

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WORLD OF FANTASY ON SHAKESPEARE'S AND SŁOWACKI'S CHARACTERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAITS

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Zofia Stefanowska (1955:331-364) says that the central idea of Shakespeare's and Słowacki's works is echoed in Mickiewicz's motto which reads that the faith in the influence of the invisible and immaterial world on people's thoughts and actions is the chief idea of their works.

This idea is exemplified by apparitions, ghosts, Weird Sisters, angels which are visible and audible and take part in *Balladyna*, *Macbeth* and *Lilla Weneda*. The fantasy world which is established according to popular beliefs as well as Christianity plays a great part in the selected works. Moreover, both poets hoped that in popular convictions, under the cover of superstition, a real knowledge of invisible powers governing the world could probably be tracked down.

It is certain that Shakespeare and Słowacki did not introduce ghosts, voices from the other world and the evil and good powers to prove the diversity of their imagination. Apparitions and Weird Sisters, voices bordering on superstition as ghosts at the feast in *Macbeth*'s and *Balladyna*'s courts and Weird Sisters who take possession of both *Macbeth*'s and *Balladyna*'s souls were established according to primitive popular beliefs. They constitute only stage manifestations of the invisible world and suggest ambiguity and uncertainty.



Picture 5. *Weird Sisters while practising witchcraft.*
Painted by George Craig.

As Zofia Stefanowska (1955:331-364) notes, Słowacki inherited from his ancestors a conviction that there was law and order in the world. He was brought up to believe that the world was ordered but the essence of the harmony was hidden from the eyes which tended to grasp only the surface of phenomena. Only when one was able to show the system of invisible relations between 'the world of things' and 'the world of spirit', would he comprehend the true principle of the cosmic order.

Therefore, *Macbeth*, *Balladyna*, *King Lear* and *Lilla Weneda* take issue with the idea of the ordered world. They try to understand the higher and spiritual order in which there is an answer to the question about the sense of suffering of man or a whole nation. The answer is embraced in the world full of moral values and one whose core meaning is the fight between good and evil powers. Every feeling, every decision and every human deed counts in this fight whereas gentle states of consciousness or thoughts hidden in recesses of our soul are vital and turn the scale of fate. Nothing is lost and nothing is created without any cause since the world is a moral order. To understand this, one must notice the system of spiritual relations which make all the other phenomena arrange themselves in a consistent whole. Never is man really solitary, he is always under the influence of supernatural creatures which arrange the invisible network of cause and effect. One element of the cosmic fight between good and evil is a constant exchange of values between the visible and invisible worlds. Thus, it is a fight which is restricted neither by time nor by space: man lives in the past by memories and in the future by premonition. But the final choice depends on man: he is responsible for his own defeat; his merit is victory over himself.

With regard to *Macbeth*, he is responsible for his own defeat, for he allows himself to be subjected to Weird Sisters. They begin to direct his life and make him the victim of their prophecies and promises. Having heard all of them, *Macbeth* begins to consider how to achieve the aims as quickly as possible. Then, he starts to think about the murder which he describes in the following manner:

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 't were well
 It were done quickly: if th' assassination
 could trammel up the consequence, and catch
 With his surcease success; that but this blow
 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time, -
 We'd jump the life to come. - But in these cases,
 We still have judgement here; that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
 To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice
 Commends th' ingredients of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips.
 (*Macbeth*, 1.7.1-12)

Macbeth realises that the crime he intends to commit is a heinous one. Despite the fact that he is determined to do it, some voices of conscience try to prevent him from performing the plan, for he owes him security. Duncan is his King and a relative. Moreover, Macbeth is aware of being punished for his deed and therefore he mentions 'the poisoned chalice'. Despite his willingness to kill Duncan, Macbeth is not sure whether they, he and his wife, will manage to achieve the final aim. When Macbeth says:

If we should fail,
 (*Macbeth*, 1.7.59)

we have a chance to see his weak nature and vulnerability. His wife, however, wants to help him and makes him understand that her feminine nature is much stronger. For instance,

What beast was't then,
 That made you break this enterprise to me?
 When you durst do it, then you were a man;
 And, to be more than what you were, you would
 Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,
 Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
 They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
 Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
 How tender't is to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this.
 (*Macbeth*, 1.7.47-59)

These words are very strong and aim to convince Macbeth that he is able to carry out their plan. However, having committed the murder, Macbeth is not psychologically strong enough to return to his own apartment and to smear the sleeping chamber - servants with blood. Immediately, after his deed Macbeth feels remorse which will be present till the moment of the last of his visions.

