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**The Dark Triad of Narcissism, Machiavellianism and
Psychopathy in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, *Othello*, *King Lear*,
Hamlet, *Twelfth Night*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Mračna
trijada narcizma, makijavelizma i psihopatije u
Shakespeareovom *Rikardu Trećem*, *Othellou*, *Kralju Learu*,
Hamletu, *Na tri kralja i Mnogo vike ni za što*)**

Master of Arts Paper

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Index Number: 2916/2018

Status: R

Sarajevo, 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Freudian Psychoanalysis: <i>On Narcissism</i>	5
<i>Cluster B: The Narcissus Myth and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder</i>	7
<i>Manipulation, Malice and Machiavellianism</i>	9
<i>What is ‘Gaslighting’?</i>	11
Richard III as the True Machiavel	13
Iago and the Power of Persuasion	20
The Role of Bastardy in <i>King Lear</i>	27
Shakespeare’s Magnum Opus: Juxtaposing Machiavellianism and Narcissism in <i>Hamlet</i>	33
The Sickness of Self-love in Shakespeare’s Comedy <i>Twelfth Night</i>	40
Villainy and Love Phobia in Shakespeare’s Great Comedies: <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	47
Conclusion	54
Works Cited	57

Introduction

As one of the greatest playwrights and poets ever present on England's stage, William Shakespeare's name and works have been widely recognised and acclaimed throughout centuries. Shakespeare wrote tragedies, comedies, histories and romance plays, as well as numerous sonnets and poems which remain prominent even in the twenty-first century. His works still function as a fertile ground for various scholarly debates. Every person, regardless of their level of education or professional sphere, has at least once heard a quote from one of Shakespeare's dramas or has read a line from one of his famous lyrical works. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare has left a tremendous influence on many literary authors, whereas his dramas allowed different people to better understand the world which surrounds them. Everything can be found in Shakespeare's works: elements of tragic love, effects of constant change, representation of the human psyche, as well as the manner in which the phenomenon of evil, as such, functions.

This paper will, therefore, focus on the representation of evil and villainy found in several Shakespearean characters. Their personalities will be hereinafter analysed in relation to the so-called 'Dark Triad'. In other words, this thesis will examine the behavioural patterns, malicious tendencies, and power-struggles easily detected when Shakespearean villains are taken into consideration. However, certain narcissistic and/or psychopathic features can also be traced among some Shakespearean protagonists. Paulhus and Williams explain that the Dark Triad is formulated out of three elements: "...Machiavellianism, subclinical narcissism, and subclinical psychopathy" (556). The Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), Machiavellian doctrines and psychopathological mental states all combined create the three points of the infamous dark triangle. Particular features of the Dark Triad can be detected in different characters and usually the traits of this gloomy triangle overlap with one another. They are three separate constructs which overlap with one another in a single unit, that is to say, within a single personality (Paulhus and Williams 556).

Firstly this paper will analyse Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical research especially in regards to the Narcissistic personality disorder, or as Freud initially named it 'secondary narcissism'. For this reason, Freud's *On Narcissism* will be of crucial importance because this essay paved the way for future studies on NPD. Later on, this paper will present a set of interconnected sub-chapters which will focus on several interconnected issues. Primarily, the Narcissus myth will be analysed in

regards to the so-called Cluster B which encompasses four personality disorder, including NPD. Afterwards, this paper will focus on Niccolo Machiavelli and his *Il Principe* political tractate. Machiavelli's work presents the idea of gaining political advantage through manipulation, deceit, power-struggles as well as through the notion that the final end justifies all means necessary to achieve it. In the last sub-chapter, the paper will analyse the phenomenon of 'gaslighting', as a special characteristic of manipulation which creates cognitive dissonance and makes a victim more emotionally vulnerable and susceptible to mental manipulation.

Afterwards, this thesis will turn to the examination of different dramatis personae which incorporate some of the elements of the Dark Triad. The characters selected will be analysed in the Bard's *Richard III*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Thus, four tragedies and two comedies were selected for the further research. The first character to be explored in regards to his behaviour, (psycho)pathological tendencies, as well as his overall portrayal will be Richard III. As a deformed anti-hero, Richard is placed brilliantly at the very centre of the Dark Triad and he clearly incorporates all three sides of the previously-mentioned triangle. This thesis will focus on Richard's hunger for power, his ability to cheat people into trusting him due to his (paradoxical) charm, but the paper will additionally explore Richard's own mental state, thus analysing Richard III as a true Machiavellian figure. Even though he is portrayed as physically deformed, Richard is able to fool other characters around him, eventually disposing of them once their service is no longer required for his social/political mobility. The paper will also analyse the withering of the Chivalric Code through the Duke of Gloucester, due to the fact that his Machiavellian tendencies replace the Mediaeval rules of conduct, honour and dignity.

Iago will be analysed in Shakespeare's *Othello* because he is clearly a character possessing narcissistic and psychopathic tendencies, whereas Iago is a character who uses his high intellect in order to wreak havoc among other fictional individuals. Iago is narcissistic, thus inherently racist, and his hatred for the Moor, Othello, will be exemplified henceforth. Additionally, Iago functions as the play's super-ego, as he rapidly pushes the overall plotline to progress, while he observes, judges and punishes other characters in whatever way he sees fit. Iago's power of manipulation (the power of his voice) and gaslighting will also be compared to that of other literary individuals, especially in regards to *Heart of Darkness* and *The Lord of the Rings*. In many elements, Iago may

be even more dangerous than Richard because other individuals are willing to trust his judgement, although his intentions are extremely pathological.

The third character to be analysed will be Edmund from *King Lear*. Various characters in this famous tragedy could be perceived as villainous, however Edmund was elected due to his brutality and his growing sense of self-entitlement. As any narcissist/Machiavel/psychopath, Edmund is willing to destroy the lives of others around him because he believes that his bastard status, his position as an illegitimate son, grants him this opportunity to take his revenge on others. He is cunning, diabolic, particularly dangerous and sadistic in his own right, therefore he will make for a perfect Dark-Triad individual. In the fourth segment, this thesis will focus on Shakespeare's magnum opus *Hamlet*, whereby it will be explained what happens when two Dark-Triad characters clash. The first to be analysed will be the new king Claudius, who is undoubtedly a real Machiavel, capable of deceiving many around him and even usurping the throne, killing the former ruler and marrying his wife in order to gain power and dominance. On the other side, the tragedy's protagonist – Prince Hamlet – is also an NPD individual, and this can be exemplified in his hypersensitivity, his constant lamentation, but also in his perpetual negative demeanour towards other female characters, such as Ophelia. The clash between two such persons can only end badly, whereas Shakespeare explores the set of circumstances in which both such villainous individuals destroy one another.

In the final two chapters, this paper will delve into Shakespeare's comedies. Taking into account *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio would be the true epitome of a narcissistic figure, who also harbours feelings of success and social mobility. He does not venture through the plotline murdering other characters, yet his sick self-loving nature, his alleged moral superiority and his vivid lack of empathy make Malvolio one of the best examples of a Narcissus figure. Malvolio is one of few Shakespearean villains who is not gravely punished at the very ending of the play, although he suffers some degree of humiliation which affects Malvolio greatly, thus solidifying his role as a so-called vulnerable narcissist. Malvolio does not die in the end, but other characters are able to recognise his true intentions. Similarly to other Dark-Triad fictional individuals, Malvolio prospers to a particular degree during the course of the play, yet his intentions are finally thwarted by a more powerful set of circumstances.

Finally, this thesis will depict three characters from one of William Shakespeare's most entertaining comedies – *Much Ado About Nothing*. In this example, Don John, as well as Benedick and Beatrice will be of interest, because they all exert some Dark-Triad qualities. Predominantly, John is the closest thing to a Shakespearean villain, albeit he is utterly passive. John is similar to Edmund because he shares their illegitimate status and, moreover, he firmly believes that his bastard status makes him a villain. He tries to spoil the wedding ceremony, however his plans are stopped and the day is saved. Eventually, John flees Messina, but in the end he fulfils the expectation of the audience members and other characters who perceive him as a negative character. There are moments when Shakespeare invites the readers/spectators to empathise with John, yet since he does not alter his ways, he remains one of the most notorious individuals in this play.

Benedick and Beatrice can also be perceived as two narcissistic individuals because they are emotionally unstable. The so-called 'love phobia' is something which is commonly associated with narcissistic profiles, and both Beatrice and Benedick are suffering because of their emotional immaturity. It should be noted that the majority of evildoers in Shakespeare's plays have to pay for their actions in the end, while one a few escape their punishment. In case of Benedick and his beloved Beatrice, their ending is a bit different even though they encompass some of the narcissistic tendencies; by opening up to love and empathy, Shakespeare allows more freedom and a bright future for some NPD characters, while those who do not alter their ways have to pay a heavy price. The aim of this paper will be to present such various types of individuals, who will stop at nothing to take the throne, destroy their adversaries or simply annihilate other people's genuine happiness. The amount of detail presented in Shakespeare's own analysis of different personalities is astonishing – and since the Bard was extremely skilful in his interpretation of other people's mental or emotional states, it should be noted that his tragedies/comedies remain relevant even for the people of the twenty-first century just as they were of significance during the Early Modern period. In order to get better acquainted with the enigma of human existence, it should be taken into consideration that such dramatic pieces serve as a warning, but they also issue elements of hope for the readers. The Bard is then situated as the main guide among his spectators, portraying such faces as Richard, Iago, Hamlet or John, while simultaneously helping his audience interpret their cognitive patterns, as well as their behavioural idiosyncrasies.

Freudian Psychoanalysis: *On Narcissism*

Taking into account the psychoanalytical approach in order to better understand the basic functioning of the human mind, there are several prominent names which should be mentioned. For example, Alfred Adler, Carl Gustav Jung and Jacques Lacan are just some of the individuals who greatly contribute to the world of psychoanalysis. However, prior to all the aforementioned persons, Sigmund Freud's own research and discoveries influenced, as well as marked the psychoanalytical approach as it is recognised today.

Psychoanalysis, as such, was founded by Freud (1865-1939), and Freud believed that certain persons could be treated if their unconscious thoughts and emotions are examined, thus gaining more insight into the inner world of people (McLeod). Commonly, Freud is associated with such concepts as the Oedipus complex, id, ego and super-ego, interpretations of dreams (the Unconscious), but also narcissism. Additionally, it should be mentioned that Abrams in his *Glossary of Literary terms* describes the psychoanalytic criticism as an approach which “deals with a work of literature primarily as an expression, in fictional form, of the state of mind and the structure of personality of the individual author” (247). It becomes apparent that a number of psychological phenomena can be exemplified through literary works, especially dramatic pieces. In other words, psychological alterations, disorders of personalities and mental complexes which can be observed in the real world can in turn be described in fictional writings. A renowned literary scholar Terry Eagleton also described the psychoanalytical approach when it comes to literature in his own work *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Eagleton explains that: “Psychoanalytical criticism, in other words, can do more than hunt for phallic symbols: it can tell us something about how literary texts are actually formed, and reveal something of the meaning of that formation” (155). Therefore, Freud's scholarly contribution to the realm of literature cannot be disputed. Besides the previously-mentioned psychological phenomena concerning the Oedipus complex, and three layers of consciousness, this paper will primarily focus on Freud's theory of narcissism.

Narcissism, as a term, is also mentioned by Terry Eagleton, relating it again to Freud and his research. Since Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis also explored the aspects of psychosexual development of people, it is no wonder that his work on narcissism is closely associated with sexual growth. “Auto-eroticism must thus be distinguished from what Freud will call 'narcissism', a state in which one's body or ego as a whole is 'cathected', or taken as an object of desire”

(Eagleton 134). However, in order to better comprehend what degree of contribution Freud made while dealing with narcissism, his own essay *On Narcissism* should be considered. This paper observes the study of narcissism within the framework of sexuality, as a common feature in Freud's study, but it also, perhaps even more importantly, explores the nature of the relationships formulated between the ego and external objects. Although we could not state that Freud's own research was the 'alpha and the omega' of psychoanalysis, we can surmise that his contribution at least paved the way for further studies, as a huge number of works appeared over the course of many years. The very nature of narcissism and the Narcissistic personality disorder has developed immensely and is still being researched even in the twenty-first century.

In Freud's own words, narcissism and sexuality are closely entwined, yet narcissism cannot be perceived merely as a 'pervasion' of some sort. Rather, as Freud indicates: "Narcissism in this sense would not be a perversion, but the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (73-74). Moreover, it should be noted that if the libido of a single individual starts gradually 'withdrawing' from the external world, and if the same libido is redirected into the sphere of the ego, the final result will be nothing else but the demeanour which is perceived as narcissism. Megalomania as such does not appear as a completely new entity in itself, but rather, megalomania is formulated as a magnification of narcissism. Not only that, but megalomania is also a plainer state of narcissistic tendencies (Freud 75). Narcissism can, therefore, be divided into two basic subdivisions or groups – the primary narcissism, but also something which is called the secondary narcissism. This classification, especially concerning the secondary type, has remained an extremely important contribution made by Sigmund Freud for all other discoveries which would ensue after his own time. The type of narcissism which arises from the primary narcissism may be a secondary one, but it is also superimposed upon the primary. In essence, Freud describes the appearance of the secondary narcissism through the following lines: "This leads us to look upon the narcissism which arises through the drawing in of object-cathexes as a secondary one, superimposed upon a primary narcissism that is obscured by a number of different influences" (75). Suffice it to say, Freud's work on many occasions connected narcissism to libido and sexual growth, but narcissism is not explicitly reserved for only that segment of the human psyche¹. He

¹ See Freud, pp. 67-102, for an insightful analysis of narcissism and psychosexual development.

often drew on the literary tradition and classical mythos in order to exemplify his discoveries more profoundly. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* is commonly associated with the complex, while similar psychopathological conditions can be traced even in Shakespeare's magnum opus *Hamlet*. Nonetheless, the deviant behaviour of narcissistic personalities can be detected even in Shakespeare's fictional writings, and while the Bard existed several centuries prior to the contemporary psychoanalytic theory, his knowledge of human nature remains of paramount significance. This paper will henceforth answer two particularly important enquiries: how does the myth of Narcissus connect to Freud's teachings, and where can the readers find traces of narcissism in Shakespearean dramas, while analysing the dramatic pieces through the prism of psychoanalytic theory?

Cluster B: The Narcissus Myth and the Narcissistic Personality Disorder

As indicated in the previous chapter, Freud drew upon Graeco-Roman traditions and his use of the term 'narcissism' comes as no surprise to all those scholars dealing with the study of psychology and literary theory. More often than not, many misconceptions concerning the so-called Narcissistic personality can be detected among individuals applying the term. It is usually associated with self-adoring, personal glorification and selfishness, however such features are only the tip of the iceberg within the realm of (secondary) narcissism. In order to better understand the disorder, the basic etymology and the Narcissus myth should be taken into account.

