

2016

The Performance of Melancholy: Understanding the Humours through Burton, Jonson, and Shakespeare

Lindsey N. Betts
Claremont McKenna College

Recommended Citation

Betts, Lindsey N., "The Performance of Melancholy: Understanding the Humours through Burton, Jonson, and Shakespeare" (2016).
CMC Senior Theses. Paper 1368.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/1368

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you by Scholarship@Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in this collection by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Claremont McKenna College

**The Performance of Melancholy:
Understanding the Humours through Burton, Jonson, and Shakespeare**

submitted to
Professor Seth Lobis

by
Lindsey Betts

for
Senior Thesis
Spring 2016
April 25, 2016

To my parents, who have brought me to where I am today;
and to my brother, Caleb, who keeps me going.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	5
Introduction.....	6
Chapter One: The Seriousness of Burton's <i>Anatomy of Melancholy</i>	11
Chapter Two: The Caricatures of Jonson's <i>Every Man Out of His Humour</i>	39
Chapter Three: The Game of Melancholy in Jonson's <i>Every Man In His Humour</i>	51
Chapter Four: Visions of Real World Melancholy in Shakespeare's <i>As You Like It</i>	61
Chapter Five: The Discourse of Melancholy in Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i>	72
Bibliography.....	86

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must thank Professor Lobis for the wisdom, support, and guidance he has provided as my advisor. He was there from the moment I showed interest in studying literature to the day I made the transition to becoming the Literature major I was destined to be. I must express the deep gratitude I have for all his dedicated work as my professor and thesis reader.

I thank my mother, father, and brother, for their love and support during my time at Claremont McKenna College, and especially during the process of this cumulative project. And I thank my Aunt Janiet, one of the many saints whose prayers I keenly felt during these past four years.

I thank Professor Stergiopoulos and my fellow writers in the Literature thesis colloquium, for their endless supply of encouragement and thoughtful feedback. I also thank Andrew Atwong for editing and structural assistance.

I thank Professor Rentz, Lisa Crane, and the librarians at Honnold Mudd Library's Special Collections, for their support and guidance during the preliminary research that eventually led to this thesis.

I thank my friends, Tess Lommers-Johnson, Joel Porter, Bradford Richardson, and Elena Segarra, for the time and love they have so freely given me in academic and emotional support. I thank my roommates Haley Alderete, Kelsey Heflin, Glenys Kirana, and Michelle Lam, for the love they have shown me specifically through tolerating my incessant obsession with Shakespeare.

Introduction

In placing a stringent duality on the concepts of joy and sadness, modern society has torn down what once was a complex and deeply nuanced aspect of human psychology. Writer Laren Stover said in a recent *New York Times* article, “sadness gets a bad reputation;” but this was not always the case. There was a time when sadness and the stereotypically negative emotions were understood as complex and integral elements of the human experience. In the first centuries of the study of medicine, psychology and anatomy were tightly knitted under the wider study of general medicine. What were called the four humours first had a very specific and biological definition that soon developed into something seemed to belong more within the study of human psyche and personality. The humours had everything to do with human experience and the process of understanding it; this thesis argues that literature, as a human invention to convey humanity’s stories of development, can be a prime tool in the exploration of the humours. The turning point in the discussion of melancholy and its counterparts took place during the Elizabethan era. In works of prose, poetry, and even drama, the transition was very tangible and highly lauded by the public. In the transitory period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, playwrights like Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, inspired by their audience’s interest in the scientific literature of the day, produced vivid plays where the humours and passions took on human form. Driven by a similar interest in his fellow man, Robert Burton published a comprehensive study of melancholy in 1621, a scientific work in its own right that was also more narrative in nature than anything that had been written before. Melancholy had suddenly been made extremely

accessible to those members of society who stood outside the elite circles of traditional medicine and philosophy.

The theory of the humours began with ancient physicians like Hippocrates and Galen, who desired to simplify the infinite complexity of the human psyche. In their book *Born Under Saturn*, Rudolf and Margot Wittkower explain:

Hippocrates, the great physician of the fifth century BC, seems to have firmly established the theory according to which the human body consists of the four humours or fluid substances: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Health is dependent on the equilibrium of these substances, while an excess of any one produces disease. (102)

The amounts of these four humours soon came to represent varying temperaments. In general, more blood engenders a sanguine or cheerful personality, phlegm a spirit of apathy, yellow bile a choleric or irritable person, and black bile a melancholic.