Seeing that all the noble values of Macbeth such as courage, bravery and good fame have to be denied, the

readers are filled with compassion. In the course of events this compassion does grow, especially when Macbeth is distressed by discord and qualms of conscience arousing out of the realisation of his own heinous behaviour. The conflict between the gloomy side of his nature and very vulnerable consciousness lasts till the end of his days.

As J. Sokołowska (1971:180-189) notes, the basis of Shakespeare and Słowacki's concept of human nature is grounded on the conviction that man's nature is defined by his deeds, behaviour, decisions and the choices he makes. Moreover, they define the person's character and all the changes that take place there. Yet they shape characters' fate who possess a very essential feature - free will.

Macbeth was also free. The prophecy announcing his future kingship:

All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter.
 (*Macbeth*, 1.3.50)

restricted it only apparently. Yet Macbeth did not have to yield to this prophecy considering that Banquo warned him against the devilish trap.

J. Kott (1965:116) observes that Shakespeare's creativeness is characterised by a deep knowledge of human nature, which can be clearly seen in the case of its abnormal and pathological states. Macbeth, living in constant tension and stress is susceptible to such states. When he suffers from extreme emotional burden, he experiences lucid intervals in the shape of hallucinations.

Before killing Duncan, Macbeth experiences visual hallucinations and sees a non-existent dagger, on the blade of which there is blood:

I see thee still;
 And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
 (*Macbeth*, 2.1.45-46)



Picture 6. *The bloody dagger*.
 Painted by George Craig.

Having committed the crime, he undergoes auditory hallucinations and hears a loud voice announcing his loss of dreams. Although no-one and nothing says about it any

more, sleeplessness caused by the nervous breakdown seems to be the probable consequence of the cruel deed. Being the victim of the devilish trap, Macbeth is completely subjected to Weird Sisters who, by means of clever hints, promises and proposals, make him cloud his mind. As a result of all the promises and at Weird Sisters' constant instigation, Macbeth loses control over himself and the touch with the real world. The fantasy characters make him become a member of a new dimension, which is revealed by his behaviour and madness. It is the fantasy characters who introduce disorder and chaos in the world. Moreover, by their clever actions, the fantasy characters mean to set people at variance with nature and existing order of the world.

Similarly, Lady Macbeth's genuinely pathological state of mind appears in one of the most impressive scenes of the tragedy, known as the sleepwalking scene, i.e. walking and performing certain tasks while sleeping. Different symptoms of the somnambulism have been presented so carefully that it is not difficult to make a diagnosis today. When the readers happen to flip through *Nowoczesna psychiatria kliniczna* by Noyes and Kolb (1969:458) and study a few courses of treatment, they may arrive at a conclusion that Lady Macbeth suffers from claustrophobia, automatism of movements (washing hands), optical hallucinations (bloody stains) and olfactory hallucinations (the smell of blood). Thus, Shakespeare presented here the escape from reality to raving by the elimination of the conscious part of her personality. Soon, the period of suffering comes to an end and Lady Macbeth kills herself but it is not certain whether she did it in illness or perhaps she made a final decision of escape having recovered consciousness.

It is difficult to talk about the influence of the Weird Sisters on Lady Macbeth since she has never seen them. Thus, in contrast to Macbeth, one cannot ascribe her madness to the direct effect of their activity. But, it is known that Macbeth wrote a letter to his wife in which he told her about his meeting with the Weird Sisters. Having read the letter, Lady Macbeth undergoes a change, due to which her inside turns out to be a nest of evil powers and lust for authority. Thus, the reader may note that the letter had a similar effect on Lady Macbeth as the meeting with Weird Sisters in the case of Macbeth. As Maciejewski (1967: 222-223) notes, never is man really solitary. He is always under the influence of supernatural creatures which remain invisible to us. Both poets seem to be fascinated by people stricken with insanity. Of course, they did not treat insanity as a kind of mental disease. Quite the contrary, they treated insanity as a gift and a characteristic favouritism owing to which people could become convinced that there was another dimension of existence and yet that the world possessed its own soul. Thus, insane people (Balladyna, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth) were the privileged ones. Although they suffered a lot, they had an opportunity to be associated with the metaphysical world. Moreover, becoming a member of a completely different dimension, they received new, much

deeper and richer lives, which was the reward for their constant suffering.

