goes back to centuries ago, and it has been so strong that has passed to today's cultures, or maybe it was never foreign, considering that many of the elements of witchcraft comes from African traditions.

The ones who "practiced" witchcraft and those supernatural actions were mainly women, or at least they were adjudicated all the blame. The problem with this is not the action itself, but the association with evilness, dangerousness, and the devil. If witchcraft would not have that opposition with God and Christianity, it would not be a problem the practice of it. However, especially during the past centuries, being a witch meant being harmful to the other people. That ended up causing more difficulties to women by making them the target for those actions:

Witchcraft was therefore a female issue, with most of the suspects being women who somehow did not fit the norms of society, either physically or in their personality. Indeed, evidence shows that women were more likely to be prosecuted when displaying a disruptive behaviour, as those who begged, quarrelled with the neighbours or conducted a "lewd and naughty kind of life" were more exposed to village gossip and, as a consequence, predominated among the suspects (Risicato, 2021, p. 20).

Literature represents society, ideologies, and a specific vision of the world at certain period, and the perspective of women as witches was not an exception. The connection between these two parts crossed the real world and causes thousands of texts that spread the idea of women as witches with evil purposes. It became very common to see this witches on literature, reinforcing the stereotypes over women.

If we pay attention to witches on literature and culture, it is possible to notice their association with specific objects, animals, and elements. During last centuries, these were seen as evidence that a women used to practice witchcraft, Risicato (2021) explains that a:

common element of the English trials was the belief in the witch's possession of an animal familiar as a further proof of her association with the devil. Indeed, evidence suggests that witches were believed to possess an animal, which could be a dog or a cat, sometimes even an insect, a toad or a rat, that was thought to be a demon in disguise (p. 23).

Those components were not omitted in the representation of witches in literature, and they became what we call symbols. From colors, animals, and objects to ways of talking and dressing. The witchcraft in literature is completely surrounded by these symbols, and they all have meanings. To analyze them, it is important to first of all, know what a symbol is.

According to the specialized literary dictionary of Estébanez (2016), a symbol refers to a sign that suggests another reality represented by it (p. 1214), in addition, the symbol is very common in religious and mythic expressions (p. 1215). In this way, symbols are used to associated two elements, in the case of women and literature, the symbols reinforce the connection between women and witchcraft and evilness.

Symbols represent and portrayal different meanings that might be hidden or difficult to notice at first. Marabyan (2025) gives a closer perspective of symbols in relation to theories:

According to Roland Barthes all signs, including symbols, consist of a signifier (the form of the sign) and a signified (the concept it represents) [Barthes]. This dual nature highlights that symbols are more than just objects or words, as they hold intricate

meanings that need to be deciphered... In literature, symbols function in a similar manner, conveying underlying cultural narratives that go beyond the literal interpretation (p. 196-197).

There is also a cultural perspective there, knowing that symbols are part of culture, thus, they might be related to society's ideologies. Marabyan (2025) explains this other theory through the explanation of Victor Turner statements:

Turner's study on ritual symbolism among the Ndembu brought attention to how symbols are not only theoretical, but are based on actual social and cultural truths [Turner]. His concept of "communitas" pertains to the collective emotional response generated by mutual symbols among a group, a concept that can also be relevant in the context of literature. Symbols in literature frequently connect with readers on an individual and societal level evoking a feeling of shared comprehension or emotional reaction.

These definitions of symbols and how they work are fundamental while analyzing witchcraft and women. The reality is that the association between them was placed in literature because of the society's perspective and vision of witches. The literature just represents the cultural knowledge and thoughts that people had on women at that time.

As a conclusion for this chapter, it is fundamental to state that all the concepts explained are part of the base for this study. From the representation, portrayal, the feminist and symbolic perspectives, they are all part of the objective of this research which is to make a deep analysis of how the identity and representation of women is constructed in the play. The identity of the female characters represents a series of ideologies and perspectives about women. The main goal of this study is to make a deep and complex analysis of each one of the characters with the purpose of investigating if they are portrayed in a positive or negative way. It is not the purpose of this research to judge or to sentence the author, understanding that the decades and ages change and so the perspective of society about certain groups. The goal is to analyze those complex characters as part of a very particular and amazing literature that Shakespeare wrote.

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework is fundamental in an investigation. It allows this study to specify and explain the main structure of the work, and provide details of the steps to follow in order to make the analysis in an accurate order. This chapter works as the base for the research and creation of the topic that is developed in the next chapter. A good methodology is important for the investigation, some of the most important aspects of it are:

First, the methodological framework works as the structural system for research. In this way, it is a skeleton that tells how the investigation is done and what aspects it takes into consideration. This leads to the guide step by step of the actions to follow in order to achieve the goal, which is the correct elaboration of the analysis. The steps to follow work as a guide for the analyst too. Through a well-elaborated framework, it is possible to correctly use the techniques and approaches that are most necessary and recommended for this type of research. The structure of the methodological framework allowed the development of the chapters, and it worked as a guide for them.

This framework also provides the approaches, techniques, data, methodology, design, and many other aspects used in the study. This is fundamental because it helps the investigation to maintain the order and be understandable. This leads to have better efficiency in the research and the development of the topics. At the same time, this chapter helps to connect the main topic and how the examination of the representation of women is done.

Due to the nature of this investigation is a literature analysis, the methodological framework does not include interviews, data collection, or samples. Instead, this research focuses and is going to develop the next elements: the research approach, which is qualitative and a feminist method; the research design, that is descriptive and experimental; and finally, the data collection procedure.

The techniques and methods explain in this chapter are connected with the representation of women, and their main goal is to provide a good and well-structure investigation that lead us closer to see the identity of the women represented in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”.

3.1. Research Approach

3.1.1. Qualitative

This investigation uses a qualitative approach to develop the analysis of the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. The qualitative approach is one of the three main approaches that are used in academic investigations. But what is the qualitative approach?

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) includes the interpretation, identification, and examination of patterns and themes in textual data and determines how these themes and patterns help understand an issue or phenomenon in a deeper way for answering the research questions at hand. Qualitative analysis emphasises ‘sense-making’ or understanding a phenomenon rather than predicting or explaining (Islam and Aldaihani, 2022, p. 6).

In addition, this approach differs from the quantitative. García (2023) refers to the qualitative method as a reflection focus on the humanistic and social phenomenon, it also tries to comprehend concepts, opinions, and experiences (p. 198).

Its purpose and techniques are different, according to Taherdoost (2022) this method:

aim to address societies’ scientific and practical issues and involve naturalistic and interpretative approaches to different subject matters. These methods utilize various empirical materials such as case studies, life experiences, and stories that show the routines and problems that individuals are struggling with in their lives through focusing on their in-depth meaning and motivations which cannot be defined by numbers (p. 54).