These temperaments were linked “not only with physiological characteristics but also with intellectual and professional dispositions” (102). During the early periods of study, popular culture quickly dubbed melancholy as the most unfortunate of the humours, associating it with low behavior and moods. To have an excess of any humour was considered a flaw, but melancholy had especially become a social pariah amongst common discourse. However, one exception was allowed, and that was for those individuals that society deemed “creative.”

It was only acceptable for artists and scholars to be truly melancholy. The root of such logic was based in the Aristotelian postulation that there existed a link “between the melancholic humour and outstanding talent in the arts and sciences” (102). But, the proof

was also in the lives of these individuals. As Lawrence Babb states in his essay on “Melancholy and the Elizabethan Man of Letters:” “The worldly lot of the scholar or artist is a grievous one...with disappointment, humiliation, and frustration...a life of many sorrows; and sorrow breeds melancholy” (250). Here, the ambiguity regarding cause and effect is evident. Does the humour cause a sour temperament, or is it the troubles of life that form the fertile ground from which melancholy grows? The relationship between mental work and temperament relied on the aspect of humoral theory that claimed the mind and body were fueled by heat and moisture. Without proper fuel, “mental exertion cools and dries the brain” (251), equivalent to an excess of black bile. Thus having a melancholic disposition was associated with an overabundance of academic study. So much that “Renaissance physicians believe, then, that mental endeavor is likely to lead to physical ills and mental depressions—even psychoses. Melancholy is the scholar’s occupational disease” (252). By the Elizabethan era, the stereotype had been firmly established. Such ideology was what Jonson, Shakespeare, and Burton challenged, each through their own unique methods.

Ben Jonson and his comedies played up the popular images of melancholy in an attempt to criticize the obsession with the humours that was so prevalent in the world in which he lived. Part of this obsession came with its association with genius. Babb also explains that, “[there was an impression] that the melancholy man might be a person of great intellectual powers” which “lent the melancholic character such a dignity that many men were tempted to assume” (253). This behavior of assuming the role of melancholics, whether or not it was genuine, is the kind of subject to which Jonson dedicates his comedy of humours. There was no question about whether his characters were in or out

of their humours because he provided two-dimensional caricatures of melancholy, digestible representations of this more complex temperament.

When characters like Hamlet took the stage, the understanding of melancholy became much more nuanced. Shakespeare's personalities seemed to be designed to be analyzed, to be complex representations of the human psyche. And this meant that their temperaments and symptoms would not fit into one definition of melancholy or its causes. There was a sense that the stigma was lifted, by those critical of the humour as well as by those "suffering" from it. Rosalie Colie points out the change when "the melancholy man knows how to praise melancholy because of the perceptions his melancholy gives him, because it is melancholy that drives a man to seek solitude and to contemplate truth" (408). These men and women were not just geniuses, but deeper thinkers, more sensitive souls, and altogether superior humans. Yet they were still often imaginary, at least within the world they inhabited on the stage. It was Robert Burton that finally provided a complex but applicable and accessible discussion of melancholy to Elizabethan readers.

Burton followed the tradition of sixteenth century medical and philosophical literature discussing the humours, but humanized the temperament even more. In fact, he elevated melancholy to "an heroic disease...its principal sufferers...endowed with perceptions far more intense, more poignant, often more obsessive and more painful than those ordinary men...[and] the malady of creative people" (Colie 395). Burton made melancholy a natural improvement on human nature. Stover claims that during this era, "melancholy was treasured." Burton dissected the humour so carefully that nearly everyone could claim one of its manifestations, whether positive or negative. There was a

fluidity within the discussion of melancholy, so much so that it began to apply to all of life rather than to one individual aspect of it. Burton, Jonson, and Shakespeare played an integral part in the development of humoral discourse and serve as excellent examples of the educational power of literature.

Each of these writers contributed to the advancing culture of education that was transforming the understanding of melancholy and the other humours. Stover notes that, as of 2015, “everywhere you look these days you see something on how to be happy—how to manifest abundance, desires and success, find your bliss.” Perhaps seventeenth century London was not entirely different. In a world where sanguine was best, the darker parts of the human psyche were often completely ignored or demonized. Through the stage and the written word, Jonson, Shakespeare, and Burton were offering a study that went beyond basic interpretations and included their observations and criticisms on the popular rhetoric and perceptions of the humours as well. They asked the questions of how Elizabethan society was talking about melancholy and why. Even if their works do not speak to modern sentiments of the personality and psyche, they still provide a vivid vision of the cult of melancholy.