The three mysterious creatures, which hindered Macbeth's and Banquo's way not far from Forres still arouse readers' or viewers' curiosity. For some, Weird Sisters were only the embodiment of lower states of our psyche, projections of characters' thoughts or unimportant show decorations. However, Romantic poets, fascinated by the women's strangeness, decided to treat them as real characters. The Weird Sisters are characters who really exist, act and disappear. Moreover, they also harm people and cause thunderstorms by means of winds. Furthermore, as J. Komorowski (1995:69) observes, their power is not unlimited because they are subjected to Hecate and even more powerful rulers.



Picture 7. *Weird Sisters and Hecate.*
Painted by George Craig.

Holinshed used another name for the Weird Sisters, namely elves and fairies. In the tragedy the very notion appears in the scene where Hecate tells the hags to dance around like 'elves and fairies' (4.1.42). At first elves were treated as people and angels, that is, creatures who were very friendly, full of dignity and splendour. Nevertheless, in the Elizabethan period they were considered to be devils dwelling on earth. The fear of women who were submitted to Devil and caused harm to people was widespread in the Renaissance. Many scientific books and folk stories tackled the problem of poor women who were made responsible for all the real and imaginary evil deeds and promises. All the prophecies and promises about future told Macbeth by the Weird Sisters come from this source. As J. Komorowski (1995:68) observes, the devil was able to foretell the future through his earthly servants, that is, the Weird Sisters. Sometimes, he told the truth while foretelling the future but mostly he aimed at deluding and bringing man to ruin.

As F. Mahon (1961:46-52) notes, incredible things happen in the world of Shakespeare's works. Knowing that Słowacki followed Shakespeare, we can say that almost all the phenomena referred to by Mahon concern both playwrights. Thus, mysterious ghosts fly in the hazy glow over the surface of the lakes, ghosts arrive from different worlds to haunt and punish people. People change into trees (Grabiec is changed into a willow), even flow-



Picture 8. *Weird Sister as an earthly servant.*
Painted by George Craig.

ers and fruit have some magic power. Ghosts, demons, apparitions, hags, fairies and elves appear accompanied by dreadful gales, roars of rough lakes, in the moonlight or in the early morning mist. They appear in the most gloomy, overcast and gruesome places such as deep lakes, dark forests, freely meandering brooks and the ruins of old castles. Once they arrive, they happen to be cruel, evil and even blood-thirsty. Rarely do they strive for people's favours and when they are spurned, their revenge becomes savoury.

As it can be seen, the Fantasy worlds seem to be similar and in some cases twin in their appearance. Moreover, both playwrights make use of them in order to introduce the element of fantasy into them. Yet the fantasy worlds tend to form a new reality whose invisible dwellers affect the real world characters. Also, both playwrights decided to choose the fantasy world as a kind of setting for the action of their stories. In this way, Shakespeare and Słowacki stressed the popular elements and concentrated on medieval superstitions. Secondly, all the images of the fantasy world evoke feelings of the mysterious and of the unknown and they agreed with contemporary opinions about what is beautiful and sublime on the one hand and what is threatening and uncertain on the other.

As P. Sisson (1986:70-72) observes, the reader of Shakespeare could talk endlessly about the world of threat, for it is a fascinating and unique reality. It constitutes something really magnificent for people who are susceptible to the fantasy, magic and witchcraft, albeit it threatens. The reader has an opportunity to gain the experience of something that is intangible and unbelievable.

The supernatural or fantasy world has many dwellers. Apart from Hecate and the Weird Sisters there are two demons or familiars: Grey - Malkin and Paddock which are believed to have magical and first of all evil powers of evil powers. Some other familiars are: an owl, a raven, a wolf, a bat, a toad and some snakes. Yet Shakespeare and Słowacki never criticise the existence of creatures coming from a different world. On the contrary, both poets treat them as the inevitable part of the world of their plays.