In Greek mythology, Narcissus was distinguished because of his beauty, albeit his lovely appearance wrought his own tragedy. Namely, Narcissus rejected the nymph Echo or (in earlier versions) a young man by the name of Ameinias. He was punished by the gods afterwards, whereas he fell in love with his own reflection in the watery spring, and either pined away or committed suicide. The flower which sprung after his death bears his name. Because he had refused Echo/Ameinias, Narcissus was forced to fall in love with his own reflection. Thus Freud perceived narcissistic demeanour as a form of emotional immaturity ("Narcissus"). Even though the exact tale may vary from one version to another, the overall story remains highly memorable even in the twenty-first century. The character of Narcissus appears as a direct reference in one of Shakespeare's poetic works. The Narcissus myth is not only reserved for Shakespeare's plays. Allusions to the myth can be traced in *Venus and Adonis* narrative poem, when the Bard describes the episode in which Narcissus attempted to kiss his reflection in the water. "Narcissus so himself

himself forsook / And died to kiss his shadow in the brook” (Shakespeare, “Venus and Adonis”). Shakespeare was certainly acquainted with the story of this mythical character, even though he was not aware of how many elements of the so-called ‘Cluster B’ he had previously imbued into his *dramatis personae*.

The Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) is placed in the so-called Cluster B category. Doctor Andrew Skodol elaborates on the term ‘disorder’ in the following lines: “Personality disorders in general are pervasive, enduring patterns of perceiving, reacting, and relating that cause significant distress or functional impairment. Personality disorders vary significantly in their manifestations, but all are believed to be caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors” (Skodol, “Overview of Personality Disorders”). Furthermore, disorders are classified in accordance to their (dis)similarities or symptoms – three clusters exist: Cluster A, Cluster B and Cluster C. Cluster A is characterised by appearing odd or eccentric. The B type appears utterly emotional, dramatic or erratic, while Cluster C is marked by anxiety and fearfulness. Cluster B incorporates the following: the Anti-social personality disorder, Borderline, Histrionic and Narcissistic disorder. Therefore, narcissism is diagnosed through low self-esteem, fragile self-worth, and an overt degree of grandiosity (Skodol, “Overview of Personality Disorders”). Emotions and erratic demeanour are just some of the features which describe a narcissistic individual, but other traits like the fragile ego or the pathological grandiosity are not the only features usually associated with Cluster B disorders.

Narcissists lack empathy, they manipulate others in order to achieve their own goals, they possess an over-exaggerating sense of superiority, hence grandiosity, but moreover, they obtain gratification from external praise and not from the inner sense of achievement. Narcissists with extremely low levels of self-esteem often quickly burst into anger. However, NPD can be divided into two main groups: the grandiose type and the vulnerable form of narcissism (Wright, and Furnham 1121). In this regard, we move away from the Freudian division of narcissism and present extended categorisation. The grandiose and the vulnerable types of narcissistic personalities do share a lot of common features, yet they still differ from one another at least in their external manifestations.

The most prominent feature, which separates the two narcissistic entities, is the fact the notion that vulnerable narcissists tend to be more timid, albeit they share all the fantasies as their counter-

parts. Their inner ideals are grandiose while they do not ‘appear narcissistic’ on the outside. The grandiose individuals possess more happiness and life satisfaction (Wright, and Furnham 1121). Nevertheless, since they lack empathy and are more than willing to use others in order to do the dirty work in their stead, narcissistic characters tend to be highly manipulative and other individuals, for example in literature, act as their henchmen or eventually become their victims. Their own tragic fates are marked by narcissistic manoeuvring. When Shakespeare’s dramas are concerned, characters which exert manipulation and personality grandeur can be examined as narcissistic individuals. Such dramatic persons achieve their ends: “... through arrogance, manipulation, demand, and love of self, greatness feelings, admiration emotions and non-sympathetic approach to others” (Younus, et al 1). Arrogance, lack of both empathy and sympathy, and hunger for power are the core elements which superbly correlate with the Machiavellian doctrines.

Manipulation, Malice and Machiavellianism

In addition to narcissism and psychopathy, the Dark Triad is formed by inserting another crucial element which is called ‘Machiavellianism’. The term relates to Niccolo Machiavelli and his monumental work *The Prince*. With the dawning of the Early Modern period, the rules of conduct based on knightly demeanour as perpetuated through ‘the Code of Chivalry’ change drastically. The Chivalric Codex altered, or rather withered away, after the closing years of the Mediaeval period. A number of changes ensued, and the differences concerning the failing chivalry can be observed, for example, in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*, through the characters of King Arthur, Lancelot, Mordred and other warriors of the Round Table. The Code of Chivalry implies that a knight should be brave, fearless, but at the same time devout, loyal, courteous and generous. Hence, strict codes of conduct dictated the lives of various knights (Alchin, “Medieval Knights”). Late Mediaeval romances provided greater insight into the world of knightly demeanour, yet not many of the same role-models survived with the arrival of the Renaissance period. Machiavelli explained many of the new doctrines which replaced the Code of Chivalry, while Shakespeare epitomised similar changes in his plays.

Shakespeare often portrayed characters who exert Machiavellian characters as pure villains or anti-heroes, and some examples would be characters alike Richard III, Iago, Edmund, etc. which will be analysed hereinafter. Namely, Machiavellian personalities can be unearthed in such fictional

characters who do not back away from using manipulation and deceit in order to achieve their own goals. By the late sixteenth century, the term ‘Machiavellianism’ was used to describe the art of deception applied in order to progress in life. Through Machiavellianism, glory and survival justify any means, whereas power is obtained by using immoral or brutal methods. Characters with such traits are, among other traits, greatly focused on themselves and their own ambitions. They come across as charming or seductive, they use flattery often, lie when necessary, cause others harm, have very low levels of empathy, lack genuine warmth in social interactions, and possess a complete array of other similar ruthless or psychomaniac qualities. In the Dark Triad, Machiavellianism is closely interwoven with narcissism, because Machiavellian traits correlate with psychopathic tendencies or the Narcissistic personality disorder. Those individuals standing in the middle of the Dark Triad live in belief that they deserve excessive admiration, they are menacingly cold and insensitive towards others, but they also wield manipulation to achieve their goals (Jacobson, “What is Machiavellianism in Psychology?”). It becomes apparent that manipulation is not only suggested as a tool to achieve power by Niccolo Machiavelli, but it also essentially required in order to justify the means through which one is able to develop in political and other spheres.

Machiavelli himself elaborates on the notion of how one is able to obtain high levels of power within a particular community by using wicked means. “These methods are when, either by some wicked or nefarious ways, one ascends to the principality, or when by the favour of his fellow-citizens a private person becomes the prince of his country” (Machiavelli 55). In order to hold onto more power and acquire more influence over others, one would not restrain from applying the techniques described by Machiavelli. Ergo, many Shakespearean characters, in this case predominantly villainous characters, may be settled at the centre of the triangle formulated by such traits. In other words, many of the previously-mentioned characteristics appear to be strongly (inter)connected beneath the umbrella of psychopathic tendencies. Concluding this segment, we are able to surmise that Machiavellian doctrines stand in sheer contrast to the Chivalric Code of behaviour and that in Shakespeare’s time, knightly honour, loyalty, bravado and good will were indeed replaced by doctrines of manipulation, ornamented by promises of greater wealth and influence. The power of manipulation cannot easily be discarded; this paper will portray the recurring phenomenon in Shakespearean dramas whereby numerous ‘good’ characters become

victims to those *dramatis personae* who lacked empathy, behaved cruelly or applied the ‘gaslighting’ method so that they could succeed or dominate.

What is ‘Gaslighting’?

Mental manipulation remains one of the most effective weapons used by narcissistic personalities, and a true Machiavellian figure will definitely not refrain from using cognitive deception and influence. The term ‘gaslighting’ is considered to be one of the most potent powers which a psychopathic individual may exert, through genuine charm, in order to try and undermine the victim’s confidence, thus leaving them susceptible to the deceiver’s influence.

Gaslighting implies a particular degree of insidious deception and manipulation, while the person practicing it is also called ‘gaslighter’. The character of gaslighter attempts to undermine the victim, making them doubt their own reality, whereas the victim afterwards is almost unable to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is real and what is false. Thereby the victim becomes utterly dependent on the gaslighter – the victim is rendered as pathologically dependent on the manipulator’s feelings or thoughts (Duignan, “Gaslighting”). The term was derived from the title of a play adaptation in 1938 – *Gaslight* – and the drama presented some of the basic elements of the technique. Patrick Hamilton’s play depicted elements such as: attempting to convince the victim of the truth of something intuitively bizarre or outrageous by forcefully insisting on it or by marshalling superficial evidence, flatly denying that one has said/done something that one has obviously said or done, dismissing the victim’s contrary perceptions and/or feelings as invalid or pathological, enquiring about the knowledge and impugning the motives of persons who contradict the viewpoint of the gaslighter, but also many other forms (Duignan, “Gaslighting”).

In the play rendition of *Gaslight*, the manipulator is actually the husband character who subtly drives his own wife to a state of near insanity by gradually convincing her that she is imagining sounds up in the attic, but also the dimming of the gas lamps inside of their family abode (Duignan, “Gaslighting”). Interestingly enough, persons with psychopathic intentions try to use this method in order to weaken and transform the victim. Narcissists apply this technique to literally transform numerous people into intellectual or emotional slaves, thus satisfying only their own desire. “The phenomenon is attested in the clinical literature as a form of narcissistic abuse whereby the extreme narcissist attempts to satisfy his pathological need for constant affirmation and esteem (for

“narcissistic supply”) by converting vulnerable people into intellectual and emotional slaves...” (Duignan, “Gaslighting”).

Shakespearean characters also present some forms of similar behavioural patterns of gaslighting, and many of them, as this paper will indicate later on, can be perceived as gaslighters. Additionally, some of the characters are predominantly males and such Machiavellian figures persists in using their power on the victims of the opposite sex. Thus, it is obvious that gaslighting operates on the basis of domestic violence, as well as gender stereotyping, but this element of the gaslighting technique should not be discarded. Sweet elaborates on this notion by stating the following:

Using domestic violence as a strategic case study to identify the mechanisms via which gaslighting operates, I reveal how abusers mobilize gendered stereotypes; structural vulnerabilities related to race, nationality, and sexuality; and institutional inequalities against victims to erode their realities. These tactics are gendered in that they rely on the association of femininity with irrationality. (851)

Sweet furthermore elaborates on the idea that gaslighting in itself is connected to genre, and the technique is more commonly associated to men rather than women. In this pairing, a particular dysfunctional (heterosexual) couple is comprised out of one male gaslighter and one female gaslightee. “...case studies involve a heterosexual male partner as gaslighter and a woman as gaslightee” (Sweet 853). Similarly, Richard III and Lady Anne stand in this contrast, whereas he uses the seductive charm and Machiavellian manipulation in order to woo the widow, eventually succeeding. This paper will examine how many times the situations of gaslighting can be derived from Shakespeare’s dramatic opus, thus elaborating on the notion of how the cruel method may be attributed to those characters who formulate the Dark Triad. Examples of similar devious and diabolic methods are plenty when it comes to the realm of Shakespearean fictitious works, whereas the phenomenon of gaslighting, apparently, was not only reserved for the twentieth or the twenty-first century respectively, but rather, the same form of cognitive influence has always been present throughout centuries and it likewise affected the lives of Shakespeare’s own contemporaries. The term ‘gaslighter’ and ‘manipulator’ can be used interchangeably, such lexemes are more or less identical in meaning, and this paper will use them interchangeably henceforth.

Richard III as the True Machiavel

When narcissism, psychopathy as well as Machiavellianism are concerned, few are the characters which better fit this malevolent triangle than the notorious ruler Richard III. William Shakespeare's historic plays dramatised the inhuman elements of various fictional individuals, albeit paradoxically, because characters like Richard III are essentially portrayed as human beings. However, such *dramatis personae* vividly reflect the dark and diabolical nature of the human mind, as well as various (psycho)pathologies which lurk beyond the outer framework of their demeanour. Therefore, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* reflects the basic mindset of particular individuals during the Elizabethan/Jacobean period in England, whereas the Bard also tried to unmask the horrendous face of history which can be detected through Richard III and all those characters who serve as his henchmen. This dramatic piece illustrates how far the protagonist was ready to venture in order to maintain his goal and achieve his ends, while it becomes obvious for the readership that Richard is a true narcissistic individual, clearly psychopathic, and a true Machiavellian figure.

From the very opening of the play, the Bard through the use of the so-called 'dramatic irony' faced the spectators with the true visage of the protagonist. Namely, Shakespeare went in *medias res* in order to allow his audience to recognise the true Machiavel behind the ever-so-subtle and charming portrayal of Richard III. Abrams defines the dramatic irony as:

...a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends. (Abrams 136-137)

From the opening soliloquy "Now is the winter of our discontent", the audience or the readers are able to understand who the main character is. It becomes evident that there is very little of the honourable Chivalric Code remaining behind the disfigured face of the Duke of Gloucester. In fact, his words reveal the twisted and vengeful personality, as well as his unscrupulous nature which will serve him to taken over the crown later on in the dramatic work. Richard explains to the audience how he had been disfigured by the very nature itself, and how he was not adequately fit to enjoy all the pleasantries of the world. Richard initially presents his charming personality

through the outpour of his own self-loathing, whereas the audience in turn and perhaps unknowingly transform this cunning individual into an epitome of sympathy within their own minds. In the opening soliloquy, Richard actually parrots the abusive taunts he had to endure for years (Donkor, “Richard III and Machiavelli”). Through this introspection, the readers or the audience members try to open their empathy in order to view this deformed (both metaphorically and literally) character as someone who was robbed of dignity even from his very birth. However, as it was established in the previous sub-chapters of this paper, narcissistic and psychopathic individuals actually use their high degree of charm often, in order to present themselves differently. The spectators can thus find themselves in a cage of cognitive dissonance because Richard’s actions later on in the play reveal so much of his cruel and conniving personality.