Chapter 1

The Seriousness of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*

Robert Burton (1577-1640) felt called to bring a higher understanding of melancholy to the common man; it was not something to be satirized or watered down. He firmly believed that “melancholy is the mark of living: all mortal men...are marked for life by original sin, which in Burton's language is translated into melancholy” (Colie 391). But this massive volume included more than just an inspired lecture; in fact, there is no way to say how far the *Anatomy of Melancholy* has reached into the literary tradition itself. It goes beyond the genre of the humours, not only describing but also applying the sixteenth century elements to the human psyche, passions, and personality and other intersections of the body and the soul. The *Anatomy* was both a product of and a further source for such an interest in humours. Burton was a master of many things, for that was the making of a scholar. In his introduction to a 1927 edition, editor Floyd Dell explains:

The *Anatomy* is a sort of literary cosmos, an omnium gatherium; a compendium of everything that caught the fancy of a fine and lusty scholar who lived in an unspecialized age. Poetry, medicine, psychology, philosophy, old wives' tales, philology, wars, antiquarian lore, theology, morals, history, climatology, food, travel, love, hate, ambition, pride, astrology, art, politics, and a scheme for the establishment of Utopia—all these and more, are poured forth, helter-skelter, by this seventeenth century mathematician, vicar, rector, and reckoner of nativities, in a style abounding in quaint conceits, sly Rabelaisian humour, and not without a certain vein of unmalicious satire. (Burton ix-x)

The *Anatomy of Melancholy* is much bigger than its title; it is more than a textbook or a commentary but an argument “against the old narrow concepts of melancholy and of human nature, providing a way of regarding both things” (Colie 405). There is an element of performance here, as if Burton put on several masks during his writing; he even said “the quiet scholar dreams of what he might have done as soldier, statesman, explorer; of what a devil of a fellow he might have been” (x). Works like Jonson’s comedies of humours were a natural counterpart to such literature; Burton too gave his readers several caricatures of human personality, but his medium made his own performance less obvious. But, “instead of a fictional hero, Democritus and his reader go hand in hand through the hills and valleys, the deserts, the seas, and the airy spaces of this book...from one picaresque disorder from one consideration, one intellectual incident to the next” (Colie 404-405). Floyd Dell tells us that Burton “grew up during the age of Shakespeare...an age that was frankly interested in the passionately unreasonable aspects of human nature.” (xiv) If we approach Burton from a purely psychological angle, we see that drama may play an even great part in the analysis of melancholy. For the modern reader, Dell translates the “Anatomy of Melancholy” to “An Analysis of Morbid Psychology.” He argues: “Burton was, indeed, a scholarly and humanistic precursor to Freud. The range of his interest, so far as the facts of human behavior are concerned, was identical with that of our great modern analyst of the psyche” (xiii). At this time, all authority on these topics rested with the likes of Galen, Hippocrates, and other ancient physicians. Burton was unique in that “his interest in the subject was actually not so scientific as artistic” (xiii). Similar works which focused on the science of humours did exist, including Lemnius’ *The Touchstone of Complexions* and Walkington’s *The Optick*

Glass of Humours. However, both were short works, more like pamphlets covering the essentials of the humours, but not much more. Burton's work is truly the most narrative of the genre; stories form the foundations of his arguments, enabling other authors to then build stories atop his careful and inspired groundwork.

Burton starts right off with some comedic humor in his explanation of the plates that open his volume. In describing the image of "Solitariness," he writes "Mark well: If't be not as it should be,/ Blame the bad Cutter, and not me" (1). In his start, Burton is almost setting the framework for the readers' reception of the work as a whole. He asks that, in his study of the human psyche, his faults and inaccuracies not be attributed to him as the author. Rather, we must blame false representation on the subjects themselves, for Burton is merely the messenger. It is obvious from parts of his book that he also dealt with melancholy, so one might assume he had better control of his topic; but self-analysis is often the most difficult to accurately engage with. With the knowledge of his own temperament, we must not rush to conclude that the *Anatomy* is merely a grand self-diagnosis. Burton pulls from all areas of the mythos of storytelling, attempting to represent a myriad of literary characters and tropes. It is a given that his diverse subject matter might not please every reader, thus the necessity of his proviso at the start. Similarly, his final description of the cutter's portrait of the author includes "As thou like'st it, so it likes thee./ And I for it will stand in view,/ Thine to command, Reader, Adieu!" (1). Burton essentially sets himself up to win, telling readers that their enjoyment of his work depends completely upon them. Like an actor, Burton will be led by his audience, his success or failure commanded solely by them.