Ghosts such as salamanders, sylphs and gnomes have their origins in angels. They were bodiless and yet much more powerful than men. They strove for immortality which could only be achieved by a marriage with man. This can be a good explanation of Goplana's deep and passionate love to Grabiec. In spite of all these ghosts descending from heaven there is also a hell which has been formed according to popular beliefs. This hell has also its dwellers; for example, there are some horses which appear at Chochlik's call:

Cztery konie piękne,
Czarne – księżycowymi wierzgają podkowy;
I wóz na ciebie czeka Mefistofelowy;
Ale nie mów Goplanie

Four fine horses at your service... black ones
To kick up their moon-shaped hooves.
And Mephisto's own carriage waiting for you,
But do not tell Goplana...
(*Balladyna*, 3.4.663-666)

Moreover, Chochlik used to treat Grabiec to tobacco 'from Lucifer' and as an imp changed into a black dog. Also, Goplana - 'Lucifer's wife' did not forget the hell and called the magic powers of hell to help her to transform Grabiec:

Czuwajcie nad sennym,
Ja czary piekiel zamówię.

Watch over him as he sleeps.
I, meanwhile, will summon all the charms of hell.
(*Balladyna*, 3.4.555-556)

Yet it was Goplana who talked about her servants who were represented by sylphs, devils and angels:

Więc rozesłałam sylfy...

So I have dispatched my Sylphs
(*Balladyna*, 1.2.565)

Diabliki!
Lećcie u zorzy,

Devils! what ho!
Fly you to the dawn,
(*Balladyna*, 3.4.522-524)

Chodźcie mnie uściskać, aniołki,
Bo Goplana na wieki wam znika

Come, my angels! Come and embrace me!
Embrace me in farewell. For Goplana is leaving you
Forever.
(*Balladyna*, 5.1.23-24)



Picture 9. *Goplana is waking up.*
Painted by T. Pilecki.

This comic context makes hell mythical and facetious. Nymphs used to be presented as creatures who were dangerous to men. Słowacki, however, chose a different concept, namely, nymphs took the form of girls who expressed ethical order. Goplana's light-heartedness seemed to be the echo of a harmonious relationship between nature and history which was to reign in prehistoric times. The order, unfortunately, was broken by man who committed the sin of murder.

Goplana's guilt and consequently her punishment came into being when she combined her life with the life of man and was seized with human passions. Her efforts to restore the unshaken harmony turned out to be unsuccessful. But flying away, being chased away and punished by God, she remembered to punish the criminal:

Lecz nad mury gnieźnieńskimi lećąc,
Zaśpiewam smutne pożegnanie ziemi.

ABSTRACT

This article aims to tackle the problem of the influence of the world of fantasy on Shakespeare's and Słowacki's characters' psychological portraits. The relationship is significant but before presenting it I would like to show what the role of the world of fantasy is and then, how it refers to and influences characters' psychological portraits.

The world of fantasy plays a great role in the selected works as, first of all, it creates a new reality which convinces people that there is another dimension of existence and yet that the world possesses its own soul. Some members of the world of fantasy appear to ordinary mortals and foretell their future (*Macbeth*) and others bring people to ruin. Sometimes, some members happen to intertwine their existence with the life of man and are even seized

And as we fly together above Gniezno's towers,
I will sing my sad song of farewell to the earth.
(*Balladyna*, 5.1.68-69)

Goplana's farewell took the form of a sinister cloud which cast away up in the sky produced the avenging thunderbolt.

As G. Sinko (1970:28) notes, both *Balladyna* and *Macbeth* feel remorse which does not allow them to sleep peacefully. At the beginning qualms of conscience arouse a feeling of fear and uncertainty since *Balladyna* and *Macbeth* are afraid of the external spot known as the indelible stain. What is more, both characters find the cause of their inner fear; in the case of *Balladyna* it is Hermit and all the visits she has paid to him whereas *Macbeth* is scared by the Weird Sisters who were responsible for telling him what would happen in the future. The dialogue with conscience leading to the truth, reuniting the split personality into one whole and also the necessity for changing social roles contributes to all the modifications in the personality of both *Balladyna* and *Macbeth*. Therefore, *Balladyna* tries to keep up appearances of virtue. The peasant girl learns courtly manners and also learns how to become a real lady. This social promotion of *Balladyna* is connected with hiding all traces of the past. And here *Balladyna* seems to retreat from her family and friends. Her mother becomes a kind of burden for her because she cannot remove all the features of humble birth.