Richard is adamant to overthrow his brother Edward, which the audience notice from the start, and he wants to become the next king. However, even though his nature appears charming or subtle at particular moments in the play, the amount of cruelty once he obtains power is overwhelming. “The extent of Richard’s wickedness at times seems almost supernatural, and even more harrowing is the fact that his tyrannical reign is rooted in historical and popular culture...” (Green 7). Richard’s villainous nature and diabolical scheming are portrayed through the dramatic irony in which he openly situates himself as the villain within Shakespeare’s fictional scope. This is exemplified in act I, scene i of the play: “I am determined to prove a villain / And hate the idle pleasures of these days” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 11). Regardless of the initial impression which the protagonist places before the readers, Shakespeare undoubtedly formulated Richard as a narcissistic individual, yet as one who is overwhelmingly charming, hence manipulative, regardless of his physical deformities. It is the power of his intellect and his words which allows Richard to be extremely seductive – his silvertongue demeanour stands in contrast to his deviant and blood-thirsty nature, nonetheless he remains particularly charming when the situation demands it. “Therefore, Richard’s overwhelming power, tainted as it may be, gives him a unique allure and distinguishes him as a ruthless but charming king” (Green 7). Richard III can be perceived as a true Machiavellian figure because he is, among other devious traits, an extremely talented actor. Besides his seductiveness mentioned at the beginning, Richard uses and abuses other characters through his scheming mannerisms. His brilliant intellect plays in his favour frequently, because due to his profound acting capacities, he is able to alter the perceptions of other fictional individuals within the plotline. He is the master actor on Shakespeare’s stage, whereas

other characters, such as Lady Anne, Buckingham, Hastings, and many more, serve as his mere props. They are the tools to be exploited until his Machiavellian plans are put in motion (Green 63). Suffice it to say, the main character stands perfectly situated at the centre of the Dark Triad, because he relentlessly exhibits traits of all three categories, entwining them in a single malicious unity. Thus, Shakespeare breathed life in a true Machiavel, who is also particularly interesting because he is simultaneously narcissistic and dangerously psychopathic.

Richard exerts particular narcissistic traits which brilliantly correlate with his Machiavellian side. For example, his rampant self-interest is evident, his hunger to dominate over others is unparalleled, and the fact that he is willing to wreak havoc and mayhem are all elements which make him utterly dangerous (Donkor, "Richard III and Machiavelli"). His opening internal monologue allows the readers to comprehend just how much Richard is able to veil his true intentions. In order to present himself as something different, the Duke of Gloucester hides the entirety of his malevolent nature from the rest of the characters: "Dive, thoughts, down to my soul" (Shakespeare, "The Tragedy of Richard III" 11). Richard's narcissism is peculiar in this regard. He does not possess a comely face, yet he paradoxically takes pleasure in his own deformity. His ugliness is in actuality the index of his villainy, but it is likewise a reflection of the wrong-doing which he executes, as well as the tragedy which awaits him in the play. However, being the master manipulator, Richard behaves in such a way that his face or his body do not reflect the foul nature at first glancing. He is in full control of himself. Moreover, the protagonist makes himself appear utterly humble, munificent or friendly, all the while remaining dangerous for those around him (Wilson, "Richard III's Deformities"). Therefore, besides the spectators who recognise his vile personality in the dramatic irony, other characters are unable to detect his (secondary) narcissistic tendencies. His ugly physicality, as well as his soothing behaviour perpetuate a notion of cognitive dissonance which allows Richard to narcissistically exploit other dramatis personae.

Another example of Richard III's narcissism can be seen in his relationships with Lady Anne. In this scene, Shakespeare describes the main character in a different manner, thereby his narcissistic posturing translates his ill-designed appearance into a new, more proper shape and hue. Richard corners Lady Anne while she mourns her dead husband Henry, who had been killed by Richard himself (Bone 30). Upon Richard's entry, Anne insults him, as she swells in rage. Her style is initially vile and aggressive, however her warrior-like stance is quickly undermined once Richard

applies his malevolent eloquence. He even goes as far as subjecting himself at least seemingly to Anne's own whim. Richard allows Lady Anne to kill him if she so desires, while the audience recognise all of this as his manipulative game. "Anne goes from cursing Richard to agreeing to marry him within twenty-one lines, but throughout the conversation her responses to him vacillate between spiteful hatred and meek acceptance" (Bone 31). Anne's greatest conflict actually lies with Richard's actions; he was the one who murdered her husband and father-in-law, however Richard refuses to accept the blame. He even attempts to use flattery in order to woo Anne, explaining how her majestic beauty was the initial cause of such crimes. "Your beauty was the cause of that effect— / Your beauty, that did haunt me in my sleep / To undertake the death of all the world, / So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom" (Shakespeare, "The Tragedy of Richard" 29). Firstly however, his kind words are not enough to deceive Anne completely.

She is still aware of his dark deeds, and his narcissistic personality does not break her defences so easily. Only after allowing her to kill him does Anne's confidence wither away. Lady Anne hesitates and drops the dagger, commanding Richard to rise up. It is at this moment that Richard achieves his victory. "Arise, dissembler. Though I wish thy death, / I will not be thy executioner" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 35). From this moment onwards, the readers can see that Richard is victorious – his narcissistic manipulation prevails. The conflict of this scene no longer centres on the external battle between the two characters, but rather on the internal discourse. Anne is in her own cognitive dissonance – she is no longer sure how much Richard is gaslighting her, therefore she quickly succumbs to his desires. Eventually she agrees to marry him, and this proves to be her downfall. His deformed body no longer outrages her, and his villainy no longer disgusts her. Anne is fully entranced by the abnormality of his role (Bone 32-33). In this way, William Shakespeare brilliantly portrayed how much Richard was able to use his gaslighting demeanour in order to win over the affections of a woman genuinely crying over her husband's corpse. The narcissistic manipulation, suffice it to say, knows no boundaries. Professor Ni explains how narcissists apply their manipulative techniques in order to coerce people into doing things that they never desire to commit:

The narcissist may regularly use their charm, persuasion, or coercion to pressure people into giving them what they want, even when it's clearly one-sided and unreasonable. Some are particularly fond of manipulating others into surrendering their boundaries. Here, the

narcissistic supply is based on others succumbing to the narcissist's exploitative influence, which they consider “winning” and ego-affirming. Many pathological narcissists do not relate, they use. (Ni, “7 Ways Narcissists Manipulate Relationships”).

In addition to being an epitome of the NPD, the Duke of Gloucester is obviously psychopathic. His tendencies are anti-social, his crimes ruthless and his hunger for power is insatiable. Shakespeare describes Richard as a dramatic character who will murder everyone standing in his pathway to power and glory. His brothers, Lady Anne and other characters are just some of his victim throughout the progress of the play. “... Richard III takes his revenge by becoming demonic, thoroughly evil. Many psychopathic criminals take revenge by inflicting humiliation and violence on their victims” (Millon et al. 461). Richard plots against his brothers, as well as against the crown’s heirs. He does not restrain himself from murder even the children who might pose a threat to his total dominance. In act IV, scene iii, it becomes apparent how cold-blooded Richard can be once he enquires about the death of his nephews: “Come to me, Tyrrel, soon at after-supper, / When thou shalt tell the process of their death” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 217). His relaxed demeanour to speak with his henchman Tyrrel about the death of the young boys further establishes the notion of how cruel the protagonist may be.

This Machiavellian character eventually commits his atrocities and climbs up the social ladder, thereby becoming the new king of England. However, his exploitation of others does not last for long due to the fact that Richard is eventually beaten by Richmond. Once the future Tudor king confronts Richard, the protagonist’s conscience seems to turn against him and all his wrong-doings and foul work appear to backfire on Richard. In other words, as though trapped in a particular sphere of madness, the figures of all his fallen adversaries appear to Richard before the battle. In this state, the new king quickly realises that his conscience is plaguing him. “My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, / And every tongue brings in a several tale, / And every tale condemns me for a villain” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 287). Furthermore, the audience can examine the idea of a true Machiavel actually possessing a soul. He is tortured briefly by the ghost of the past, who remind him of the crimes committed against men, women and children alike. It appears that everything which is Machiavel creates is essentially evil. Undoubtedly, Richard’s actions reflect his Machiavellian/psychopathological nature, but also his short reign and the newly-established system of monarchy becomes tainted by blood. Therefore, any system

established at the cost of the innocent is inherently evil, just like the new ruler in Shakespeare's tragedy. "Any term can be used to define a particular system but all are the systems of evil if they deny justice to the weak" (Khan, "Renaissance and Mechanism of Stagnancy" 198). Shakespeare presented Richard III as the true embodiment of vice. In this regard, the vice itself is punished, and virtue is rewarded. It appears that Richmond in this regard is the antithesis of Richard, because his own virtue is rewarded while the other Machiavel is destroyed (Wilson, "Richard III's Deformities"). The Bard allowed for the gradual growth and development of the Machiavellian protagonist, only to perpetuate the idea of how quickly such villainous individuals can rise to power. They are still overthrown in the end.

Therefore, the previously-established models of chivalry are erased when Machiavellianism is concerned. Rather, the Machiavellian doctrines remove all the values of the Mediaeval Chivalric Code. In *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, the aforementioned code seems to wither away from the very beginning. Obviously, the main character is a Machiavel, therefore the notions of the chivalric conduct are annulled. The rituals of chivalric undertakings and honour appear to become hollow – moreover, the Machiavellian logic evacuates chivalry of its inner meaning (Grady 71). Various elements of honour, loyalty, bravery in its essence appear to be almost non-existent when the Duke of Gloucester is concerned. His tactics, his ruthless malice and his appetite for influence completely shift his perspective. Richard embodies the Machiavellian doctrine(s), and all of his words or deeds remove any meaning from the once-respected Chivalric Codex. There is no longer any sign of a respected knight within Richard, rather he coils in the shadows like a serpent waiting to strike at those who are weaker than him, less dominant or with a lesser degree of emotional and intellectual capacity. In many ways, this can be observed when he turns to the audience directly and starts addressing them again in his dramatic fashion. For example, after wooing and finally winning over Anne, Richard openly proclaims to the audience: "Was ever woman in this humor wooed? / Was ever woman in this humor won? / I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 39). The audience members or the readers are able to surmise – Richard does not adhere to the code of honour or dignity, and he employs every strategy necessary to keep him on top, above everyone else. The glances of his inner self, his consciousness may appear at certain moments to tell the story of his wrong-doings, however this is not enough for a Machiavel. The protagonist not only uses his tricks to obtain power, but exerts more glee and joy at his evil work than one would imagine. Wolfgang Clemen in this regard even

compares Richard the Machiavel to the figure of Vice in morality plays, particularly popular during the Mediaeval period. Vice is the Devil's follower, and he is a figure of diabolical tricks and horrible deceit. Richard's gift for verbal irony could have stemmed from this sort, albeit he is not by any means a comic figure. However, the triumphant glee by which he applauds his own skill at disguise and deception, as well as his ability to cause chaos, may be inherent from the character of Vice. In his aside, Richard seems to invite the spectators to honour him in his manipulation, and additionally praise him for his work (Clemen 125). His arrogance, pomposity and grandiosity are visible at such instances, whereas all chivalric features of honour and respect vanish. Shakespeare further perpetuated the idea that the Chivalric Codex is annihilated by Machiavellian teachings.

Taking into account the Freudian psychoanalysis, Richard III is the example of a personality wronged from his birth. Richard suffered a great congenital disadvantage, but this is something which Freud would consider to be his excuse to commit his evil deeds. Thus he differs, due to his actions, from a civil society governed by morals and laws. Richard is the Freudian 'exception', because it is his deformity which is the cause and not just the sign of Gloucester's villainy (Wilson, "Richard III's Deformities). As established in this chapter of the paper, Richard is narcissistic and psychopathic, but also Machiavellian in his dissembling nature, because he exploited everyone around him, disposing of them once they were no longer of any use to his foul ways. He climbed the social ladder quickly, murdered the previous king Edward, his younger brother George and the future heir to the throne, as well as his own wife. He slashed through his family, manipulated and (ab)used others relentlessly. Even though his conscience at one moment began to plague him, reminding him of his past sins, this was not enough to turn Richard from folly and evil. From the opening soliloquy, all the way to his final downfall, William Shakespeare described the Duke of Gloucester as a profoundly Machiavellian persona, therefore Richard's personality is the actual meeting point of all the elements which characterise people diagnosed with NPD or suffering from psychopathy.

Iago and the Power of Persuasion

In Shakespearean drama, the most interesting villains are those characters which display an impressive degree of complexity, but also intelligence. For Shakespeare, it seems that such traits are crucial in order to characterise the most attractive villainous individuals. The element of deceit required in order to fool the protagonist or cause them harm can be observed with characters such as Iago. In the previous segment of this paper, Richard III brilliantly deceived his brothers, while in case of Shakespeare's other tragedy *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, the devilish Iago skilfully manipulated the Moorish protagonist (Green 3). In this regard, Iago's mastery of manipulation and the ability to use his eloquence to gaslight Othello has fascinated numerous audience members over many centuries. Iago is the character who uses persuasion, combined with his immeasurable intellect, while planting the seeds of lies and corruption, thus contributing greatly to Othello's downfall. Iago exerts an almost supernatural penchant for evil deeds, whereas the ability to use his voice allows this villain to perpetuate quarrels, intolerance and eventually the very murder committed by the Venetian Moor.

In act I, scene i of *Othello*, Iago's disdain for the main character becomes evident. Primarily, it should be noted that Iago is a character which encompasses numerous elements of narcissistic and psychopathological tendencies, which are also imbued with racism. At the beginning, Iago openly compares the Moor to 'an old black ram', and this metaphor stands in contrast to 'the white ewe'. In Iago's descriptions, the readers are introduced to the black-hued Othello and his beloved Desdemona, a young woman of pale complexion. Iago and Roderigo exert this level of racist prejudice from the very start of the play once the men wake up Desdemona's father Brabantio. "Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul; / Even now, now, very now, an old black ram / Is topping your white ewe. Arise, arise; / Awake the snorting citizens with the bell, / Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you: / Arise, I say" (Shakespeare, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* 9). As evident from Iago's epithets referring to Othello, the dramatic villain also compares Othello to the devil, urging Brabantio to realise how quickly Othello might father children with Desdemona. His descriptions are vivid, his comparisons blunt and insulting, whereas the audience are able to quickly comprehend Iago's trickery. Just like Richard, Iago is prone to spreading deceit and lies among other dramatis personae in order to fulfil his own goals. Iago's eloquence henceforth plays in his favour because many characters either directly or indirectly become the victims of his sharp

tongue, and as all victims, such characters are forced to carry the consequences of Iago's manipulation.

William Shakespeare's mastery in penmanship allows for contemporary readers to easily detect particular traces of various elements which make the Dark Triad. Interestingly enough, in order to assert any level of narcissism when Iago is concerned, one should take into consideration the villain's sense of racial hegemony. Iago is undoubtedly racist, as exemplified in his use of animal imagery, and as such is also extremely narcissistic because almost all persons diagnosed with NPD are inherently racist in their own right. In this regard, narcissism is the psychic derivate through which NPD can actually manifest itself. Because racism implies the belief of racial superiority, it also grants the narcissistic person the right to dominate other races which they usually perceive as inferior. Usually, the narcissistic personalities possess the ardent belief whereby both idealise and advocate their belief in racial supremacy (Bell 665). Iago loses no opportunity to constantly remind the spectators of Othello's blackness, hence perpetuating the grandiose sense of self-entitlement and racial superiority further. In this regard, Iago stands in contrast to Desdemona, for as much as Iago in his narcissistic demeanour constantly reminds the spectators' of Othello's colour, Desdemona makes the audience forget his skin-hue. Additionally, Iago also uses his speeches to describe Othello and Desdemona's union as something unnatural. "Iago keeps reminding us of Othello's color just as Desdemona causes us to forget it. To him Othello is "an old black ram," or worse. He loses no opportunity to keep him conscious of his supposed inferiority and he makes the most of the unnatural character of his union with Desdemona" (Goddard 191). Therefore, it can be concluded that Iago indeed possesses a narcissistic personality, while he is at the same time completely diabolic and moreover racist. He compares Othello to animals, and uses every chance in order to exert the racial undermining and profiling as much as it is possible. Haughtiness and jealousy also portray Iago as a narcissistic individual. Shakespeare allows the readers to actually delve deeper into the mind of this villain in order to understand why he loathes Othello so much.