The nature of this methodology might contrast with the quantitative one, which focuses more on numbers and data. The qualitative, on the other hand, provides an analysis made by

observation and experiences. The searching for information is not numerical, but closer to humanistic techniques that support the analysis to be complete and accurate.

This method is one of the most important elements is the interpretation and examination of the information. One of the first steps for this research is to identify the sources, documents, and sites that are used to develop the topic. In the case of object of study for this investigation, the sources are mainly academic papers and studies that provide important, helpful, and structured information of the representation of women, “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, Shakespeare, or any other element associated with the main objective.

Methods of collecting data in this approach can be from on-site observations and interviews to historical reviews of tapes and records. Literature reviews can be also a good contribution in addition to the other data collection methods. Researchers use a set of standard formats including three coding processes (open, axial, and selective coding), and then develop their theories (Taherdoost, 2022, p. 56).

In this research the method does not relate in interviews or a specific data, but on the analysis of information already written about Shakespeare and his work and of course the new information provided by this study and the analysis of this investigation about how women are represented in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. Once the necessary information is gathered and the structure is set, it is time to interpret and analyze. In this case, the analysis relies on the women and how Shakespeare represents them in his play, which leads to the using of the feminist method.

3.1.2. Feminist Method

The feminist method as studied in the theory embraces a lot of elements and aspects to analyze regarding the female characters. This method aims to know how women are represented in comparison with other genres and classes. Feminist method cares about details such as descriptions (they can be moral, a related with personality, attitudes, physical descriptions, related to clothes or body parts, and others), the context of the author and play and if there is any aspect that might influence the way the author represents women, cultural and social aspects that surround the female characters such as the association with witchcraft, submission, or evilness.

This method is fundamental taking into consideration that the representation and image of women have changed a lot throughout the history and of course this has affected literature too. The representation of women is related with the identity that certain society, community, or people have about them.

In order to analyze that identity and representation the feminist method is going to provide different and intersectional tools to analyze how in the play and through the language women are described physically and morally. Descriptions have and this specific connotation and perspective about the specific female characters. Through this method it is also possible to see and appreciate the development of the author and the creation of the characters and their complexity.

The main goal of this method is trying to discover the vision and perspective that William Shakespeare and that society at that time had about women. The purpose of this is to know if this image of them was positive or negative. This study does not want to take a position to condemn the author and that specific context, but to understand the possible reasons of they have this perception of women and how it is represented in the play. Following this position, the main goal is to analyze the descriptions and representation of the identity of women and see if they are connected or associated with negative or positive connotations. Part of this is to appreciate the construction of the characters that William Shakespeare did too.

This method is the base and completely fundamental to this research especially because the main object of this study is women and how they are represented which includes to follow the feminist method and techniques. The play “The Tragedy of Macbeth” contains a lot of female characters and each one of them has a very deep symbolism and great development. To embrace is one of these aspects and characters, the feminist method is essential.

3.2. Research Design

3.2.1. Descriptive

To aboard the main problems of this investigation, a descriptive method is used for the analysis of the main topic and object of study. The descriptive design focus on the detailed

description of a phenomenon or population, in the case of this research, women in literature and the representation. Siedlecki (2020) explains that:

The purpose of descriptive studies is to describe individuals, events, or conditions by studying them as they are in nature. The researcher does not manipulate any of the variables but rather only describes the sample and/or the variables. Although a descriptive study can explore multiple variables, it is the only design that can also explore a single variable. Descriptive studies look at the characteristics of a population; identify problems that exist within a unit, an organization, or a population; or look at variations in characteristics or practices between institutions or even countries (p. 8).

Descriptive design is the one which is more accurate to the object of study in this investigation. “Descriptive studies can be purely descriptive, or they can be descriptive comparative” (Siedlecki, 2020, p. 8). The main goal of this design is to give a detailed description of the problem and analysis.

The object of study in this research is women in literature and how they are represented. The design allows to know deep information and a background of the females characters in literature. The study provides a very good amount of information and descriptions on how women are perceived in this field. In addition, there is a very well-structured approach to the representation: what it is, which elements it includes, etc.

The descriptive design allows you to have access to important and detailed information, and to make a highly complex and complete description of all the elements that are part of how women's image and representation is constructed in the play.

At the same time, some of the historical and cultural context of the play and the author are described. This information is essential to develop the main objective of the study. The description also includes the main elements and aspects that are associated with the object of study (women represented in literature. Some of these parts are: a very good and detailed explanation of feminist criticism and how to use that theory and method, and background and examination of witchcraft and all the elements of this practice that are connected with women in literature or that help to create certain representation of this group.

3.3.Data Collection Procedure

In regard to the data collection procedure, the nature of this investigations denies the possibility of obtaining any type of main information from surveys or quantitative methods. In the other hand, this study focuses on the analysis of information that is provide by different online and printed sources such as:

- Academic articles;
- thesis;
- specialized books;
- dictionaries;
- specialized dictionaries on the literature field;
- academic journals;
- chapters of books;
- historical data;
- digital databases;
- digital conferences;
- digital libraries;
- academic repositories;
- academic essays;
- other academic and trustable documents.

The main goal of gathering information form these professional and academic sources is to investigate more about the main object if study and topic develop through the whole paper. Considering these trustable documents is essential to construct the base of the investigation. These tools allow the study to gather information about:

First, the main object of the investigation, in this case, the representation of women. The research aims to understand what representation is, the history behind it, and how it can be applied to the study. This research also includes the information about women in literature and the main aspects to take into consideration while analyzing that topic. In a very similar way, the

sources provide data and information about the author, William Shakespeare, and the historical, social, economic, and political context in which he lived.

Then, the sources also help to find theories and information that can be used to support the position of this investigation. The position of this study in regard how Shakespear represents women is supported by professionals academics and their works.

In addition, the information found gives a very detailed panorama of the problems, discussions, or scandals associated with the object of study. In this research, it was the different point of view and perspective that other academics have about the female characters of “The Tragedy of Macbeth” and the discussion if they could be representing feminist behaviors or not.

Finally, these sources provide efficiency for the development of the analysis, in addition, the sources are trustable, so the information gathered is accurate and helpful to use. Gathering professional information and theories by literary academics is fundamental to support any position taken in this investigation. This research considers those sources as the base for the analysis.

Chapter IV

Analysis

4.1. The Subversion of Gender Roles, Characteristics Presented in the Female Characters

4.1.1. *The Ambivalence of Genre*

In “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, the female characters present an important and ambivalent subversion in the construction of the genre. It is possible to see how the roles of the female characters are inverted through a parallelism with the masculine ones. At the end of the 17th century and most part of the literature history, the roles associated with men and women were very delimited and clear. The figure of a woman was constructed with characteristics of submission and passiveness. This understanding of females was, of course, a consequence of the society itself and how the social relations worked during that period of time.