Słowacki managed to take advantage of Shakespeare's idea of the magic world, which is very fallacious. Moreover, this erroneousness becomes irrevocable and sinister in consequence. The supernatural powers of Słowacki's works cannot prevent *Balladyna* from meeting Grabiec at night but they are able to make others undergo a metamorphosis (Grabiec was changed into a willow). One encounters here similarity with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Bottom is equipped with a donkey's head.

with human passions (*Balladyna* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*). Moreover, as Weintraub (1977:227) observes, all the mysterious characters introduce the feeling of threat and yet make all the tragedies more mythical.

By occasional meetings, the members of the mysterious world tend to leave some kind of stain on the characters' psyche, which makes them suffer and deprives them of sleep, calmness, prudence, caution and self-control. Moreover, contact with the mythical world makes the characters' see various strange objects, hear loud voices and undergo hallucinations. Yet the mythical characters appear to witness various events, which should remain invisible, and do everything to reveal all the secret actions which contributed to the deaths of many innocent people. The dwellers of the world of fan-

tasy make the truth come out and at the same time contribute to the fall of the characters who, having committed heinous crimes, suffer from constant tension, stress and emotional burden.

All the fantasy characters and the presentation of the fantasy world enlarge the spatial and temporal nature of the selected works. Moreover, the world of fantasy in the selected works defies the order of the world. The fantasy characters perform various actions which thwart people's plans. It is they, as S. Makowski (1981:130) notes, that create unusual types of love (Kirkor's love to Alina and Balladyna and Goplana's love to Grabiec parallel to Titania and Bottom) and characters' amazing states (Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Balladyna). Yet the fantasy characters govern the supernatural powers: for instance, the lightning which strikes and kills Balladyna.

All the characters coming from different worlds as well as wonderful transformations of characters, all aspects of 'higher' justice in which ordinary people believed so much are presented as if genuine. Therefore, the reader is made to reject his own reality and is obliged to give in to illusion. According to Neoplatonism, man exists on the border between the spiritual and material world. There is some kind of spiritual existence (*mundus intelligibilis*) above man and on top of this existence there is a mysterious and unknowable being whose characteristic feature is a complete unity. This being has its own servants, namely, ghosts and apparitions that act on its orders and instructions. Therefore, while reading, the reader begins to believe that the world of fantasy is real and hence he can neither doubt the great power of the magic objects nor can he question the existence of ghosts, Weird Sisters and fairies. Thus, the influence of the world of fantasy and its dwellers makes the characters haunted, have visions and undergo hallucinations. The fantasy characters also create the atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and threat. Finally, they happen to drive some characters crazy.

The fantasy world provides the reader with unusual emo-

tions, brings about strange topics which tackle the problems of evil and irony of fate which doom the noble characters and promote the most treacherous ones. Therefore, as Sawrymowicz (1972:25-26) observes fantasy arouses metaphysical uneasiness which consequently becomes a thirst for a quest for a deeper meaning of life.

Shakespeare and Słowacki have many things in common in their treatment of the supernatural worlds. First, their fantasy worlds are very similar to each other, for both playwrights show a conviction that despite tangible reality there is another and a completely different dimension of existence. This unknown dimension of existence is inhabited by ghosts, apparitions and witches and it is they that allow readers to have some experience with spheres of extraordinariness and strangeness. Yet Shakespeare's and Słowacki's worlds are much complex, richer in metaphysical plan and confidence in things functioning beyond intellect than those of their contemporaries.

The fantasy worlds and their characters in Shakespeare's and Słowacki's works affect real life characters. Therefore, real life characters undergo transformations both negative and positive and fall into extreme emotional states, for instance, from love to hatred or from weakness to extreme strength. As a result of the influence of the fantasy world they become more complex and possess very rich psychological nature.

Shakespeare's and Słowacki's characters prove that every man is only a prisoner of his own passions. This is true to some extent, for man seeks justification for his vile actions: he does not ascribe evil to his mean nature but to external reality. Thus, Weird Sisters, ghosts and devils symbolise evil for real life characters. All the fantasy characters of Shakespeare and Słowacki tend to delude man with numerous impossible promises and prophecies. And only one fulfilled promise (*Macbeth*) is sufficient for man to believe that he does not decide about his life but he is a puppet governed by higher metaphysical powers.

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