At the start of his book, Burton supplies us with an abstract in verse couplets. As in his commentary for the front plaque, he proceeds to go through the different types of melancholy and the various scenarios where the humour would be most apparent. The first four stanzas best summarize the four corners of melancholy. To measure the effects of the humour, one could imagine it as a diamond, with each corner representing the pairing of an effect on the patient (either positive or negative) and the intensity of that effect. From the start, it seems that “the climate of Burton’s book is of opposites and opposites, contradictions and paradoxes” (Colie 405), but he clarifies these as he goes on. Melancholy is a complex humour, so he first introduces the neutral expressions and works outward to the extremes:

When I go musing all alone,
Thinking of divers things fore-known,
When I build Castles in the air,
Void of sorrow and void of fear,
Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet,
Methinks the time runs very fleet.
All my joys to this are folly,
Naught so sweet as Melancholy. (8)

The modern conception of “melancholy” often brings to mind a person stricken with grief, crippled with sadness and a loss of any passion for anything at all. But melancholy *is* a passion after all. Like the fluids in the body, there are no absolutes. When a person grows faint or turns blue, it is not because suddenly they have no blood. Rather, these are physical representations of an inner imbalance. In this first stanza, Burton reminds his

readers that a proper amount of melancholy can be pleasing and cause the individual to actually relax. But then he shifts to the other end of the spectrum:

When I lie waking all alone,
Recounting what I have ill done,
My thoughts on me tryannise,
Fear and sorrow me surprise,
Whether I tarry still or go,
Methinks the time moves very slow.

All my griefs are too this jolly,
Naught so sad as Melancholy. (8)

It is a classic scene: lying awake in the middle of the night, consumed by thoughts on the day and perhaps as far-reaching as one's whole life. But it is important to note that this level of reflection breeds no action. "Over-thinking" best describes this corner of melancholy, an expression of the humour that is in actuality a hidden one. Upon these basic principles of positive and negative expression, Burton continues to build his argument of the multiple layers:

When to my self I act and smile,
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brook side or wood so green,
Unheard, unsought for, or unseen,
A thousand pleasures do me bless,
And crown my soul with happiness. (8)

There is a subtle transition here between inner and outer expression. The intensity has risen enough to drive the person to a particular location and affect their countenance. And there is a sense of action, if only the act of more intentionally dwelling on these thoughts and, in the process, blocking out anything that might compete with them. The negative alternative seems simply to be the inverse:

When I lie, sit, or walk alone,
I sigh, I grieve, making great moan,
In a dark grove, or irksome den,
With discontents and Furies then,
A thousand miseries at once
Mine heavy heart and soul ensconce. (8)

While the happy melancholic was inclined to focus on pleasing thoughts, the tortured individual is bombarded with the opposite inclinations. Rather than blocking those darker thoughts, he allows them in, and even seeks solitude in a locale more aligned with the dark passions. However, the limit of these more intense expressions remains that they do not really lead to any extreme action that affects other people.

Burton soon moves beyond this as he systematically lays out the several subgroups of melancholy, foreshadowing what he does later before each partition. One group is that madness which brings on hallucinations. The melancholic is described to hear and believe to see “Sweet musick, wondrous melody,/ Towns, Palaces, and Cities fine” as well as “Rare beauties, gallant Ladies shine” (9). The power of the mind also creates false images of “Ghosts, goblins, fiends” and “Headless bears, black men, and apes,/ Doleful outcries, and fearful sights” (9). The next step of melancholy taking over

the mind leads to taking over the whole body. From deep reflection comes a blurring of the line between reality and fantasy. Happy or dark thoughts begin to materialize as still unrealized but very possible realities. One set of thoughts are rooted in deep desires and the human fascination with beauty we have not produced but still find relatable; the other spring forth from every fear and anxiety (usually surrounding that which is unnatural or unfamiliar) that an individual has pushed to the back crevices of the psyche.

In the following stanzas, Burton presents more drastic expressions of melancholy as he alludes to both sides of love melancholy, the happy as well as the bitter. “Methinks I court, methinks I kiss,/ Methinks I now embrace my mistress” refers to the sweeter moments when “Such thoughts may still my fancy move,/ So may I ever be in love” (9). The alternative involves “My sighs and tears, my waking nights,/ My jealous fits” which lead the patient to conclude that “No torment is so bad as love” (9). Another action rooted in melancholy is seeking solitude, or demanding that “Friends and Companions get you gone,/ ‘Tis my desire to be alone,” though this also leads to very different manifestations. For one melancholic, “’Tis my delight, my Crown, my bliss” to be alone (9). This ties back to the softer interpretation of the condition: melancholy is less about being consumed by dark influences and more about deeper thought and reflection in general. For a person with a balanced amount of the humour, solitude fuels their mind and spirit and was generally positive. However, the opposite extreme is much less pleasant: “’Tis my sole plague to be alone,/...Fear, discontent, and sorrows come” (10). To say the least, this short abstract is full of contrasts. The final stanzas present a character who is so content that he would “not change life with any King” yet within the next lines has made a major turn: “Now desperate I hate my life,/ Lend me a halter or a knife” (10). It is a