The position and roles for women in the society were represented in most part of literature too, however, in regarding to William Shakespeare and his play “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, there is a change in this image, and this can be seen through the characters of the story. This change of roles appears in characters such as Lady Macbeth and the three witches and it is presented as a change in the roles of power. In this way, women do not have the purpose of being apart from the chaos and decisions in the plot but, in a opposite way, they are the ones who are leading the story and the actions of Macbeth and the other characters. They have characteristics that were seen as masculine.

This change in the representation results as something innovative, considering the past tradition of relating women to a picture of domestic, passive and submissive person. The active role the characters take in Shakespeare’s play show another perspective of how the actions and decisions of the female characters had a major influence, not only in the plot, but in the construction of the male characters, their development, and the end of the story. To analyze this, it is fundamental to see how Shakespeare constructed some male characters, as Macbeth, in comparison to females such as Lady Macbeth and the three sisters, in order to notice the main

differences between the characters and how their developments and construction are a representation of the subversion of roles.

4.1.2. *Macbeth*

Macbeth is the main character of the story, and the one who received the prophecies of his future as a king by the witches, however, is the one who doubts the most in regarding to lead and take the decisions required to have the crown. Macbeth could be seen as a character which holds insecurities of his role as a possible king and the consequences and actions of being in that position. At the beginning, his wife tells him, “When you “dared” to do it, then you were a man; And, in order to be more than what you are, you would Be so much more the man” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 20). Through this quote it is possible to notice that there is an association of practice and taking of action with power.

Taking the decision of killing the king immediately means having power and becoming a man, which is something that Lady Macbeth praises. Masculinity, in this perspective, means having the courage to murder in order to have a better position. Unfortunately for her, Macbeth, instead of being clear with his intentions, is always doubting of his own decisions: “If we should fail?” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 21), “To know my deed, it’s best not know myself” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 28). Although his desire to be the king is always present, his willingness to take difficult decisions, such as the murder, place him in a lower position in regarding his power:

MACBETH.

I’ll go no more.

I am afraid to think what I have done.

Look on ’t again I dare not.

Lady Macbeth.

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures. ’Tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,

I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal,

For it must seem their guilt. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 59).

Macbeth is not a man that represents a typical authority in the story. He is afraid and uncomfortable for the action he made. He lacks the authority that other male characters have to gain power and political positions. At this point it could be interesting wondering if there is any regret inside of him or if he just experienced the human and natural reaction for ending with another life. The guilt became more overwhelming for Macbeth than his desire to be king.

On the other hand, to see the prophecies of the witches become a reality, Lady Macbeth knew that it was fundamental to not act correctly. This is something that she constantly reminds her husband:

Thou wouldst be great,
 Art not without ambition, but without
 The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst
 highly,
 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false
 And yet wouldst wrongly win. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 31).

Macbeth in this way is lacking not the ambition and desire of the crown, but the courage to take it, which implies murder the king and most important not being overwhelmed by that. This is what can be seen as unusual in the play, we are front of a male character that is not taking the position of the leader or acting with authority. “My hands are the same color as yours, only I would be ashamed To have such a white heart” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 28). The one who continues with this role in the play is Lady Macbeth, who leads and advice Macbeth in regarding the murder and the crown. In this perspective, Lady Macbeth is constructed with the masculine characteristics that her husband does not have. She does not doubt in taking the decisions that lead her husband to have the crown, even if she had to murder someone by herself. The confidence of her personality and her masculine attitudes make Lady Macbeth a particular character that has one of the main roles in her husband future and the development of the events in the play.

4.1.3. *Lady Macbeth as an Androgynous Figure*

Lady Macbeth is one of the most important, but peculiar characters in the “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. The construction of this female character relies in the construction of an androgynous figure. Through the play she acts, thinks, and takes decisions that questioned her position as a traditional women, in this way, the vision of Lady Macbeth as the wife of Macbeth, is not created in having a passive role of supporting her husband, but in being the one who takes the main actions for him or at least influenced him to do it.

From this time forward. Are you afraid
 To be the same man in reality
 As the one you wish to be? Would you have the crown
 Which you believe to be the ornament of life,
 And yet live like a coward in your own self-esteem,
 Letting "I shouldn't" wait for "I would,"
 Like the poor cat in the proverb? (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 41).

It is possible to observe this androgynous behavior in the words she speaks to Macbeth. She claimed to him his fear of being the king and the consequences or actions that are required. By calling him a “coward in your own self-esteem”, she stated her husband lack of action, even comparing him to a poor cat. Lady Macbeth even refers to Macbeth as an innocent flower which needs a serpent. This means being able to leave that passive an innocent behavior, and becoming someone willing to betray the king and take his crown.

Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent
 flower, But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming
 Must be provided for; and you shall put
 This night's great business into my dispatch,
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come
 Give solely sovereign s way and masterdom.
 MACBETH
 We will speak further.

Lady Macbeth

Only look up clear.

To alter favor ever is to fear.

Leave all the rest to me. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 35).

Lady Macbeth does not see herself as distant to the plan and murderer, but as someone who has an active role in the development of events. She declares “Leave all the rest to me”, as she takes care of the plan and influenced her husband to participate. Macbeth is not a character which stays patient and quiet, she is the one who is manipulating the situation. All of her characteristics are indeed a representation of what in the past were behaviors and attitudes of a man, and yet she takes them as part of her dominant personality.

The subversion of genre roles has as a consequence a subversion of power roles. The passiveness of Macbeth and the aggressiveness of Lady Macbeth cause a change in the development of their relationship. The power that commonly is on the hands of the man, passes to be in Lady Macbeth hands. She declares herself as the main influence of her husband, and she leads him to take the actions that make him become king. This female character breaks the traditional role of women and shows a series of characteristics which placed her in a dominant position, some of these are:

4.1.3.1. The victim role

Opposite to the tradition of representing women in positions in which they are victims or have a passive position in regarding to the power and social relationships with men, Lady Macbeth has a dominant role that is constructed with masculine characteristics that her husband lacks off. In history and literature the role of the female characters was relying on listening and acting according to the men's decisions and actions. In the case of the play, Macbeth does not have this masculine and dominant personality because he listens to her wife and follows her plan to kill the king and take the crown. In this way, Lady Macbeth has a strong character, even stronger than the masculine character. She is not a victim, she is the one who is leading the main decisions on the plan that develops the plot of the story, but a very smart character who is aware on how society works.

4.1.3.2. The Ambition

Part of this understanding of Lady Macbeth can be seen in her ambition for her husband to become the king. In this case, it is not only a desire that she has or an innocent dream of supporting her husband, but an actual take of an action and making the plan and the. It is not common that women in literature were represented with this kind of ambition because that desire and behavior was seeing more in the male characters whose role in this society was a dominant one. For this reason it is very peculiar to see a female character which contains these characteristics of ambitiousness. Lady Macbeth does not fit the archetype of a female character or a wife. Her ambition and desire for the crown even caused her to be involved in violent situations.