The obvious example of Iago's disdain for the Moor is exemplified through Iago's own words. He openly proclaims that he loathes Othello because the rumour has it that Othello once slept with Iago's wife. In the first act, scene iii, Iago explains the following: "I hate the Moor: / And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets / He has done my office: I know not if't be true; / But I, for mere suspicion in that kind, / Will do as if for surety" (Shakespeare, *Othello, the Moor of Venice*

43). Even here, the Bard elaborates on the idea that Iago is capable of deceiving others even though he is not completely sure whether the rumours of his wife's infidelity are true. Nevertheless, this elements of jealous certainly allows the readership to recognise the devilish Iago as pathological in his conduct. "If jealousy and haughtiness are the calling cards of narcissism, Iago certainly qualifies for the diagnosis. Beyond being jealous of Cassio's promotion, Iago shows himself to be jealous of other people's sexual activity as well" (Pope 24). Iago is willing to exploit everyone around him in order to achieve his ends, and Iago does not restrain from gaslighting. Primarily, it should be noted that Iago falsely accuses Desdemona of being unfaithful to Othello with none other than the newly-appointed lieutenant Cassio. Just as the word once spread of Iago being a cuckold due to his wife's alleged infidelity, here a new web of deceit is weaved by none other than Iago himself. This character gaslights Othello into believing him over Desdemona which eventually proves to be Othello's biggest mistake. It is Iago's manipulative influence of the black Venetian general which will cause the tragic events to transpire on stage. The basic interaction between Iago and Othello is why the tragedy happens. "The tragedy concerns the interaction of Othello, a black general in Venice, and Iago, his ensign. When the jealous and resentful Iago is passed over for a promotion, he plots to dupe Othello into believing that his new bride, Desdemona, has been unfaithful to him with Cassio, the newly promoted lieutenant" (Pope 18).

Taking into account the psychoanalytic theory and the psychological profile of the character, it should be noted that Iago, on a mental level, actually serves as a 'preprojected super-ego'. In other words, Iago is the best possible example of an embodied super-ego. Freud's famous work focused greatly on the division of the human consciousness, and the term of the so-called 'super-ego' is something which usually always reminds different people of Freud and psychoanalysis. However, the division of psyche is not the only reason why Freud's teaching are so vastly popular. Perhaps even more famous is the Oedipus complex, whereas in *Othello*, the readers are able to detect how the terms of super-ego and Oedipus complex connect, thus allowing Iago to manoeuvre the plotline. Stealing Desdemona away from her father allows the conflicted Othello to actually live out the Oedipal fantasy of stealing away the mother from the father. However, the fantasies of this calibre cannot so easily be forgotten and Othello will have to pay for such sins. Ergo, the super-ego in this regard has three main roles: it criticises, it judges, and it punishes. Hence, Iago is the perfect man for the role of this calibre. The overall play of *Othello* may not be completely about the protagonist. Rather, it appears that it is the embodiment of the super-ego, i. e. Iago, that which

controls the play and literally manipulates the majority of the plot (Pople 23-24). Iago's devilish personality drives the plot forwards, and his narcissistic exploitation and vengeance allows him to control the action, while in turn, everything transpires in the manner he desires.

Another hidden asset of Iago lies in the magnificent power of his voice. Richard III used his voice, manipulation and charm to woo Anne, order the killing of the young prince, and the destruction of the previous order, while in *Othello*, Iago uses his own charm in order to affect Othello's mind in the best way possible. Iago not only gaslights Othello into believing the schemes, but also Iago's almost magical voice feeds on Othello's vivid insecurity. It seems that Iago's power of voice has more strength than Othello's own cognitive authority, or his own sight for that matter (Grover-Friedlander 69). The authority of persuasion is not solely reserved for Shakespeare. By using vocal eloquence, sometimes perhaps supernaturally, is something which allows particular characters to take control over the lives of fates of others. The persuasive aspect of voice-control or high and seductive elocution can be observed in other literary works beside Shakespeare. In order to better understand how Iago functions in his manipulation, this paper will contrast the influence of Iago with those of Kurtz from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Tolkien's Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings*. In Joseph Conrad's novella, Kurtz's power of persuasion holds great meaning and significance for the protagonist called Marlow. The authority behind Kurtz's vocal is something extremely special for the protagonist. Conrad applied the voice element in this way to render the charm and authority behind Kurtz's character; Kurtz was able to control the trade in Africa, exploit the natives and even eventually redeem Marlow all through the power of his tongue. This becomes clear once Marlow enquires about Kurtz and his speech, thereby learning that one does not talk with Kurtz – rather, everybody listens to this man without hesitation. “You don't talk with that man--you listen to him” (Conrad 69). Just like Othello listens to Iago and eventually is influenced by the Machiavellian manipulation, the readers realise that voice holds great significance for Marlow in Conrad's novella. Kurtz's voice allows Marlow to be redeemed in the end: “...and as Kurtz's voice redeems him, so does Marlow's voice, which carries the lie, redeem Kurtz's Intended” (Fitch 32). Similarly enough, just like Lady Anne listened to Richard's seduction, while subverting the truth, so did Othello listen to Iago – rather, the power behind his voice was too magical to reject and so persuasive that it was nearly impossible to forget it. Another example is the wizard Saruman from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Saruman the White is a character which commonly uses the (magical) authority of his voice to pass judgements, persuade or control others around

him. However, for Professor Tolkien, the vocal authority has more meaning than simple ‘magic’. In other words, the voice of Saruman symbolises an even greater effect of persuasion than magical glamour. When Tolkien’s high fantasy mythopoesis is concerned, Saruman’s power should be compared to that of gods. If deities are able to create all beings through the power of logos, then Saruman can create elements through the power of his idiom, although his own magical prowess is lesser than that of higher gods. “Simple speech has the effect of a magical glamour without actually being magical. If the deity could create all being by speech or logos, then Saruman, possessing the lesser power, can create seeming (but not being) through speech as well” (Wise 10). Furthermore, just as Kurtz wields authority in his voice, and just as Saruman the White exerts persuasion through lexemes, so does Iago influence Othello in order to do his bidding. Just as high deities/mages alike Saruman are able to formulate things by speaking, Iago is the exact opposite. He is able to destroy and maim through the power of his logos.

In the previous chapter of this paper, Richard III was compared to the figure of the Mediaeval Vice figure, and in order to better comprehend Iago and his motives, the antagonist of *Othello* can likewise be observed through a similar prism. In this way, Iago fits the Dark Triad even better, whereas the readers will be able to examine the Machiavellian and self-centred traits. Although Iago does not run around cutting down opponents like Richard, and although he does not issue orders by which innocent children are murdered, it does not mean that his Machiavellian traits are any less important. As a Vice-like character, Iago is interesting in this way because he tempts Othello into becoming irreparably sinful, thereby this task is finished with extraordinary ease and delight. Such a character, capable of deceiving and double-crossing, has to possess something which makes him attractive for other dramatic individuals. Shakespeare envisioned Iago as a human character. It is precisely because of this humanity that Iago is such a unique Vice. Green elaborates on this notion by explaining that:

On the contrary, it is the humanity of Iago that makes him such a unique—and powerful—Vice. Shakespeare complicates the allegorical figure, who traditionally lacked much in the way of characterization, by granting him psychological reality and making him the most intellectually sophisticated character in the play. Iago woos his victims with more than just a silver tongue. He is tremendously well-developed for a Vice character, which in turn makes him dangerously effective at his job. Although the Vice has to hold a good deal of persuasive

power over the protagonist for there to be any sense of conflict at all, that power is often difficult to define because the Vice is allegorical and too comical to take seriously. (44)

Albeit, Iago is not deformed physically like the notorious king, but his human outward appearance makes him a danger for those in his proximity. For Iago, emotions can be perceived as trifles which hold little importance. Due to his Machiavellian nature, the spectators realise how distracting empathic sensations are when Machiavels are concerned (Green 34). Iago can be ‘deciphered’ as both the devil-like figure and a real Machiavellian personality. Instead of being highly attractive, Iago is usually interesting because of his humanity, his imperfection. Still, he is a character perusing justice. His own sense of justice is an extremely peculiar one and Shakespeare portrays it as something perverse. His methodology to obtain the sense of justice is impossibly evil. In a Machiavellian re-reading of the character, one is able to realise how: “In Iago, we see vengeance taken to an extreme which we can only secretly fantasize about. Iago represents the wicked fantasy of satisfying the ultimate revenge, throwing virtue and other “trifles” to the wind and laughing all the way” (Green 40). Suffice it to say, Iago fits the role of a Machiavel perfectly; moreover, he fits the Dark Triad even better. His racism, his sense of entitlement and superiority, as well as his jealous and hatred, definitely label him as a narcissistic figure, yet his insatiable desire for revenge (or justice in his view) mirror his psychotic tendencies to harm others, make them suffer, as well as obtain selfish goals – hence, a Machiavellian personality. This notion of his psychopathic character is something which Shakespeare described in more detail in act IV, scene i. In this scene, Othello is ‘informed’ of his wife’s affair and he orders Iago to fetch some poison so that he could end her life and dull his pain. However, being even more complex than a Vice figure, Iago offers an alternative – one even more sinister than poison. He openly advises the Moor to strangle his wife in her bed. “Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, / even the bed she hath contaminated” (Shakespeare, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* 149). He adds insult to injury by claiming that Othello should suffocate the beautiful Desdemona in the same bed which she had polluted by her infidelity. Iago’s instructions present a clear picture of a psychopathic figure, who is able to go so far as to explain someone how to commit murder of the innocent young woman. Clearly, this more developed Vice character is a dramatic villain who wields more malignancy than can meet the eye of the spectator. Narcissistic, psychopathic and moreover Machiavellian in his own right, the antagonist of *Othello* is an agent of destruction. Since he is so self-oriented, self-entitled and desires to complete only his own desires, Iago only through his ‘attractiveness’ is able

to achieve the ultimate goal of revenge. Alike Richard the Duke of Gloucester, the antagonist of *Othello* falls superbly into the centre of the Dark Triad, being immersed into the qualities of all three points of the malevolent triangle. However, he does not only stand at the crossroads of such traits. Iago encompasses more features than readers/audience can imagine. “Iago’s attractiveness as a villain comes about from his complexity as a Vice, a devil, and a Machiavel” (Green 42). If the character of Vice or the devil is usually associated with something dark, uncouth or unsightly, then one is able to comprehend why Iago is strangely interesting in this sense. This idiosyncrasy is the product of all traits imbued by the Immortal Bard. He is, therefore, paradoxically attractive, and shares great similarities with Richard, because in his complexity. Iago may be one of Shakespeare’s most sinister villains, but he definitely remains one of Shakespeare’s best-written antagonists, with a multi-layered personality, at occasions bigger than life itself.

William Shakespeare had a profound knowledge of the human psyche, as such. This allowed the Bard to recreate actual personalities on the stage, and thereby many people even in the twenty-first century are able to analyse how round the character of Iago is. The antagonist may be observed as many things, and he is at times ruthless in the eyes of the audience, while perhaps kind in the eyes of other fictional characters, yet Iago remains unequivocally powerful and a truly compelling figure. From his secondary narcissism, to his psychopathic egotism, and especially his self-oriented approach, Iago is formulated in such a way that very few can stand against his persuasion. He is not only one of the most fascinating villains of the Early Modern period, when it comes to theatre, but also Iago is an extraordinary example of a pathological individual whose personality features contribute greatly to the area of the psychoanalysis. Iago is the devil incarnate.

The Role of Bastardy in *King Lear*

The roles of villains and their mental capacities always remains one of the most intriguing elements of Shakespearean dramas. In transmitting human personality from the realms of reality onto the piece of paper, the Immortal Bard of Avon allowed his plays to be affected by various evil characters, their selfish desires and ingenious undertakings. In other words, Shakespearean villains more often than not in actuality move the very play forwards, destroying everything in their path or persuading other more docile characters to complete their bidding. Richard III openly proclaims himself to be the villain, robbed of a beautiful appearance, and as a beast of war and destruction, he acts accordingly: “And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover / To entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determinèd to prove a villain / And hate the idle pleasures of these days” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard III* 11). Richard squirms in his deformity, dragging his stunted arms and limping beneath his hunchback appearance, while simultaneously and psychopathically exploiting and killing innocent people, establishing his ruthless regime of power and dominance. Secondly, Iago is basically the super-ego of *Othello*, ordering and judging other characters yet from his own perspective and his own selfish point of view. Due to a mere rumour, he is willing to retaliate and wreak havoc among characters such as Othello or Desdemona. “How am I then a villain / To counsel Cassio to this parallel course, / Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!” (Shakespeare, *Othello, the Moor of Venice* 83). He is ironic, sinisterly playful with the audience, enquiring why he should be dubbed a villain, however it is obvious that Iago acts only from the sense of his own judgement. Being prideful, and because of his rank and jealous of the Moor, the lives of Cassio, young Desdemona and others will be placed in peril once Iago decides to bring his own sword of judgement upon them. For the reason, the role of villainous characters remains of paramount importance when Shakespeare’s *King Lear* is also analysed.

King Lear is one of William Shakespeare’s best-known theatrical pieces, and one of his best-written tragedies. As such, the tragedy is not deprived of the profoundly impactful characters which are evil to the core, and whose decisions make the plot progress. In the field of psychoanalysis, the cognitive sphere of different persons in *King Lear* also remains an important element. Predominantly, the role of madness and reason, of myopia and clairvoyance, are just some of the focus points when *King Lear* is concerned. One of greatest thinkers of the twentieth century, Michael Foucault elaborates on this notions by explaining: “Here madness and non-madness,

reason and non-reason are inextricably involved: inseparable at the moment when they do not yet exist, and existing for each other, in relation to each other, in the exchange which separates them” (10). However, the question remains – how does the role of sanity connect to the Dark Triad, especially in Shakespeare’s famous tragedy? This query can be answered through the analysis of bastards in Shakespeare’s *Lear*. The evil sisters Goneril and Regan without any doubt can be identified as evildoers, nonetheless, Edmund’s personality becomes even more impressive when the connection between psychopathy and insanity is formulated. As it was the case with Richard and/or Iago, Edmund the Bastard is as psychopathic as Richard and as subtle as Iago. In more contemporary terms, Jefferson and Sifferd explain that: “... many psychopaths are not mentally incapacitated in a way relevant to responsibility” (91). Therefore, it is safe to conclude that Edmund’s selfish tendencies, his scheming and persuasion are the elements of his psychopathy, however unlike the characters of Fool or Lear, Edmund remains a psychopathic individual, who is not mentally deprived. His own psychopathology allows him to be more dominant than the rest.