4.1.3.3. Manipulation

Lady Macbeth is a very smart woman who knows that the only way for her husband to be king is carrying out the plan of murdering the king. Of course this type of action is seen as a betrayal in the eyes of society and the other characters, reason why Lady Macbeth has to manipulate her husband slowly into agreeing with the plan and killing the king with his own hands. This is a process that does not happen in one night, but in a sequence of small talk, actions, and events. The manipulation of Lady Macbeth is done through the conversations that she has with her husband in which she declares very often that he does not have the necessary skills or the masculine behaviors to commit that crime. By attacking her husband's self-esteem and masculinity, Lady Macbeth is able to convince him to carry out the plan.

4.1.3.4. Violence

Lady Macbeth is developed as a violent character which is something unusual for a female or a woman in literature. It is often seen as the female characters to be innocent or have behaviors that built a passive and a saint personality related to religion or even holy Mary. In the case of Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare created a character that is far away from that vision. She contains all the characteristic already mentioned that make her look more like an evil or a heretic women. She rejects all of her feminine parts and behaviors to choose a violent personality. It is not common for a female character to commit murder or to even be related with death. In this

case Lady Macbeth breaks this stereotype or archetype of women who are distant from this violent actions.

4.1.3.5. Political Position

All the characteristics that Lady Macbeth has makes her a woman who is involved into the political relations and events of this story. From this perspective it is very interesting to see a female character who has a voice and can take small actions into a field that was supposed to be only for men. Of course, in the eyes of other characters Lady Macbeth is still a lady who might not be related that much with the social and political situations happening in the story, however Macbeth and the readers are able to see the real nature of the character and how she leads the main events through the manipulation of her husband and the plan of murdering the king.

It is possible to see through all of those characteristics of Lady Macbeth as a female character that she breaks a pattern related with the construction of gender roles and femininity. One of the major examples of this subversion of roles and characteristics is related to her sexuality. To become a woman who is able to take the men's decision and having the masculinity that she has, Lady Macbeth considers necessary to reject feminine sexuality:

The raven himself is hoarse
 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
 And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top—full
 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
 And take my milk for gall, your murdering ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
 To cry, "Hold, hold!" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 33).

Lady Macbeth asks to not have her female sexual parts as a way of declaring a rejection of her own genre. This is something crucial because the female body has a very deep connection with maternity, which is one of the characteristics that the women in the past or even now have very present in their lives and in regarding to how society and men perceive them. Purpose of being a woman during that time was seen to be a mother who has the future children of the men. Many women were raised with that purpose. For this reason the fact that Lady Macbeth is asking to get rid of her female sexual parts is important because she is leaving her femininity behind and taking the role of a man or at least their masculine behaviors and characteristics.

Doesn't agree with you. I have nursed a baby, and know
 How tender it is to love the baby that drinks my milk.
 I would have, while it was smiling in my face,
 Plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
 And dashed out his brains, if I had sworn to do this
 As you have. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 21).

In this way it can be perceived that Lady Macbeth has some sort of detachment to her role as a mother and to her maternity. Her ambition and manipulation are stronger than her purpose of being a mother. Lady Macbeth has a disconnection with seeing herself as a woman who should follow the rules and what it is expected from females. By rejecting and declaring "unsex me" she is showing that she is completely aware of women's position in today's society and the relation of passiveness and submissiveness with men. She is aware that to become the woman that she desires to be, she must distant herself from her own feminine characteristics.

4.1.4. *The Witches*

The subversion of rules is very particular in the case of the three sisters because they are witches and for instance, their nature is something unknown or strange in the eyes of the other

characters. In certain way the witches do not fit completely a masculine archetype such as the other male characters, but they don't adjust themselves into a feminine behavior either. In the play the name of the witches is never mentioned, and this has that connection with this lack of identity or in other words a lack of humanity.

ALL dancing in a circle

The Weïrd Sisters, hand in hand,

Posters of the sea and land, (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 16).

The witches are not archetype in the same way as women or men, that they are related with nature and earth. Their past is unknown, the same way is where they from or any other information about them. The only information known is the words are prophecies they tell Macbeth and their actions as witches, which are related with animals, spells and supernatural forces.

FIRST WITCH

Round about the cauldron go;

In the poisoned entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone

Days and nights has thirty-one

Sweltered venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 129).

The way in which the three sisters are created in the play has a very deep connection with a negative or superstitious perspective of women and witchcraft. In certain way their behaviors do not fit completely the common behavior of a woman an even less the behavior of a man. They are not saints, quiet or passive as what it was expected for women, but on the other hand they nature is more violent and grotesque then the masculine one.

The whole construction of the three sisters as witches creates a negative connotation which is related with the fatal destiny they tell Macbeth about his future as a king. The representation of the witches differs from the subversion of rules that Lady Macbeth and Macbeth had, however, deeper analysis of these three sisters, their connotation, and their role in

the story is developed in the next chapter that analyzed the relation between women and witchcraft and the connotation of evilness and tragedy they have.

As a conclusion for the first chapter, it was possible to see that “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by William Shakespeare has a very particular way of representing women in the story. Female characters as Lady Macbeth, are constructed over a series of characteristics that were more commonly seen in male characters. Her attitudes, behaviors, and actions are more masculine than what was expected from women. She shows a dominant and reckless personality, without any fear or doubt in regarding violence and death.

Opposite to her husband Macbeth who does not fit the male standard of a brave man. He does not have the authority or courage of killing the king, and it takes him a long time and manipulation from her wife to commit the betrayal. On the other hand, the witches are distant from being equally to men or women. Their nature remains unknown and mysterious, and they do not fit into a specific archetype of innocent women or brave men. However, their representation is associated with nature and supernatural forces, which can be seen as a negative connotation.

4.2. The Association of Women and Witchcraft and how it Constructs a Negative Connotation Associated with Evilness and Tragedy

The witches are a very particular and important element in Shakespeare's play, and as referred in the last chapter, the three sisters differ from other characters such as Lady Macbeth or Macbeth in regarding to their construction and their role in the story. The sisters actions are the ones who lead Macbeth to his fatal destiny, which placed them as important characters for the development of events, however, what is a topic of interest for this research are the characteristics of the witches and the witchcraft elements that can be associated to women such as Macbeth, which creates a negative connotation of her.

4.2.1. *The Dark Nature of Lady Macbeth and the Witches*

One of the main characteristics of the three sister in the play is their nature. In the story they are many characters introduced, however, they are all humans. In the case of the witches, from the first page, it is possible to notice that there is some supernatural force connected to them, and for instance, there is a separation between the sisters and the other human characters.

BANQUO

How far is 't called to Forres?—What are these,
 So withered, and so wild in their attire,
 That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' Earth
 And yet are on 't?—Live you? Or are you aught
 That man may question? You seem to understand me
 By each at once her choppy finger laying
 Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
 And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
 That you are so. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 17).

Banquo stated that the witches were not habitants of earth, distancing them from the other characters immediately, however in the last verse he declared that it is difficult to understand what they are, which tells that although not being women, their nature is still unknown and mysterious from them or for the understand of human beings. Another interesting aspect is that

he said, “You should be women”, it is possible that he is referring to their appearance and looks, which may be similar to women human beings. This is a decisive detail because there is a direct association of women and witches, which is fundamental to understand the negative connotation of women and witches. Another example of the mysterious nature is:

MACBETH

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?

What is 't you do?

ALL A deed without a name.

MACBETH

I conjure you by that which you profess

(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 123).

The actions and rituals of the sisters remain not only unknown, but unnamed for the humans. For Macbeth, understanding what the witches are doing is impossible because their nature is constructed over supernatural forces and beyond the human knowledge. That sense of mysterious for the humankind, is what placed the witches in a superior level. This means that they influenced Macbeth and Lady Macbeth actions by telling them the prophecies and the future.

The question is how is this strange nature of the witches related with Lady Macbeth?

Lady Macbeth

Come, thick night,

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark

To cry “Hold, hold!” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 33).

Lady Macbeth makes different calls to spirits and the dark night in different moments of the story. In the last example she asks the thick night to come and the heaven to not be there. At the same time she alludes to the knife to commit the crime. All of these elements that Lady Macbeth mentions are not related to innocence or to the traditional women's role. The words and

the language that she uses are grotesque and violent. It reminds to witches and their characteristics of harm and murder people. Witches were related with night and dark elements, and in this case Lady Macbeth is surrounding herself with them too. In addition, she is rejecting directly heaven which can be seen as heresy.

Another example of this happens at the beginning of the play and with one of the most famous words of Lady Macbeth.

Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top–full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse, (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 33).

In the moment where she is planning to kill the king, she calls the darkest spirits. This is a very direct association with witchcraft because in the eyes of the society a woman who invites these spirits to come, is all the opposite to what was expected of a woman about following God. She does not only call the spirits, but ask them to be part of her thoughts so she does not doubt or hesitate about committing the betrayal against the king. Her most famous line “unsex me”, as it was already mentioned in the last chapter, denies her femininity and her nature as a woman. In this way it could be an association to the witchcraft nature.

Lady Macbeth wants to get rid of all the elements that make her a female, and these are the same characteristics that witches used. In that example she also asks the spirits to fill her body and to not allow any remorse to come into her mind. This reminds of the Bible and the moral ethic perspective of asking God to take care of the mind and avoid bad thoughts to come in. In the case of Lady Macbeth she is asking all the opposite, which increases her relationship with witchcraft and dark elements that place her completely away from the Christian behaviors.

Another characteristic of witches and Lady Macbeth is how related they are with nature and earth. Something similar happens every time one of the sisters appears or disappears in this story. They are welcomed with thunders or elements associated with weather and nature: “*Thunder. Enter the three Witches*” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 111)., “*Thunder. First Apparition, an*

Armed Head” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 125), “*Thunder. Second Apparition, a Bloody Child*” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 125), “*Thunder. Third Apparition, a Child Crowned, with a tree in his hand*” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 127).

The relation between witches and witchcraft seems to be surrounded by nature elements which is something that happens to with Lady Macbeth as in the last example where she calls the thick night to come on her. The natural elements are associated with these evil forces mostly regarding the night, darkness, rain, and any other aspect that it is surrounded by mystery.

4.2.2. *Betrayal and Violence*

The unknown nature that witches have and the lack of understanding that human beings as Macbeth have about them place the witches in a position where they have an advantage over the human beings and can use their natural and supernatural forces to manipulate or destroy the other characters, or at least leading them into different possibilities for their future such as Macbeth and his prophecy of becoming the new king.

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 17).

The prophecies can be seen at first as something positive, however at the end of the story it is possible to see that they only caused destruction and the running of their fate. During the play, Banquo warned Macbeth about the danger of talking unbelieving the three sisters, emphasizing their purpose of harming them. He explained to Macbeth that the three sisters are instruments of darkness, and even if they tell the truth or seem to be honest, at the end it is just a betrayal. Macbeth ignored those warnings and he kept believing his fate of being king.

BANQUO That, trusted home,

Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,

Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange.
 And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
 The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's
 In deepest consequence.— (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 23).

The words Banquo tells Macbeth are a very common perspective of witches and witchcraft. This description of the witches is passed down to Lady Macbeth. Banquo makes an emphasis on the witches ability to betray the humans. This is very interesting and important because Lady Macbeth is betraying the king, and in the future betrays Banquo too. As mentioned before, Lady Macbeth is the one who plays one of the biggest roles in the play regarding manipulating Macbeth and setting up each one of the elements for the plan. Lady Macbeth is seen as a traitor because she orchestrated and developed a betrayal against the crown. In this case she has the same characteristics of the witches. This is supported by the already developed idea of her as a violent character whose nature is related to the devil and all the evil forces that causes her mind to not have remorse or any emotion in doing evil.

Another behavior associated with witches and associated with Lady Macbeth are the sacrifices of animals or people as part of a cult to satan or any dark divinity.

FIRST WITCH Where hast thou been, sister?

SECOND WITCH Killing swine. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 13).

Murdering animals as part of rituals is a common knowledge or stereotype related to witches or even to certain religions that does not fit the christian or catholic church. This actions could be seen as worshipping dark forces and going against the nature of God. This perspective placed witches as aggressive and violent. In the eyes of society, they do not have the same emotions or are ruled by the same ethic as human beings. They are violent and it challenges the nature of what it is seem as correct for the rest of people and God.

In the case of Lady Macbeth she has specifically asked the spirits to take any remorse or emotion from her. All of this with the purpose of taking someone's life. The betrayal and murder of the king is in action that is seeing as cruel and the violent, even more when the one who is

planning it is a woman. From in this perspective Lady Macbeth and the witches share this aggressive nature in which they do not care killing someone or something. This supports the image of Lady Macbeth as dark and evil woman.

4.2.3. *Rupture of the Natural Order*

One last characteristic and one of the most important ones into the witches is how they change the fate or the natural order of the crown. The balance that was supposed to have the society or the king is completely destroyed once they tell the prophecies to Macbeth. The end of the play is completely surrounded by death and tragedy. Natural order and social relationships completely change, taking the fate of Macbeth to a tragic end.

Following this perspective the witches and all these supernatural forces that only change the future, but they take the power from men, and at the end they end up killing each other. The prophecies the three sisters tell Macbeth create an entire obsession of him and his wife Lady Macbeth. Till the point they both have tragic endings. The idea of changing the future and becoming king takes them deeper and deeper until their obsession leads them to a fatal destiny.