The audience members cannot easily detect whether Edmund is insane in his own right, because he is in obvious control of himself and others. He is a minor character, almost a sub-plot dramatic individual, who allows the story to progress further in a tragic manner. He is a bastard child of his father Gloucester, and as such he feels a great sense of vengefulness and self-entitlement, whereas his actions bring about the dark events which paint *King Lear* with death and gore:

Goneril and Regan, King Lear’s two elder daughters, and Edmund, Gloucester’s illegitimate son, are the children who turn against their elderly fathers. Their actions, in both the main plot and the sub-plot of the play, run in parallel with each other, and bring about the downfall and eventual death of both Lear and Gloucester.” (Atherton, “Character analysis: The villains in King Lear – Edmund, Goneril and Regan”)

Edmund is obviously prideful, vain and extremely arrogant, and similarly to Richard and Iago, this can also be observed from one of his monologues. In this regard, Edmund presents a particular degree of introspection, just like Richard, and allows the readers/audience greater insight into his own psyche. Therefore, utterly mad or completely sane, Edmund portrays a cunning personality. It should be noted, moreover, that Edmund is also deeply troubled by his position. Since he is an illegitimate child of the Duke, he possesses less dignity than his legitimate brother, and this is something which causes great disdain for any narcissistic/Machiavellian/psychopathic individual.

In the second scene, he even enquires about his ‘baseness’ or rather, why he is described as base due to his illegitimate status. Edmund believes himself to be utterly generous in his mind, and that his outward appearance is honest and true: “My mind as generous and my shape as true / As honest madam’s issue? Why brand they us / With “base,” with “baseness,” “bastardy,” “base,” / “base,”” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* 30). When comparing and contrasting Edmund to Richard, the two evildoers can be viewed as similar in the inner spectrum, while their physicality differs vividly.

Richard is dissembled, whereby he is ugly, and on the other hand, Edmund the Bastard appears as an ordinary human being, all the while inside he is a true narcissist. This much can be examined in his continuation of the aforementioned speech, when he pompously invites the deities to join him and stand on the side of all (wronged) illegitimate children. “Now, gods, stand up for bastards!” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* 31). He possesses a firm belief that even the gods should join his cause and help him contrive revenge against his legitimate brother Edgar and his father. Clear parallels can be drawn with Iago forthwith – the racist Iago finds cause to justify his own negative position, while Edmund here does something similar. Both bring great peril and misfortune for numerous gullible and naïve dramatis personae.

The Dark Triad incorporates numerous elements, and duplicity is one of the best features which prevails in all three of its integral portions. When Edmund’s psyche and emotional state are analysed, Edmund can easily be identified as a scheming manipulator. He deals with double-crossing and Edmund possesses great knack for duplicity and mental games. He stands against his father and half-brother, while they remain oblivious of his true nature. Alike many NPD individuals, Edmund is rather resentful, while his manipulative personality stays unambiguous. He is capable of easily tricking Gloucester. He makes Gloucester believe that Edgar is plotting against him. By doing this, he adds oil to the fire because Gloucester harbours fears which concern the breakdown of society, further enlarging his paranoia. Simultaneously to this undertaking, Edmund is able to play a double game; he gaslights Edgar into believing that their father had turned against Edgar. The Bastard is even capable of wounding himself in order to falsely accuse Edgar before their father, and this is perhaps the clearest example of Edmund’s calculating personality (Atherton, “Character analysis: The villains in King Lear – Edmund, Goneril and Regan”). Edmund is like a magnet for other persons as he draws in their trust and this is reflected in his

potential for evil. It is this sense of bastardy which functions as a driving force for Edmund to commit his heinous works. His modus operandi lies in the narcissistic arrogance and thirst for vengeance, while his bastard status serves as the reasoning for his scheming behaviour.

Interestingly enough, the Bard formulated Edmund's personality in such a way that it is unquestionably vain and vile, yet Edmund is more-or-less completely aware of his characterisation. He may be pathological, however Edmund is not insane in a traditional sense – at occasions he appears to be even more intelligent than other credulous play individuals. Shakespeare exemplifies Edmund's ability to actually understand his own conduct patterns rooted in his twisted moral corruption. In act I, scene ii, the readers are able to see how much Edmund is aware of his unscrupulous nature: "I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the / firmament twinkled on my bastardizing" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* 37). His ability to think is not flawed by his grandiose nature, and this fact makes Edmund all the more dangerous. He is an adversary which others perhaps do not even recognise. The blood-thirsty Richard, the overly-brilliant Iago and the scheming Edmund are all reflections of the Machiavellian teachings.

The Florentine salesman emphasised the notion of placing self-interest and cunning behaviour before the needs of others. As the third piece in the puzzle of Machiavellian doctrine, Gloucester's bastard son fits this description perfectly. However, the bitterness over his bastardy may not be completely unwarranted. His psychopathic tendencies are especially important for the psychoanalytic theory, whereas Edmund's social positioning should also be taken into consideration. "A Marxist interpretation of Edmund would focus on the injustice of the laws of inheritance, and might also see his Machiavellian scheming as reflecting the fact that Edmund has only himself to rely on" (Atherton, "Character analysis: The villains in King Lear – Edmund, Goneril and Regan"). The Bastard is excluded from the communal order, from the societal strata, and therefore his resentment is based on the reality of his existence. The fate of bastards may not be the kindest fortune, yet Edmund's villainy transcends all borders and ventures beyond all limits of lawful conduct. Like a true Machiavel, Shakespeare successfully described the idea of how similar characters do not pick and choose their victims. It does not matter whether other people around are 'good' or necessarily 'evil'. The true Machiavel will unscrupulously dispose of anybody. The Bastard tries destroying Edgar, but also the evil sisters.

Edmund professes his undying love and affection to both women, but after getting better acquainted with his character, the readers/spectators are able to recognise his duplicity by now. Still, Edmund shares even this thought with the audience: “Neither can be enjoyed / If both remain alive” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Lear* 233). Goneril swells in envy and poisons Regan, afterwards she stabs herself. Jealousy is the basic ingredient of their tragedy. They desire more than they are entitled to. Ultimately, it is their villainy which brings forth their downfall (Atherton, “Character analysis: The villains in King Lear – Edmund, Goneril and Regan”). Edmund’s trickery changes the course of the plot, while his dubious scheming hits both the heroic and villainous characters. It is apparent that Edmund’s narcissistic and psychopathic nature spares neither his (alleged) friends nor his unsuspecting foes. In other words, Edmund works solely for himself and it is his own gain which drives him forwards. By being in full control of his words and work, Edmund remains highly dangerous because he is able to manipulate his own emotional state with relative ease.

His vain personality and the bitterness over his illegitimate status depicts Edmund as a perfect NPD individual. On the other hand, the death and destruction of the two evil sisters, but also of Cordelia, Lear and others all make up for the result of the Bastard’s psychopathic state. Edmund as one of the antagonists of Shakespeare’s play utilises more emotional capabilities than the rest of the positive characters, so to say.

Again, considering the general nature of Machiavellianism, it is neither surprising nor innovative to recognize that Regan is more Machiavellian than King Lear and that Edmund is more Machiavellian than Edgar. In terms of emotional intelligence, the antagonists are perceived to more readily display and utilize their emotional capabilities than their respective protagonist. (Cundiff 31)

The Machiavellian element of *King Lear* not only contributes to the villainous endeavours of characters such as Regan or Edmund. They manipulate and exploit other characters, their goals are clear to the audience, and they are absolutely negative personalities which formulate the Dark Triad. However, due to their malicious deeds, other Shakespeare’s characters are able to comprehend the reality of the events transpiring even better. Evidently, the Bard allowed characters such as Lear or Edgar to enlarge their own emotional capacities through Edmund and Regan, or rather, their Machiavellian ploys. Even though their clairvoyance is belated, Lear and

Edgar finally learn to detect malice through the tragedy occurring. “However, as Lear and Edgar appear to expand their emotional intelligence at the end of the play, the protagonists come to understand the malice that they had once been blind to and they are able to reach their fundamental solutions, even if belatedly” (Cundiff 32). The cognitive sphere and the emotional capacities of personalities alike Edmund are obviously in service to their selfish desires. Edmund the Bastard not only influence the family relationships between the father and his daughters, between Edgar and other individuals, but his exploits also tackle the course of politics and monarchy. It appears that Shakespeare allowed for a ‘domino effect’ to occur, and Edmund is definitely the first character to present the audience/readers with the initial push. Edmund’s evil is beyond measure, his methods sinister and his desires unrelenting, and therefore it is safe to conclude that he is a true Machiavel. With this puzzle piece, Edmund like his predecessors in this paper – Richard and Iago – can be classified as dramatic individual worthy of the central position within the Dark Triad. The gods eventually appear to smile upon the bastards of the earth, due to the fact that Edmund’s evildoing is fruitful, however once Edgar finally realises his brother’s wrath, Edmund is challenged to a duel.

Edgar is victorious in this skirmish, and the narcissistic and psychopathic Edmund the Bastard is destroyed. The wrong-doing is stopped, and once Edgar realises his half-brother’s sinister intentions, he grows out of his shell of understanding and confronts Edmund, thus killing him in the end. “For Edgar, this change could allow him to realize the villainy of his brother Edmund and confront him in the form of a duel” (Cundiff 32). It should be noted that the Bard’s theatrical opus allows for a better insight into the reality of evil and darkness. William Shakespeare’s literary mastery renders a perfect picture of the world as it is, and moreover, his dramatic works help people understand the emotional and cognitive state(s) of all those narcissistic, Machiavellian and/or psychopathic individuals. “Shakespearean drama is not just the most vocal protest ever recorded in history but the also a means to learn the method to survive against her evil and ultimately to defeat her” (Khan, “Shakespeare – The Concept of ‘Najasa’ (The Bawd)” 8). Shakespeare’s fictional realms are both a warning and an instruction for all those dwellers of the Dark Triad who refuse to alter their ways and continue planting seeds of deceit and mayhem. Persons like Richard or Edmund do not change, thus their final demise occurs at the hands of other, more heroic dramatic characters.

Shakespeare's Magnum Opus: Juxtaposing Machiavellianism and Narcissism in *Hamlet*

Among Shakespeare's great comedies and tragedies, such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and others, one drama in particular stands out. In this regard, the Bard's magnum opus *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* remains an endless sea of possibilities for literary and scholarly exploration in various fields. As it is universally acknowledged, Freudian theories have been applied when *Hamlet* is concerned in numerous ways, especially in terms of the well-known Oedipus complex. The family dynamics between Hamlet, his mother and uncle-cum-father, Hamlet's own mental (im)balance and other aspects of his emotional state appear as the fertile ground for the psychoanalytic theory. However, since the aim of this paper is to depict Shakespearean characters, predominantly villains, through the lens of the Dark Triad, then it is logical to examine the character of Hamlet through the same phenomenon. Furthermore, this paper explores the idea of the clash between a narcissist and a Machiavel. Claudius and Hamlet respectively can be analysed as *dramatis personae* situated at the very centre of the infamous Dark Triad, because both dramatic individuals incorporate various elements of the Triad. Thus, the basic aim of this segment is to portray the evil deeds of Claudius, as well as his unscrupulous and manipulative personality. The character of the protagonist should not be forgotten in this regard, due to the fact that Hamlet himself appears as a vulnerable narcissist at particular occasions.

The first character to be analysed in this segment is the new king Claudius. The new king is by no means a static character. His primary role is to spawn Hamlet's confusion, as well as his anger. Shakespeare did not portray Claudius thoroughly, rather the audience/readers can notice that Hamlet is far more developed than his uncle, however the Bard did present Claudius as a treacherous, usurping king of Denmark. When Shakespeare first introduces Claudius, he strikes many individuals as an intelligent and capable ruler. He even addresses his brother's death and the oncoming conflict within Denmark. Since he is primarily characterised as being superbly intelligent, Claudius knows that the sudden change in government could spawn civil unrest and cause uprisings. His speech juxtaposes the loss of his people with the new beginning formulated under his alleged care (Mabillard, "Introduction to Claudius"). The audience can, henceforth, recognise that Claudius's speech is that of an expert politician. His ability to use words and his inherent charm can be paralleled to Iago's power of speech and eloquence. In his speech, Claudius addresses the following: "Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death / The memory be green,

and that it us befitted / To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom / To be contracted in one brow of woe, / Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature / That we with wisest sorrow think on him, / Together with remembrance of ourselves ...” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 11). In this excerpt, the audience can notice that Claudius is trying to perpetuate the sense of grieving; he is falsely grieving the death of his brother, the former king, and tries to collect general sympathy among his listeners. He takes up the role of the main mourner, while the saddened people can flock together in a collective suffering.

Since he was able to gain their sympathies in his speech, Claudius can now turn to kingly duties. Outwardly, Claudius poses as a responsible individual, because he tries to tackle some political issues – after his speech, he sends Cornelius and Voltimand to appease the Norwegian king, while he also successfully deals with Laertes’s request to leave for France (Mabillard, “Introduction to Claudius”). Undoubtedly, Claudius tries to hide his true form and nature. As the readers discover later on with the apparition of the ghost, Claudius actually murdered his brother, married his widowed wife Gertrude, and thereby he usurped the throne. He became the new ruler of Denmark through foul play and plotting. This emphasises the notion that Claudius is a completely different person, and that his overall appearance can be deceiving. After his attempt to win the sympathies of the people, the readers can easily examine the new king’s character. The cognitive dissonance is obvious since his previous actions do not reflect his new ‘benevolent’ ideals. In act I, scene v, even the ghostly apparition describes Claudius in a negative manner: “Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, / With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,-- / O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power / So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen” (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 29). Evidently, the former king describes Claudius as an unscrupulous man, calling him incestuous because he married his brother’s queen. Claudius uses his power in order to seduce the queen in a shameful coil of lust. Richard III managed to seduce Lady Anne while she was mourning for her husband, thereby emphasising his Machiavellian and narcissistic nature, whereas in this scenario, Claudius not only murdered his brother, but also connected with his widow in the matrimony.

Shakespeare portrayed Claudius as the epitome of the worst human qualities, that is to say, the worst human flaws. He is the epitome of corruption, lust, greed and excess (Mabillard, “Introduction to Claudius”). His criminal activity is unparalleled in this drama, while his anti-

social behaviour can be reflected through his criminal past. This perpetuates the notion that Claudius is one man outside of his quarters, and a completely different person from within. Due to the fact that he committed regicide and fratricide at the same time, his criminal conduct can be examined as utterly anti-social (Millie 380). Like the true Machiavel, Claudius is seductive, manipulative and dangerous in his own right. He is willing to kill his own family members to move up the social ladder, take over the entire kingdom, but he is also willing to indulge into an incestuous affair with his brother's widow. Moreover, since he is capable of killing King Hamlet, and trying to harm his nephew Prince Hamlet, he is similar to Richard or Edmund who also threaten the existence of their own kin. All of these Machiavellian characters, entwined within their pathologies, present a looming peril lurking from behind every corner of the dramatic plotline.