FIRST WITCH Speak.

SECOND WITCH Demand.

THIRD WITCH We'll answer.

FIRST WITCH

Say if th' hadst rather hear it from our mouths

Or from our masters'. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 123).

The role that the witches have in regarding to the fate is directly associated with Lady Macbeth because she is the one who leads the fate of her husband not knowing that it causes her to lose her sanity. Lady Macbeth completely believes the words of the witches and their prophecies. She is also seen as the dominant woman who controls her husband and lead him to his fatal fate. From this specific perspective Lady Macbeth is an instrument of the witches too. And, as it was explained before, she shares the same personality and supernatural characteristics of the witches, as she also invokes spirits and manipulate the fate of the events.

As a conclusion for this chapter, it was possible to see how the characteristics of the witches in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” are associated with Lady Macbeth. The sisters are characters constructed by series of characteristics that fit the traditional folklore of what is a witch. They are related to mystery, supernatural forces, nature, sacrifices, music, and dance. Their actions are manipulative, and they represent a complete change in Macbeth’s fate, leading him to a tragic ending.

They are very similar to Lady Macbeth, who asks the evil spirits to take her, and put her apart from any emotion that might interfere with the main plan to take the crown. She rejects her sexuality and femininity in order to take a dominant and manipulative role. Lady Macbeth and the sisters share and at the same time differ from each other. They share similarities in regarding to their personality, they are women who break the pattern of submissiveness, innocence and passiveness. They have main roles in the development of events, more specifically, in the fate of Macbeth and his tragedy. In certain way Lady Macbeth and the witches lead Macbeth to the tragic end of the story.

On the other hand, the witches, although sharing some similarities with Lady Macbeth, they are placed in a position where they even affect Lady Macbeth’s fate. The prophecies they give to Macbeth, causes Lady Macbeth to manipulate her husband not being aware that it causes her to become insane and eventually died. The actions of the witches affected not only the men of the story, but a woman that share certain elements and behaviors with the sisters. It can be seen in this way that both of them are used to lead and create the tragic destiny of Macbeth, with the difference that Lady Macbeth results to be another victim of the fatal and tragic end.

Finally, the play does represent witchcraft and all the associations with it with a negative connotation, portraying the witches as violent and cruel. For instance, the similar construction of Lady Macbeth as a character is also represented with a negative connotation for being a woman whose personality and actions are cruel, violent, and surrounded with heresy.

4.3. Shakespeare's Symbols Associated with Women in "The Tragedy of Macbeth" and their Meaning

The symbolism is an important part of a literature analysis. It is a way of representing something in a more discrete or symbolic way. The objects, nature, and other elements of the play work as a representation or connotation of specific things. In the case of this play it is very common to see many symbolisms, especially the ones associated with the moral of the characters, their fate, development, and the supernatural aspect related to the witches. In the specific case of women there are many symbolisms from the beginning to the end of the story, to analyze deeper each one of them it is necessary to observe the quote, the symbol, and the meaning regarding to the characters and the whole play.

4.3.1. *Blood and Sleep*

The first and one of the most important symbols is the one related with insomnia or sleeping issues in general. There are many examples of this, however the first time it is mentioned is related with the witches. At the beginning of the play the three witches are talking between them about what they were doing and one of them mentioned that she was going to harm a man in the sea so he could not sleep anymore and eventually loses his mind:

FIRST WITCH

I'll drain him dry as hay.

Sleep shall neither night nor day Hang
upon his penthouse lid.

He shall live a man forbid.

Weary sev'nights, nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.

Though his bark cannot be lost,

Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.

Look what I have. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 15).

Although this man is only mentioned once in the whole play, it is very peculiar because the fate of that man could be seen as an anticipation of what is going to happen in the future for

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Both of them, at the end of the play end up insane and with a tragic ending. They both shared that same destiny of suffering from insomnia or sleep issues. In the case of Macbeth he is unable to sleep because of the guilt that he has for killing the king. The insomnia in this case is a symbol of regretting, the guiltiness, and all that confusion and insanity that the murder brought to Macbeth.

MACBETH

Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep"—the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 57).

MACBETH

Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house.
"Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore
Cawdor
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more." (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 57).

Macbeth insanity and insomnia is a process that happens progressively. The main event that causes the loss of sanity was the betrayal and murder. Once Macbeth is not able to sleep, he starts to see ghosts and slowly loses the capacity of distinguished reality. When the murder was committed Macbeth mentioned that he heard a voice telling him he was not going to sleep anymore. In this case it is a representation of how he is losing himself and how he was not prepared to hurt or murder the other person. As he was mentioned at the beginning, the fate of Macbeth ended up being very similar to the fate of the men in the sea that the witches cursed at the beginning. That man was an anticipation of all the events that Macbeth was going to be part of during the whole story. The mental instability that Macbeth has is fragmented after the murder.

When that event happened Macbeth felt guilty and he did not know how to react, opposite to Lady Macbeth who took a dominant role and even call her husband weak for not

tolerating the blood in his hands. That part is very particular and interesting because at the end of the play Lady Macbeth has the same issues with the blood, which is another important symbol.

Lady Macbeth

So brainsickly of things. Go get some water
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.—
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there. Go, carry them and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH

I'll go no more.
I am afraid to think what I have done.
Look on 't again I dare not.

Lady Macbeth

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt. (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 59).

Blood as a symbol is a crucial one, but also a very particular one because both of them Macbeth and Lady Macbeth suffer from the effects of seeing the blood in their hands. Macbeth was the first one to be in a position of regretting the murder, and then almost at the end of the play Lady Macbeth follows the same path. In this case the blood and the insomnia or sleep problems are two symbols that are completely connected and associated with the cause and effect process of the murder. The insomnia is the symbolism of guilt and the blood on the hands represents the crime committed that haunts the characters until their tragic end. In the next example it is possible to see how right after the murder Macbeth did not know how to react and was completely losing his mind over the fact that he just killed the king and the blood was on his hands, his wife Lady Macbeth reacted in a cold and passive way; however, this changes for her in the future.

DOCTOR

A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching. In this slumb'ry agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what at any time have you heard her say? (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 161).

Lady Macbeth

Out, damned spot, out, I say! One. Two.
Why then, 'tis time to do 't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 163).

Even though Lady Macbeth is constructed as a dominant female character, her actions or her destiny at the end of the play are full of tragedy. She gets sick and she is not mentally stable, reason why she has sleeping problems that leads her to lose her sanity. Lady Macbeth is constantly cleaning her hands because she thinks they still have blood. And even if she cleaned them over and over again, she feels like the blood is still there. It cannot be cleaned.

Lady Macbeth's sanity disappeared because of the murder or because her husband was gone. Being alone knowing the crime that they committed made this character lose her own senses. This is very interesting because during the whole plot she always had a very determinant attitude and braveness while facing death and blood.

4.3.2. *The Ghost*

Another important symbol in this tragedy is the ghost that haunts Macbeth. The ghost is Banquo, and it appears in front of other people, however only Macbeth is able to see him. The symbolism of the ghost is very similar, and it is associated with the blood because both symbols are related with the murder and death of other characters. Macbeth is a man who slowly started to lose his sanity and one of the signs that he shows of this the grading of his mind is seeing and

talking with ghosts. The ghost in this case is not a stranger, but the person that he murder even if not directly.

The ghost and the blood both represent the punishment or hunting for taking another man's life. From the very first moment when Macbeth committed his first crime his reaction was not what it would be expected from a man. Even his wife Lady Macbeth was quiet and was able to manage the situation instead of him. His reaction shows how he was not morally prepared for committing this crime, but yet he still did it. After that moment he keeps going lower until he degrades himself and murders other witness or people that might be suspecting of him. All this action causes that in his mind he started seeing this spectrum of the men he sent to kill.

MACBETH

Prithee, see there. Behold, look! To the Ghost. Lo,
how say you? 103

MACBETH *to the Ghost*

Avaunt, and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee.

Thy bones are marrowless; thy blood is cold; (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 105).

Macbeth begged the ghost to leave him alone, but it didn't happen and he talked to it. The ghost in this case represents the symbolism of Macbeth's mental state and shows how lost and insane his mind is getting each time. Macbeth does not only see the ghost, but he talks to it. It is possible to notice that the ambition of becoming the king and making real the prophecies that the witches told Macbeth came with a moral punishment, one that they probably didn't expect to suffer. Both Macbeth and her wife Lady Macbeth are the ones who carried out the plan, and they are the ones who were punished by supernatural forces or fate itself. From this perspective, the changing of the natural forces on the original fate causes this new fate to end up in a tragedy.

4.3.3. *Nature*

One of the last symbols to analyze is the milk under connection or association with nature. It was already explained in past chapters that witchcraft or the feminine figure related to witchcraft is surrounded by a series of characteristics and elements that support the construction of the character based on stereotypes coming from traditional folklore. In this way society has a specific imaginary of what a witch is and all the elements that surrounds them. Some of these

elements are the nature that we saw it is essential every time the witches enter the scene or exit: “Thunder and Lightning. Enter three Witches” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 7).

There are many elements even suggesting that the nature of the witches it is made by air or from natural elements such as earth.

The nature in this perspective it is not only seen in the nature of the witches, but also works as a symbol of the darkest forces, of course associated with evilness and death.

Lady Macbeth

Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry “Hold, hold!” (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 33).

MACBETH

Thus to mine eyes. Now o’er the one-half world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate’s off’rings, and withered murder, (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 53).

In this case Lady Macbeth and Macbeth called nature from the darkness to help them with the crime they are planning. Lady Macbeth asks the thick knight to come and give her the strength to commit the crime without being interrupted by her emotions or her sexual and feminine characteristics. In this case the nature has a very similar representation that the one we saw with the witches. Nature and the night are symbolisms of darkness, evilness, a mystery. Elements that surround the sisters and the prophecies that they gave them.

In the case of Macbeth it is interesting that he alludes to the time when he committed the crime describing the dead nature. This is a connection to all the elements that is seen in the story at the end, which includes the death of the characters and the suffering and insanity. Especially the ones that receive the prophecies from the witches. It is possible to see that nature is not only used for the witches, but they represent tragedy, mystery, fate and the supernatural forces.

4.3.4. *Milk*

The last symbol and one of the most important ones especially while analyzing the female characters appears with the words that Lady Macbeth says the beginning of the play:

Lady Macbeth

The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
 And take my milk for gall, your murdering ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
 To cry, "Hold, hold!" (Shakespeare, 2013, p. 33).

Lady Macbeth, as seen in the last chapter, it is a character that has a peculiar personality because of her reject comment to her own nature of being a woman. Throughout the whole story she is constantly reminding her husband that he is not a man enough, while positioning herself as the dominant one. She is the one who manipulates the situation and plans the murdering of the king. She does not hesitate in leaving behind the innocent characteristic which women are associated, in order to become a cold woman who is able to take someone's life without hesitation. One of the resources that she uses for this it is rejecting her sexuality as a woman, she said "unsex me" to left behind the female characteristics that she might consider as weak. On the other side, she also rejects one of the main characteristics that is associated with women and especially wives: maternity.

Lady Macbeth in certain part of the story stated that she could take her breast from the baby and stop feeding him, this is very similar to when she asked to take her milk for gall. Milk is a symbolism of maternity and femininity. In literature women have the purpose or the archetype or being mothers and wives. When Lady Macbeth rejects this nature that is assumed that belongs to the women, she also rejects maternal identity as a defining trait with maternity or with kids. The words and the vocabulary that she uses is very direct and might be seen as rude

for a woman. She even declares violence within her words. From this perspective Lady Macbeth does not fit any archetype but breaks each one of the expectations of being an innocent women. If the milk is a symbolism of this maternity that she rejects, the gall represents a complete negative connotation of poison, damage, and cruelty. The symbols that surround Lady Macbeth support her perspective of women not being represented in a traditional way, but having more masculine behaviors.

As conclusions for this chapter, it is very clear that the whole story and play contain plenty of symbolisms that are used to create a more complex and deeper structure and development of the characters and the events. Many of these symbolisms are related to witchcraft, women's moral description or identity of the characters. In the case of the blood and the sleeping issues, they both showed that degradation and guilt that Lady Macbeth and Macbeth had after committing a murder.

As a consequence of that, the symbolism of a ghost is haunting Macbeth as representing the punishment for his crime and the degrading of his mental sanity. Women are surrounded by the symbolism of nature like in case of the witches, but this also can represent all these supernatural dark forces that surrounds Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. Finally milk and gall are the main symbolism that Lady Macbeth uses to distancing herself from her own feminine nature and rejecting maternity.

Chapter V

Conclusions

5.1. Main Conclusions for the Specific Objectives

The main purpose of this research was to analyze the representation of women in William Shakespeare's play by studying the subversion of genre, the witchcraft, and the symbolisms. This study provided a very detailed and deep analysis of the portrayal and characteristic of the female characters in the play in order to conclude if the construction of the female characters created a negative or positive connotation and image of the women figure. This chapter approaches an overview of the main conclusions for each one of the specific objectives.

5.1.1. To examine the subversion of genre characteristics presented in the female characters of "The Tragedy of Macbeth" by Shakespeare from a feminist perspective

In regarding to the first objective, it was possible to make a deep analysis of the subversion of genre in the character of Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and the witches. Shakespeare's work possesses an ambivalence regarding to the genre and the construction of the female characters which instead of following the archetype of femininity, is more related or associated with masculine behaviors. This has as a consequence that the female characters are the ones which have a more dominant position while the male characters possess characteristics that may make them be seen as weak.