However, Shakespeare presents a fascinating phenomenon of the waking conscience with both Richard and Claudius. As exemplified in this paper earlier, Richard III is taunted by the apparitions of his former victims, and thereby his conscience starts plaguing him even for a short while. This indicates that narcissistic and Machiavellian characters can possess some degree of covert conscience, whereby the writer portrays a similar phenomenon with Claudius. Shakespeare describes Claudius as a dubious, murderous and multi-faced villain. The new king is portrayed as a man who is unable of refraining himself from hedonic satisfactions. In other words, Claudius constantly tries to fulfil his basic desires. Yet he is not completely void of feelings of regret, as they sometimes weigh upon his heart. Shakespeare explores this phenomenon in the following description of Claudius: "O, 'tis too true! / How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience! / The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art, / Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it / Than is my deed to my most painted word: / O heavy burthen!" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 63). In his aside, the ruthless Claudius presents the intimate sensation of guilt to the audience. In act III, scene iv, Claudius even tries to pray in order to ask God to absolve him of his heinous crimes.

However, in this soliloquy, Claudius realises that he still reaps the rewards of victory, accomplished through his vile deeds, and therefore he cannot give them up so easily. "My fault is past. But O, what form of prayer / Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder? / That cannot be, since I am still possess'd / Of those effects for which I did the murder, / My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 83). Power

plays an important role in this segment – Claudius cannot give it up. The benefits of his crimes narcissistically feed on his insatiable nature, and his devious personality will not allow him to atone for his sins so quickly. William Shakespeare depicts the idea of the villain’s intimate conscience in this regard, while the readers for their own part are able to analyse the various layers of the character’s personality. The other side of his personality appears when Claudius displays some emotions of a relatively gentle nature – he is sorry for Polonius’s death and he does not treat Ophelia too harshly like Hamlet. However, even though there may be characters which he genuinely cares for, Claudius does not allow his emotions to stand in the way of his ambition.

For example, he refuses to murder Hamlet directly for Gertrude’s sake, and he refuses to allow Rozencrantz and Guildenstern to read the content of the letter on their voyage to England. If they had known, perhaps they would have proceeded with more caution. He also does not stop Gertrude from drinking the poisoned wine during Hamlet’s duel, because the new king is aware this would reveal his plotting nature and his Machiavellian crimes (Mabillard, “Introduction to Claudius”). Even Claudius is eventually killed by Hamlet, just like the rest of the villainous characters. Claudius is diabolical, scheming and utterly manipulative, and he is not lacking pathological ambition which causes him to commit great atrocities. He does show the other side of his nature occasionally, especially presented through the scope of his Christian religion, however even this is not enough to stop Claudius at his tracks. Only after being killed by Hamlet at the ending of the tragedy is his foul plotting thwarted. The Machiavellian ambition in Claudius, his narcissistic and gaslighting demeanour, as well as his psychopathological crimes all make up for the Dark Triad when this Shakespearean villain is concerned. Nonetheless, this dramatic piece does not possess only one narcissistic/villainous character. In fact, *Hamlet* is a play which harbours at least two Machiavels standing in contrast to one another. Those are, of course, the previously-analysed Claudius, as well as the young prince.

Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, can also be viewed as an emotionally imbalanced personality. Hamlet’s psychologically stressful life commences after he realises the truth behind his father’s passing. Once Hamlet obtains the information from the spirit that his father did not die by accident, the narcissist in Hamlet can be observed throughout Shakespeare’s greatest dramatic work. The protagonist of the play is constantly prone to violent or cynical outbursts. This is indicated through certain caesuras in the play where the spectators can observe his contemplations or emotional

tsunamis. Primarily, NPD individuals tend to have a more difficult time restraining or coping with their emotional states. The external stimulus plays a major role in Hamlet's cognition. "There is evidence indicating that narcissistic individuals are hyper-sensitive to information that could cause them psychological distress..." (Lamia, "Do Narcissists Actually Lack Empathy?"). From this, it is safe to assume that Hamlet's own distress appears once he, so prophetically, learns the truth behind his father's demise. This in turn causes his hyper-sensitivity to present themselves. Since he is emotionally imbalanced, Hamlet as the vulnerable narcissist stands in contrast to Claudius who employs many tactics from gaslighting to blood-shedding and various other atrocities. Hamlet has a knack for perceiving the world and the people around him in two dimensions – everything is either completely good or utterly evil. "In the meantime, the prince's narcissistic perceptions of human beings as all-good or all-evil caricatures are still in operation" (Machado 36). Claudius may gaslight people into believing his grief, he may manipulate Gertrude and others, yet he is definitely not the only NPD character in the play.

In *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, the readers were able to observe how grandiose a narcissist can be, when for example, Richard invites the audience to join his merriment over the wooing of Lady Anne. His arrogance and pomposity arises in his grandiose self. The situation appears to be quite different in Hamlet's case. If Hamlet is perceived as a narcissist, Machado explains that: "... a narcissist is one whose perception of reality is distorted, usually in a self-centered fashion, and who, therefore, has extreme difficulty relating to the world around him or her except on what Avi Erlich calls an "infantile" level" (22). Ergo, Hamlet's hyper-ventilation becomes obvious and at certain moments, his inability to act, but also his constant procrastination can reflect this state of the emotional imbalance. For example, in the second act, Hamlet's emotional contemplation can be identified once the prince laments about his own 'villainy': "Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across? / Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face? / Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat, / As deep as to the lungs? who does me this? / Ha!" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 59). The erratic nature, the exclamations, the constant enquiries make up for a particularly disturbed emotional state and a particularly distressed personality. In his shock, revelation and trauma, Hamlet's vulnerability is brilliantly exemplified. Due to his vulnerable state, Hamlet's perception of the world is greatly distorted. Hamlet is sometimes exquisitely violent, even brutal by words alone. Interestingly enough, Claudius as another psychopathic and Machiavellian figure does not show an excessively violent or aggressive

behaviour when female characters are concerned. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare depicts Hamlet as definitely diabolical when his interactions with women are concerned. Hamlet, due to his mother remarrying, observes many women as corrupt creatures. Gertrude's demeanour and her second marriage break Hamlet's almost-perfect illusion of the world. And for an idealist, this is hard to bear. Hamlet sees Gertrude as a bad mother, and he projects this image onto other women, including Ophelia (Machado 36). Taking into account the psychoanalytic theory, this phenomenon of Hamlet's obscure vision can be analysed as a glimpse of the Freudian projection in Shakespeare's magnum opus. Hamlet's defensive mechanisms are exemplified thus: individual attributes, unwanted thoughts and ideas, and various motives and sensations are transmitted onto another person. They are projected on somebody else (McLeod, "Defense Mechanisms"). The protagonist is unable to bear the difficulties of the world, the imperfections of the environment, and Hamlet's narcissistic violence can be observed in his verbal oppression of female characters. He is frequently aloof when Ophelia is concerned and he uses offensive words when he addresses his Polonius's daughter. "Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a / breeder of sinners?" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 65). Hamlet is prone to violent outbursts due to his ever-prevailing sense of fear.

Such instances of fear break through Hamlet's defence mechanisms, and panic overpowers him. Due to the previously-mentioned psychological projection, Hamlet's cognitive state is important; he allows the fears of maternal power to break through his narcissistic wall, while the sense of disloyalty makes him vulnerable. Due to this sensation, he distresses Ophelia, albeit this female character in particular is the exception to the 'rule' of the alleged female disloyalty (Machado 36-37). The prince behaves in an exceptionally cruel manner, whereby on occasions his violence seems to reflect his madness. It appears that as an NPD figure, Hamlet is lacking empathy. He might be lacking the empathic element in his own right, however certain narcissists are still able to recognise and react to the suffering of others. The problem is that more often than not the narcissists are motivated to disregard such observations. "Some studies have shown a relationship between narcissism and deficient emotional empathy, but that narcissists, nevertheless, can recognize and react to the suffering of others, even if they are motivated to disregard such distress in other people" (Lamia, "Do Narcissists Actually Lack Empathy?"). Therefore, suffice it to conclude, Hamlet is able to detect the emotional imbalance he causes other people to go through, however the prince is unwilling to venture further and ease the distress from others. For this reason,

and his hyper-ventilation, Hamlet's vulnerability is evident. Hamlet is a narcissist, however his mode of functioning may be slightly different from other forms of narcissism explored in this paper. Nevertheless, Hamlet is not the only character to commit atrocities, such as killing deliberately. Claudius killed King Hamlet, while the protagonist, for example, murdered Ophelia's father Polonius.

The prince murders Polonius behind the curtain, although unknowingly. Hamlet believed the spying figure eavesdropping on his conversation with Gertrude to be the new king, however it was Ophelia's father. After killing him, Hamlet proclaims: "Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 86). Nonetheless, the murder in act III, scene iv does not stop Hamlet's array of blood-shedding. Perhaps the greatest amount of psychopathic mayhem occurs at the very ending of the tragedy. After the duel, Laertes, Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet all fall either by blade or poison. It is in this scene that William Shakespeare describes the clash between the two psychopathic figures – the Machiavellian king and the narcissistic prince are destroyed. Once he stabs the king, the protagonist in cold blood avenges his father and says: "The point!--envenom'd too! / Then, venom, to thy work" (Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* 139). Suffice it to say, neither the protagonist nor the main antagonist are exempt from the Dark Triad. Both characters appear to have more in common than they would care to admit.

Claudius and Hamlet exert psychopathic conduct, as they cause psychological distress and physical harm to various individuals. For this reason, Shakespeare's greatest tragedy is overflowing with suicide, blood-shedding and mystery, better perhaps than any contemporary thriller motion picture available. Claudius used deception to use and abuse other characters, while Hamlet retaliated in constant anger, frustration and procrastination. Therefore, Claudius the Machiavel and Hamlet the Narcissist perish at the ending of the performance. One evildoer destroys the other either directly or indirectly. In a similar manner to the previous characters analysed in this paper, those individuals sharing the traits of the Dark Triad perish because they incorporate elements of the infamous triangle. Richard is overthrown and killed, Iago is captured, and Edmund is defeated in a duel. Herein, the Machiavel is stabbed, while the emotionally imbalanced prince dies of poisoning. It appears that Claudius and Hamlet do not differ from one another drastically after all.

The Sickness of Self-love in Shakespeare's Comedy *Twelfth Night*

The Shakespearean dramas present a wide array of various themes. Topics concerning life, death, war, parenthood, human relationships, hatred but also love are just some of the aspects which can be analysed in Shakespeare's ingenious opus. Love, as one of Shakespeare's most prominent themes, prevails in his lyrical cycle, but also in his dramas. Usually, love is detected in numerous works such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, as well as many others. Love relationships are usually described through romantic interactions and some of Shakespeare's love relationships are highly complicated. Some relations end tragically, as seen in the example of *Romeo and Juliet*, whereas some end positively for the characters and this opposite phenomenon is usually observed in the Bard's comedies. This paper also analysed how certain Machiavellian or psychopathic personalities used love to obtain their own goals, rather they used love as a tool of some sort. The glorious phenomenon of love was nothing else but a method which certain villains used in order to prosper further. Richard seduced the widow Anne, Iago planted discord among Othello and Desdemona, while Edmund's scheming wrought more hatred than genuine affection among other characters. However, Shakespeare also described the phenomenon of self-love. In other words, love does not only exist between two or more separate individuals, because it is also an intimate relationship with oneself. The Bard also explored the idea of how self-love can be compared and contrasted to an ailment of some sort, and how it can be perceived as something highly negative.

Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's best-known comedies. This comedy encompasses various elements of love, hatred, gender, pathological ambition but also narcissistic desires and pride. The term 'self-love' appears elsewhere in Shakespeare's opus, also. In order to exemplify the idea of how the Bard fully understood the term in his own right, one ought to take into consideration a particular quote from another Shakespearean drama – *Henry V*. Act II, scene iv presents the playwright's perception of the phenomenon as Shakespeare explains: "Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin / As self-neglecting" (Shakespeare, *Henry V* 133). Clearly, the playwright elaborates on the notion that only by being neglectful to oneself, a person is committing a more terrible a sin than overflowing with self-love and self-admiration. However, this quote perpetuates the notion that self-love was, indeed, perceived as an unbecoming phenomenon. Perhaps it was a lesser sin than self-neglecting, but it was a sin nonetheless. For this reason, this chapter of the paper will

explore how self-loving also manifests in *Twelfth Night*. In order to better differentiate between genuine personal affection and a form of the Narcissistic personality disorder, it is important to make a clear distinction between the two approaches.

People who are essentially narcissistic, whether they are the grandiose type or a vulnerable version of NPD, tend to simply perform a role of a caring friend or a devoted lover. They are frequently more concerned with how they perform this part rather than with the quality of their presented affection. For this reason, Dr. Well explains that individuals with genuinely high degrees of self-love predominantly take responsibilities for their actions. They derive this sensation by taking responsibility for their part in different situations. The narcissistic personality functions in the opposite manner: they do not possess a sufficient amount of character to take responsibilities for the things they do wrong.

A narcissist focuses on playing the part of a caring friend, a devoted lover, or a good employee more than on actually performing the role with skill and competency. They're much more concerned with how they look playing the role than with the actual quality of their performance, or how others are affected by their behavior. People with a high degree of self-love derive it from doing a good job and taking responsibility for their part in things. Narcissists, however, don't have much incentive to do a thorough job or take responsibility when things go wrong. (Well, "Is Self-Love Healthy or Narcissistic?")

The discrepancy between an honest degree of loving oneself and the NPD is evident herein. Even though NPD may appear as a form of self-loving, it can actually be perceived as a form of illness. The idea that self-love may manifest itself in a shape of sickness traces its roots from the ancient tale of the Narcissus myth. It becomes obvious that Shakespeare drew on the tale of Narcissus, and therefore formulated his story-telling in an extremely interesting fashion by relying heavily on this mythical figure. Shakespeare caricatured the figure of Narcissus through the interpretation of Malvolio. Thus, Malvolio can be analysed as a character which presents particular behavioural elements of the Dark Triad, or more precisely, of the traditional secondary narcissism. He is, in Shakespeare's rendition, and actual Narcissus. In the first act, v scene, Olivia deliberately and openly calls out Malvolio for his narcissistic personality. Olivia detects Malvolio's self-love as illness. "O, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and taste / with a distempered appetite"

(Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* 31). Therefore, the co-relation between self-loving and sickness, at least when William Shakespeare is concerned, becomes evident.

In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is a character utterly consumed by himself. Moreover, he is blindly self-consumed and he establishes himself as an overweening rogue in the minds of both his fellow-characters and the audience. He is interwoven tightly into the social circles wherein he moves, however simultaneously his own self-worth is explicitly connected to his self-love and his self-understanding. Malvolio in actuality perceives himself worthy because he is highly valued in Countess Olivia's household (Hobgood 7). The over-arching sensations, which Malvolio constantly experiences, are those of fear and/or shame. These are closely entwined to his intensely public social structure, and he sees this structure as a prospect for significant advancement. However, his social potential was nothing else but a fantasy conjured in his self-absorbed mind. His never-ending desire for advancement and his passionate affection for Olivia are always presented as a public knowledge in the play, whereas this exposure makes him particularly susceptible to shame. Malvolio's vulnerability can become extremely enlarged if other characters notice his tragic flaws (Hobgood 7). Suffice it to mention, the Shakespearean Narcissus in this comedy is a prideful figure, and like many Machiavellian or psychopathic figures he is focused on himself and solely his own self-advancement. However, due to his feeling of shame and his confidence are easily enfeebled if others notice Malvolio's weaknesses. Therefore, he definitely becomes a vulnerable narcissist if other dramatis personae are able to see beyond the framework of his pretence.

The Bard usually presented the narcissistic figures, his fictional overachievers, in a highly negative fashion. Even Malvolio's name reflects his prideful nature and his sick intentions. Malvolio's name is Italian for 'ill will'. Olivia's lady-in-waiting Maria described Malvolio as a character who was morally strict. She would also perceive him as someone who was willing to go out of his way in order to please the Countess, and she also believed him to be particularly arrogant because everyone had to look at him with admiration (O'Neill, "Narcissistic Malvolio in Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night'"). Maria gives a longer speech through which the readers or the audience members are able to examine Malvolio's sick self-love. Malvolio is undoubtedly a negative character, whose narcissism is easily detectable because his insatiable desire to be adored does not escape the attention of the spectators. "...as he thinks, with excellencies, that it is his grounds / of faith that all that look on him love him" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* 63).

Moreover, the playwright made it easier for the spectators to analyse Malvolio's character, not merely through his name, but also through other characters' points of view.

This narcissistic figure was described differently by various fictional characters, yet their descriptions are all similar in a sense that they are highly negative. The Countess addressed his sick self-love, Maria focused on his desire to be constantly adored, while Feste the jester addressed Malvolio's constant eavesdropping and tendency to poke his nose into other people's business. "I did impetuous thy gratillity, for Malvolio's nose / is no whipstock, my lady has a white hand, and the / Myrmidons are no bottle-ale houses" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* 57). Regardless of his puritan-like stance and his prideful conduct, Malvolio's narcissism is evident even to other characters. He is grandiose, arrogant, self-obsessed and selfish, thus all of such traits make for a true narcissistic personality. His paradoxically 'vulnerable confidence', his fragile ego and his self-adoration create a true Renaissance Narcissus.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Malvolio is not a flat character. Shakespeare breathed life into this narcissist by adding additional layers to his personality. Besides all the previously-mentioned traits, Malvolio was a skilled man in his profession. As the steward to Olivia's household, he took his position seriously. For a servant character, he was very mature in his professional sphere. Olivia believed him to be sober and respectful, and she even desired his service more during her time of mourning for her brother. Since he was docile and serious, it was much better to have Malvolio attend to his mistress' needs rather than having other, more cheerful servants attend to the Countess (O'Neill, "Narcissistic Malvolio in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night""). Malvolio also stood in contrast to other characters perhaps because of his rigid worldviews.

As it is the case with many NPD individuals, Malvolio often condemned other people's behavioural patterns. The majority of people in Olivia's household enjoy dancing, drinking and partying, while Malvolio on the other hand rejects such practices with the utmost disdain. Because of his demeanour, Malvolio can be perceived as an antagonist of the play. He stands in a complete contrast to people and the culture surrounding him. His arrogance and his strict moral rules often get in way of his interactions. Furthermore, Malvolio also tried to persistently impose his arrogant sets of values onto other characters (O'Neill, "Narcissistic Malvolio in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night""). Malvolio even went so far in his arrogance that he even overstepped his social constraints. In essence, he overstepped his social position by criticising Maria, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew.

Because the trio went out drinking, he called their demeanour disorderly and unbefitting and even threatened to report their behaviour to Olivia. However, Sir Toby appropriately replied to Malvolio's meddling and reminded Malvolio of his servant status. Toby explained that: "Out o' tune, sir? You lie. Art any more than a / steward? Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, / there shall be no more cakes and ale?" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will* 61). It becomes obvious that Malvolio is rigid in his outward behaviour, but by being a hypocrite, he is not so reluctant to overstep his boundaries. He places much emphasis on the social positioning, yet Shakespeare portrayed the manner in which this character narcissistically decided to venture outside of his framework and critique others. Sir Toby puts Malvolio in his right place once he reminds the steward of his actual social value, rather than the imaginary one which Malvolio definitely harbours. Through such interactions, a narcissistic individual can perhaps painfully realise that the world does not revolve solely around and for him/her.

Since Malvolio's character is not only restricted to narcissism, and as it has been previously established in this paper, some of his traits also resemble those of a Machiavellian figure. Malvolio then easily fits the description of a Dark-Triad personality. His overall demeanour may not be explicitly Machiavellian, however he can still be perceived as one at least tentatively. As Bauer explains: "... Malvolio is seen, however tentatively, as being related to the "Machiavellian," whose crafty machinations are turned by Shakespeare into the silly antics of the bitter fool of *Twelfth Night*" (224). This paper previously explored Richard's insatiable hunger for power, but also the manner in which he was able to take the throne by killing the previous ruler. Since these are obvious expressions of a Machiavellian personality, then it becomes obvious that Malvolio as a Machiavel also harbours similar desires to rule. In fact, Malvolio constantly day-dreams of greater power and authority. In the realm of Shakespeare's imaginary Illyria, the person desiring to be called 'Count' aspires to the position of a ruler. This aim is political and it is everything that the self-loving Malvolio desires. "In the realm of Shakespeare's imaginary Illyria, he who wishes to be "Count" aspires to the position of sovereign or prince: it is Orsino, the ruler, who is repeatedly called by that title in the play. The retinue of which Malvolio dreams exceeds everything we may expect from the size of Olivia's household" (Bauer 225). Clearly, Malvolio's narcissism simply adds flavour to the taste of his Machiavellian personality. It is for this reason that his pathological ambition for social mobility marks him as a Machiavellian character.

However, Malvolio's endeavour to gain more political power and authority is not something which is meant to last in Shakespeare's writings. Rather, the Machiavellian figures quickly fall from grace, so to say, and their never-ending hunger for power backfires on them in one form or another. In fact, *Twelfth Night* portrays the full circle of Malvolio's malicious desires as he is degraded to his previous steward position at the end of the comedy. "Malvolio is back to his old position of steward and fellow of servants in the diminutive *civitas terrena* of Olivia's household" (Bauer 237). Malvolio not only counts himself as an elect individual, but he also squirms in his pathological ambition for dominance and respect. It is his desire to become god-like (omnipotent) that is spoiled by the Machiavellian frustration because he is never fully capable of obtaining his goal. His frustration and ambition are put into perspective of self-love which is overcome by those individuals who are lucky enough in life. "Thus, Malvolio's counting himself among the elect, his frustrated "Machevillian" ambition to become godlike, is put into a perspective of self-love being overcome by those who truly deserve to touch Fortune's fingers" (Bauer 238). Undisputedly, the Bard's opus reflects his ingenious ideas: his narcissistic and Machiavellian characters do not succeed fully in their intentions. Those characters at the centre of the Dark Triad, individuals such as Malvolio who are sick with self-love and personal power, eventually achieve very little or rather they become completely annihilated. Being eternally victorious is not Malvolio's forte. His own ambition is something which causes him to be in want of more power yet his dreams are never allowed to last and Shakespeare makes certain that such individuals stay in their right place or are removed completely.

Malvolio's character, nonetheless, contributes greatly to the sense of humour in *Twelfth Night*. While many audience members may gasp in shock at Richard's murder or roar with pleasure at Iago's plans being thwarted, it should be noted that it is Malvolio's self-admiration which serves as Shakespeare's comedic effect at certain occasions. This comical gap lies in Malvolio's self-perception and the manner in which other fictional characters perceive him. Shakespeare rendered the notion of how those characters who believe that the world is so explicitly predictable actually become greatly affected by unpredictable circumstances. Malvolio tries to regulate the unpredictable aspects of the world. He even goes as far as trying to repress them fully:

...the comic incongruity that makes us laugh lies in the gap between his self-perception and the rest of the social world's perception of him. It is particularly amusing, then, when

unpredictable things happen to those who like to find the world predictable, who seek to regulate and repress its unpredictabilities and who accept, legitimate and work to produce its social hierarchies. (Escolme 68)

Malvolio's promise of revenge is greatly perpetuated by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's maltreatment of him. They sometimes perhaps even go a bit far in their approach to Malvolio, although he should be reminded of his place due to his pomposity. Sir Toby believes that Malvolio has too high of an opinion of himself, partly because he is a steward, however others think that Malvolio self-glorification is too much given his social position within the social strata ("An Interesting Character Study: Malvolio from *Twelfth Night*"). In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio's character can be perceived as a comic relief but also as a particularly interesting antagonist. He is vividly bitter until the very ending of the play that he promises to bring vengeance to other dramatis personae because his narcissistic self has been wounded and ridiculed in different ways throughout the plotline. "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night or What You Will*, 187). Just as with other Dark-Triad characters, Malvolio also remains unrewarded at the end of the play. His promise of revenge simply perpetuates the notion that similar narcissistic characters, those suffering from a sickness known as self-love, can be beaten and that their ego is something which only brings more harm than good. By trying to become more than he is, Malvolio's ending is also a negative one – he remains alive, but his fragile ego remains wounded and he is apparently more than willing to create new ploys and plant more seeds of disharmony. There is no rest for the wicked, at least when the Shakespearean drama is concerned.

Villainy and Love Phobia in Shakespeare's Great Comedies: *Much Ado About Nothing*

Besides such comedies as *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing* stands out as one of Shakespeare's best-written plays and one of his most amusing comic pieces. The Sweet Swan of Avon in this regard created a particularly entertaining dramatic work which revolves around banquets, affections, weddings, scheming, as well as great amounts of humour and delight. It would be difficult to point out a single character from *Much Ado About Nothing* which would fit the Dark Triad perfectly. Although personality traits found in this gloomy triangle do overlap, and more often than not, if one identifies a single part of the Dark Triad, then the same researcher is able to discover other forms. Taking that into account, this chapter of the paper points out some elements of the Dark Triad rendered through several characters whose fictional destinies are interconnected. In other words, Shakespeare's John, Beatrice and finally Benedict are some of the dramatic individuals sharing features of narcissism, Machiavellianism and somewhat even psychopathy, even though Shakespeare presents them in such a way that at least some of their habits can be changed. In *Much Ado About Nothing* the audience members or the readers are able to observe a particularly interesting phenomenon: the Bard allows some characters to achieve their own happily-ever-after, if and only if they alter pathological habits and remove the coils of narcissism.

The first character to be analysed in this regard is Don John. Many of the *Much Ado About Nothing* characters are designed in such a manner that they dupe some other fictional individuals, whereas John stands out as a villainous persona, remaining relatively passive throughout the play. Don John's fate is similar to that of Edmund, because Shakespeare allows some degree of sympathy to be formulated among the audience members in order to explain his ways. John is a bastard son, he is illegitimate, and therefore quite similar to Edmund. Due to his birth position, John's ultimate punishment is the fact that he was judged by the society from the moment he was born. Once the play begins, John arrives with his brother Don Pedro, however because of his position, other characters in Messina reject him and believe he is suspicious. Leonato, the governor of Messina, questions John's proclamation of loyalty to his brother, although Leonato veils the harsh greeting, his doubts remain dormant under the surface of his kind words (Richter, "A Second Look at Don John, Shakespeare's Most Passive Villain"). It appears that Shakespeare's bastard characters are obligated to pay a heavy price due to their birth, hence Edmund and Don John become villains.

They are quintessentially evildoers who wreak havoc among other fictional individuals, and their Machiavellian sides, narcissistic tendencies and psychopathic mindsets become evident. They use ploys and manipulation in order to bring harm to others, yet they do not reap the rewards of victory for too long.

Sir John the Bastard is completely aware of the distrust which the society shares when he is addressed. He is aware of the stigmatisation, and through his appearance, Shakespeare clearly points out that John is the villain of the comedy. The author in this sense allows the readers to recognise the antagonist quickly as the plotline progresses. The society of Messina shuns John due to his illegitimacy. While the rest of them are talkative or at least actively social, John always remains in the background, to be quiet and he refuses to share secrets. Primarily, Leonato and Don Pedro exclude John from their conversations, further perpetuating the disdainful attitude towards John. Shakespeare includes the feelings of sadness due to John's loneliness, whereas the readers/spectators know John to be a bastard and nothing more (Richter, "A Second Look at Don John, Shakespeare's Most Passive Villain"). John is not a particularly well-developed villain.

However, both bastards – Edmund and John respectively – are able to look deep inside of themselves and actually realise their true natures. In act I, scene iii, John explains that he is unable to hide his true form; John cannot be anything that he is not: "I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad / when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have / stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am / drowsy, and tend on no man's business" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 29). Additionally, due to his self-awareness, John is not only similar to Edmund, but also to Richard in this regard. The fact that he tries to spoil the wedding for the people of Messina and the emotional pain which they have to endure seems to be the direct reflection of his villainy, and perhaps his own suffering as an outcast.

Don John believes that his bastard status actually forces him to become an evildoer. His villainy stems from his own origins. By becoming a villain and causing emotional distress for his brother Pedro and those close to the Prince, John actually fulfils his role. In other words, he fulfils the role given to him by blood. Moreover, John is clearly egotistical, because he willingly embraces the cankerous life he is forced to live. John is surrounded by such characters who only at the surface seem to trust him, but only do this to observe his behaviour so that he would not lash out. Nonetheless, his ego does not allow this, and he is genuinely hurt but the stigma imposed on him

(Richter, “A Second Look at Don John, Shakespeare's Most Passive Villain”). Don John’s Machiavellian and psychopathic side becomes apparent to the audience because he is unable to function in the society of Messina like everybody else. John’s lack of motivation for change becomes clear even though the audience may perceive him as a sympathetic character, a narcissistic villain, but a sympathetic individual nonetheless.

He only interacts with the rest of the society in an evil manner, by employing gaslighting and deceit. “In fact, his alternative to interacting with society in an evil and manipulative way is not interacting with society at all. Don John would rather be hailed as the “plain-dealing villain” than a “nobody.”” (Richter, “A Second Look at Don John, Shakespeare's Most Passive Villain”). It is either the evil side for Don John or no side whatsoever. By using manipulation to cause havoc among such characters as Hero, Claudio, Leonato, Pedro and the rest, John is clearly portrayed as a Machiavel.