In the case of Lady Macbeth she introduces a very particular case in which she does not feel identified with the nature of being women. She finds herself into the development of masculine, aggressive, and violent behaviors. She is one of the characters that leads the main story and manipulates her husband and other people in order to make real her ambition of taking the crown. Lady Macbeth does not act like a traditional woman, she takes a position in which she is involved with the political situation, and decisions of their social position. From the beginning of the play she calls evil forces to help her while committing the crime that they planned. Even in the middle of the murdering and other difficult situations, she stood as a cold and secure woman. Lady Macbeth was also characterized by her violence. She completely denies her sexuality as a

woman and her association with maternity. She can be seen as an androgynous figure who does not play any victim role in the story. Opposite to that, she is defined as an ambitious, manipulator, and violent woman who is trying to get into political and social deserts in order to help her husband to become the new king.

In the case of the witches they are constructed into an unknown and mysterious nature. Seeing them as strangers or non-humans in the eyes of other people. The three sisters do not have a very particular feminine attitude nor masculine ones. They fit in a specific type of a stereotype or social imaginary of what society believes a witch is or what kind of behaviors and actions they do. Although not being precisely the archetype of innocent women, they indeed represent the vision and perspective of a witch associated with a woman being evil and cruel.

5.1.2. To investigate how women are associated with witchcraft in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by Shakespeare and how it constructs a negative connotation associated with evilness and tragedy

For the second objective it was possible to continue the analysis in a deeper way of the association of women and witchcraft and the negative connotation. The three witches have a decisive role on Shakespeare's play because they lead the fate of the main characters that ends into death and tragedy. These sisters have certain characteristics which place them not as equal as any other women or men, but associated with evilness and stranger forces.

Following, this, Lady Macbeth is a character who shares a lot of characteristics and behaviors with the witches. Because of this, she is represented as a woman surrounded by evilness and violent behaviors. She possesses a dark nature in the way she invokes evil spirits, and it is surrounded by elements of darkness. Lady Macbeth rejects her femininity and any good christian thought that could come into her mind that might make her hesitate to commit the murder. In this way, she is a character who is constructed over betrayal and violent behavior, which are characteristics associated with witchcraft too.

In addition, Lady Macbeth also shares the similarity of being part of the rupture in the fate of Macbeth. The natural order changed, and Lady Macbeth develops directly the prophecies

the witches gave to her husband. The witches and Lady Macbeth in this way are able to change the future and the fate of the main characters.

5.1.3. To interpret Shakespeare's symbols associated with women in "The tragedy of Macbeth" and their meaning

The third and last specific objective has the purpose of analyzing the symbolism associated with women in order to study their meaning and see if these symbols construct a positive or a negative connotation of them.

The first symbol was the blood and the asleep issues. Blood is symbolism of guilt or regret for crime that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth committed. Macbeth cannot stand seeing the blood in his hands and start losing his sanity. In the case of Lady Macbeth even if she didn't seem to be affected by the blood in the beginning, in the future she lost her sanity. These two symbolisms are the beginning of the degrading of these two characters.

A symbol that helps to construct that negative effect is the ghost that Macbeth sees. The ghost is the man he killed indirectly and now is hunting him. The ghost is associated with the death of the other characters and the punishment that Macbeth receives for his betrayal.

Nature is another symbolism of darkness and the natural mysterious forces related to the fate and witchcraft. This is not only used by the witches, but by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to describe how nature was present during the crime and the evil forces the Lady Macbeth ask to help her.

The last symbol and one of the most important ones is milk and gall. The milk is related with femininity and motherhood, aspects and elements that Lady Macbeth completely rejects of her own body and nature as a woman. Changing the milk for the gall means leaving behind the maternity and taking a violent and poisonous attitude and personality. Lady Macbeth became in this way a dominant and violent women that is completely far away from any archetype of innocent women.

5.2. The Two Perspectives of the Women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth” by William Shakespeare

In the beginning of this research and study it was explained the different perspectives that the critic has about William Shakespeare's work specifically “The Tragedy of Macbeth”. One part of the academia believes that William Shakespeare has some feminist behaviors in regarding to the way he represented and constructs his female characters in his plays. This is associated in how the women is not reproducing the same archetypes of innocence and motherhood. In contrast, the characters are associated with evilness dominance and witchcraft. Another side of the critics states that even if he breaks certain patterns in regarding of the representation on the identity of women, William Shakespeare's cannot be seen from a feminist perspective because at the end he keeps reproducing another types of stereotypes over the female characters such as the negative association of them with witchcraft or manipulative behaviors.

In regarding to those two perspectives, in this study it was analyzed the representation of women in the tragedy by studying the subversion of genre, the witchcraft, and the symbolism, the conclusion that is taken is that William Shakespeare's indeed represented a break in certain patterns of literature of representing women with a series of characteristics related to submissiveness, passiveness, and innocence. In this way this analysis has stated that the female characters of these plays are deep constructed and complex to analyze. However, of course certain representation especially the ones that associate the women with the witchcraft make a continuation of this social imaginary that states that if a woman is not innocent or kind, is indeed evil and cruel. In this case the witches and Lady Macbeth represents the second type of women.

In addition, the conclusion of this research is that even though there is still stereotypes represented in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, it is fundamental to understand the different contexts and the different societies in which the play was written and in which the play is being analyzed. The feminist studies in literature were a great development for the analysis of women figures and literature, however most of them are very recent. For this reason, it is expected in certain way that during the Renaissance and the 17th century, the knowledge that the authors had about feminism was barely existent. Reason why it is acceptable to analyze and admiring the complexity of the female characters that Shakespeare does in his works while at the same time being aware of these

stereotypes that are on the text, all of this without losing the perspective that the times and ages were completely different.

In this way the main goal of this research was not to condemn the author, but to analyze the amazing complex in the structure and nature in which the female characters of this play were created and what they represent.

5.3.Recommendations

Finally, it is fundamental to mention that although this research made a very deep and detailed analysis of the representation of women in “The Tragedy of Macbeth”, the work of William Shakespeare is highly complex and in this case the focus was centered on the female characters, however there are many other possibilities for new investigations. Some of them could be the intertexts in the play that might be associated with other literature works or historical elements. In the same way there are many other characters such as Banquo and the rest of the men on the court the represent certain levels and hierarchies that might be the determinants of the social structure in the place on the representation of society.

In conclusion, “The Tragedy of Macbeth” and other works by William Shakespeare are highly complex and amazing texts that show the construction and representation of a variety of characters. Also, how the Renaissance and other historical elements influenced the literature making authors like William Shakespeare to experiment and create works that even hundreds of years later are still being studied and taken into account as classics of literature.

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