Nevertheless, this villain is far more passive than Edmund, Malvolio or Iago. He prefers to stay in the background, whereas his passive role in plotting against Hero reflects his lack of freedom, and moreover he is not able to construct any real friendships with the rest of the play’s personas. Once the wedding is spoiled, and Hero is allegedly dead, Don John flees Messina because others learn of his wrong-doing and his involvement in the plot. His brother Pedro explains that his brother’s treachery: “He is composed and framed of treachery, / And fled he is upon this villainy” (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 171). His brother addresses John’s villainy through and through never fully acknowledging the hardships which he had to endure due to the bastard status. At the end of the play, all characters who had a hand in some villainous actions are forgiven. For example, Margaret who was unaware of her role in the plot against Hero is forgiven, and she does not suffer any punishment. Don John flees, but he does not escape the wrath of the rest of the dramatis personae. Shakespeare in the end reminds the spectators that the community will never accept John as a good character. For the Bard, John will never be able to interact with the rest of the society in a positive manner; he will be ostracised constantly because of his origins (Richter, “A Second Look at Don John, Shakespeare's Most Passive Villain”). Shakespeare presents this manipulative character as someone baptised by villainy. He is not a good character, but he is a recognisable character – Messina dwellers perceive John as a villain, hence his initial role is fulfilled, while the spectators are not so easily fooled. Regardless of his unwillingness to change,

Shakespeare presents the previous hardships of this character, allowing the audience members to address some of his pain and provide both sympathy and empathy for this Machiavel. Some readers/spectators may find it in their hearts to forgive John, even though Pedro, Hero, Leonato and the rest of the Messina people refuse to do so.

Don John escapes his punishment, unlike different narcissistic or psychopathic characters he is not adequately punished for his ploys to spoil the wedding and separating the young lovers. In *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio is recognised as the villain, but he does not suffer a tragic death in the end, whereas in this comedy, John even manages to escape. Perhaps Shakespeare allowed him to live so that the audience members could try and forgive him the previously-mentioned sins. He refused to alter the basic negative tendencies and was exiled from the society that he could have been a part of, although many saw him as a bastard and nothing more. On the other side, the elements of the Dark Triad are not only attributed to Pedro's half-brother. Particular narcissistic elements can also be examined in the relationships between Beatrice and Benedick.

In their case, Beatrice and Benedick suffer from what is considered to be an 'emotional phobia'. They obviously excite one another, but spend the majority of the first part of the play hiding their feelings. They insult each other and boast about how incapable of love they really are. This much is evident in act I, scene i, when Benedick professes that he is loved by all women, except Beatrice, but that he definitely does not love a single woman: "Then is courtesy a turncoat. But it is certain / I am loved of all ladies, only you excepted; and / I would I could find in my heart that I had not a / hard heart, for truly I love none" (*Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing* 13). It would appear that the type of a woman which would fit Benedick should be born utterly perfect. It seems that Benedick narcissistically and pompously implies that his standards are absolutely too high for any woman possible. For him, no one measures up (Kuzner, "Dealing with Narcissists: Two Tips from Shakespeare"). The emotional imbalance present in *Much Ado About Nothing* indicates that Benedick is characterised by the Narcissistic personality disorder.

By behaving narcissistically, Benedick's emotional volatility is easily recognisable among the readers. "This emotional volatility may play an important role in the tendency for individuals characterized by narcissistic rivalry to experience high levels of social conflict which often has the paradoxical consequence of making it even more difficult for these individuals to gain the respect and admiration that is so important to narcissistic individuals" (Cheshure et al. 2).

Beatrice and Benedick refuse to open up, their emotional or love phobia is predominant in their narcissistic character. As previously analysed within the course of this paper, Hamlet is an interesting kind of a NPD individual, because his own secondary narcissism is quite vulnerable. In this comedy, William Shakespeare presented some of the main characters as NPD persons; Beatrice and Benedick avoid opening up to one another because they are shielding themselves from any emotional harm or burden. However, at the ball, where all guests wear masks, Beatrice takes a risk. While the two interact being fully aware who the other person is (hidden behind the mask), Beatrice tries her luck – she again insults him. However, she expresses her hidden desire for him, pretending to be oblivious of his identity at that moment. “I am sure he is in the / fleet. I would he had boarded me” (Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* 45). In her own peculiar way, she voices the importance of their relation. Beatrice reveals her feelings. At times moment, it is also Benedick who opens up and speaks of his own emotions, thus accepting his vulnerability at least briefly (Kuzner, “Dealing with Narcissists: Two Tips from Shakespeare”). The questions still remains of whether these two narcissistic figures would be able to become more compassionate. Both have to open to love and emotional danger in order to achieve their happy ending, something which is extremely rare for the wicked Dark-Triad characters. In this case, Shakespeare makes an exception.

When Don Pedro, Leonato and others orchestrate the scene in which Benedick ‘overhears’ the characters speak about him and Beatrice, they give this encouragement to the narcissist to accept his most intimate feelings. Claudio and Don Pedro speak of Beatrice’s emotional pain in order to awake Benedick’s compassionate side more quickly. They add that Beatrice refuses to speak of her emotions because she fears to experience the sensation of getting hurt emotionally. When Pedro asks why Beatrice refuses to openly admit her feelings, Claudio ‘reveals’ that she is afraid that Benedick would make fun of her (Kuzner, “Dealing with Narcissists: Two Tips from Shakespeare”). This overall situation is comedic, and definitely entertaining for the readers/spectators, however this segment is extremely important for a health development of the narcissistic psyche.

Shakespeare’s master penmanship herein becomes obvious, due to the fact that terms such as ‘empathy prompting’ later established can already be traced back in the Renaissance period. Narcissistic persons lack empathy, whereas in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick is forced to

rediscover his own. Pedro and the rest prompt Benedick's empathy in order to connect him and Beatrice for their own happily-ever-after. He is able to absorb this alleged pain which Beatrice endures, thus becoming utterly in love with her, this time openly. This flux of additional empathy makes this narcissist more willing to accept love and emotions, while his mechanisms of defence are slowly dismantled (Kuzner, "Dealing with Narcissists: Two Tips from Shakespeare"). The narcissistic armour is removed and Benedick becomes more vulnerable, but also compassionate. Shakespeare apparently saw far beyond this barrier of the narcissistic personality. For the Sweet Swan of Avon, narcissism could be beaten, and NPD individuals could truly change, at least some of them. A few of them can change if they are encouraged to do so.

Suffice it to say, Pedro and others never truly heard Beatrice speak of her emotional fears when Benedick is concerned. They literally made up a gossip, tricking the narcissist. For this purpose, Shakespeare did not give his audience a specific deed to be re-enacted in the real-life situations, but he did achieve another goal. Through such an unforgettable scene, Shakespeare allowed the audience members more psychological insight. He stages how emotional prompts can be powerful, although they may be artificial, thus showing us how empathy and love are able to overcome all obstacles. "Shakespeare gives us not a specific deed to imitate but an unforgettable scene of psychological insight. He stages how powerful empathy prompts can be, even when they're artificial..." (Kuzner, "Dealing with Narcissists: Two Tips from Shakespeare"). In this regard, Shakespeare presented a better fortune for the Dark-Triad characters in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

In this comedy, the main, albeit the passive, villain is nearly punished for his deeds. However, not quite. John escapes his destiny, nonetheless not everything is black or white in this performance. John is as much a victim as Hero is; others only perceived him through the aforementioned prism of bastardy. John's early childhood hardships might have been extremely negative to comprehend. He is a Machiavel because he uses ploys and deceit to harm others, and he is likewise pathological because he refuses to change believing this role to be his primary destiny. He will forever be hated by others. While John is not the only narcissistic and Machiavellian character, Beatrice and Benedick also fit the NPD role. Due to their recognisable emotional imbalance and fears, they pretend to be utterly incapable of love. They insult and undermine one another, although humorously, until other characters step in to help them connect. By opening to empathy and love, by removing their armour and admitting their feelings, such narcissistic personalities can indeed

change. William Shakespeare allowed the narcissists in this play to survive. They are not murdered, they are not even punished for their pathological behaviour. Don John's fate remains unknown because he flees Messina, whereas Beatrice and Benedick use their compassion to finally speak to one another. The playwright in this regard allows them to live through their happy ending. It would have been a brilliant endeavour to what transpires between such NPD persons later on after the overall performance ends and the spectators grant their final applause. *Much Ado About Nothing* remains one of Shakespeare's most entertaining comedic pieces, but also one of his biggest didactical achievements. The writer allows the readers to feel their own empathy towards John, at least briefly, similarly to the way in which Pedro and others make Benedick feel empathy for Beatrice. Shakespeare's empathy prompting is double in this regard – the Bard directs it towards his fictional individuals as well as towards his faithful audience.

Conclusion

William Shakespeare's opus remains a mirror reflection of the people and the environment which surrounded the Elizabethan/Jacobean period. Shakespeare's skill allowed his audience/readers a tremendous entry into the world of human psyche. Furthermore, the Bard's works also serve as a warning sign for many members of his audience because they possess a high degree of didactical elements. Tragedies better resonate with emotions, whereas comedies better connect with the intellectual capacities of various people, however Shakespeare's ingenious technique to portray the world in its actuality combines both the emotional and the intellectual side. In order to create rounded and universal characters with fully developed personalities, Shakespeare had to analyse, understand and project various elements of the human mind and heart. Thus, undoubtedly, this character had to encounter various unsavoury individuals through which he would later formulate the villainous personalities. The basic aim of this paper was to explore the features of the so-called Dark Triad and to analyse certain characters which are rendered as utterly narcissistic, Machiavellian, psychopathic or all those elements combined at the same time.

Firstly, this paper focused on the Freudian analysis of the human mind, as well as Sigmund Freud's own division of narcissism into the so-called primary and secondary narcissism type. Afterwards, this paper moved away from Freud's *On Narcissism*, his own initial work when this disorder is concerned, and explored other aspects of the aforementioned cognitive and emotional phenomenon. This paper then presented a set of interconnected sub-chapters which predominantly focused on numerous elements which define the Narcissistic personality disorder and everything relating to narcissism, as such. Hence, the Narcissus myth was analysed, as well as the characteristics of Cluster B. Additionally, the paper also tackled Machiavelli's doctrines and his teachings, thus explaining how malice and manipulation could be used in order to prosper and obtain power. Lastly, this paper presented the sub-chapter on the phenomenon of gaslighting, further explaining how the same technique could be used in order to cloud someone's reason, make them doubt the reality of things, thus making them more susceptible to manipulation and influence of any sort. In order to take full control of their victim, the gaslighter applies this method to make the victim weak and easy to manoeuvre; gaslighting, as such, can be perceived as just one of the manipulative methods to achieve power and status.

This paper then delved into the analysis of six Shakespearean dramas – four tragedies and two comedies – in order to present various characters as those individuals sharing the interconnected elements of the Dark Triad. Primarily, Richard III was analysed as a paradoxically attractive hero, who uses his Machiavellian techniques in order to usurp the throne, murder the king and his heirs, but also to woo a widow mourning her husband's departure. Then, it was examined in this paper how Iago managed to persuade Othello to strangle Desdemona through the power of his words only. This paper compared Iago's power of speech to Conrad's Kurtz and Tolkien's Saruman, but it also analysed Iago's role as the super-ego of the play, and the super-ego is constantly judging and punishing other characters.

The character of Edmund from *King Lear* was also explored, analysing how Edmund's own psychopathology arises from his bastard status and how Edmund was willing to sever family ties and destroy the whole kingdom. Edmund did this so that he would get revenge on his father, step-brother and all other characters unworthy of a prosperous life, at least from Edmund's own point of view. This paper then turned to Shakespeare's most famous work *Hamlet*, depicting a specific clash of two characters who possess numerous elements detected within the Dark Triad. Primarily, Claudius's personality was analysed, portraying his psychopathic side as a murderous king, but also his Machiavellian manipulation of the people around him. This personality clashed with Hamlet's own hyper-sensitivity and his own disorder, afterwards it became obvious in the analysis of this paper that neither of the two characters could win while the other survived, therefore both narcissistic persons eventually destroyed one another.

Finally, it was described in this paper how some of the villainous characters found in Shakespeare's dramas do not always have to meet a tragic ending. The paper presented the case of Malvolio, who was suffering from a pathological self-love and this character was clearly portrayed as a true Narcissus figure. His lack of empathy, his pomposity, grandiose nature, his moral superiority created Malvolio as one of the finest examples of a Shakespearean narcissist. Nonetheless, this paper presented the idea that Malvolio's fate may be worse than death at the very closing of the play, because he did not die, yet he was publicly shamed by other fictional individuals, something which is extremely painful for any narcissist. In the final segment, Don John, Benedick and Beatrice are all described as characters possessing some of the features of the Dark Triad. John was analysed as perhaps the most passive Shakespearean villain, but who nearly destroyed the

lives of various innocent people because he had accepted the role of an evildoer. Due to his illegitimate status, John fully allowed himself to be immersed into scheming and wrong-doing so that he could wreak havoc during the wedding ceremony. He eventually escapes his punishment, but Shakespeare allowed the audience to sympathise with this character because of all the stigmatisation that he had to endure while growing up in his brother's shadow. Besides Don John, Benedick and Beatrice were both portrayed as suffering from the so-called 'love/emotional phobia' respectively. Both characters were in a constant 'battle of wits', pretending that they possess no emotions whatsoever, however Shakespeare allowed these vulnerable narcissists to open up to love and eventually experience their own happy ending. Once Beatrice begins speaking of her intentions hidden behind her mask, and once Benedick is prompted to allow empathy to overpower him, both individuals are able to meet on an equal ground. Thus Shakespeare portrayed an idea that if and only if narcissistic characters manage to put aside their pride and shallowness they would be able to experience true blessing and happiness. Therefore, not everything is utterly tragic for characters who exert some NPD tendencies.

All of the aforementioned characters were analysed in such a way that this paper presented them as narcissistic, Machiavellian or psychopathic. Through their grandiose or vulnerable secondary narcissism, through their Machiavellian manipulation, and through their anti-social and pathological behaviour, many of these characters would be punished in Shakespearean fictional world, while those willing to alter their ways would be rewarded. Ergo, many of such fictional individuals shared sets of interconnected features which made them dangerous for their surroundings, however not all of them had to be exclusively placed at the very centre of the dark triangle. William Shakespeare's plays allow readers/spectators to understand people around them differently, but also to explore and experience the world in various ways, for one is never enough. In order to develop such villainous yet interesting personalities, the playwright had to analyse, understand, as well as project their behavioural patterns in such a manner that everybody could comprehend them and understand the repercussions of allowing the Dark-Triad characters to rule in their folly and evil over others.

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