grim finale to the poem, presenting the most frightening and final manifestation of the “damn’d” humour. A key insight lies within the language Burton uses surrounding time in an earlier line: “The scene is turn’d, my joys are gone” (10). The effects of melancholy are presented as quick-changing, transforming a happy thinker into a depressed and even suicidal individual in not but an instant. The multiple causes of these changes are not yet explained, but the readers understand the powers of the passion. In fact, most readers would be knowledgeable of the topic of the humours. Burton begins his discussion with a very general outline of the many facets of his topic, as his audience would have recognized such expressions of melancholy from similar examples in contemporary literature.

His first section of the book is known as “Democritus Junior to the Reader,” an extended introduction to Burton’s discussion. He lays out two things that the reader must know: where his coming from as the author and why he has chosen to discuss melancholy. He uses the pseudonym of the well-known philosopher (actually pictured in the earlier plaque) to offer his audience a sort of prologue to his work, a literary custom very common with other philosophical writers. Rosalie Colie in her discussion of Burton’s work says, “As Democritus had license to write of public matters as a law-maker...so had Burton as a physician license to write of the ills of the commonwealth as well as the ills of the people in it” (399). He explains his own reason behind the chosen name early in this section:

To assume a little more liberty and freedom of speech, or if you will needs know, for that reason and only respect, which Hippocrates relates...how coming to visit him one day, he found Democritus in his gardens at

Abdera...under a shady bower, with a book on his knees, busy at study, sometimes writing.... The subject of his book was melancholy and madness, about him lay the carcasses of many several beasts newly by him cut up and anatomized, not that he did contemn God's creatures, as he told Hippocrates, but to find out the seat of this black bile, or melancholy, whence it proceeds, and how it was engendered in men's bodies, to the intent that he might better cure it in himself, and by his writings & observations teach others how to prevent and avoid it. (15)

Burton sets up this grand picture of Democritus in order to explain his own purpose in writing this book, for "Democritus Junior is therefore bold to imitate...to revive again, prosecute and finish, in this treatise" (15). He states his intention in one brief sentence: "Thou thyself art the subject of my discourse" (11). From the start, Burton makes clear that the topic of his study is mankind and how the humours play into the universal experience, an answer he will provide through careful dissection of his subjects. He even identifies with this disposition, stating that he "writ of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy. There is no greater cause of melancholy than idleness, no better cure than business..." (16). He identifies himself as a benefactor to all those suffering from the same illness as he, offering a mixture of his scholarly knowledge and his personal experience. In fact, he uses a myriad of outside sources, "demonstrat[ing] the typical humanist disregard of the contextual demands of those sources, to buttress his argument or illustrate his point, however he chose to do so" (Colie 391). Yet his strongest points always come from a place of experience. He assures the reader, "That which others hear or read of, I felt practiced myself, they get their knowledge by books, I mine by melancholizing. Believe Robert, who speaketh from experience" (17). There is a hint of

humanitarianism to his work, most likely guided by his devout faith. In referencing a past saint, he reveals a deeper connection to his audience as more than just members of his readership, saying, “I would help others out of a fellow-feeling...I will spend my time and knowledge, which are my greatest fortunes, for the common good of all” (17).

Burton compares his readers, particularly those melancholics, to lepers in this passage, meaning he views himself and his fellows as outcasts of society. Like a patron saint of melancholy, he aims to create a sort of sanctuary for those suffering. However, I think Burton’s readers were seeking a place of education and academic refuge rather than a true medical healing. The *Anatomy of Melancholy* could be seen as such a place; the pages served as somewhere to hide from the rest of the world, or at least somewhere to find new knowledge.

While explaining his role as a writer in the introduction, Burton is extremely self-aware about his authorship, and he seems to come from a place of insecurity surrounding his ability. He quotes Terentianus Maurus in saying “The reader’s fancy makes the fate of books” (21). As much as he seems to be writing this to educate people, there is an element that implies he also aims to entertain and impress:

But it is therefore as it is, well or ill, I have assayed, put myself upon the stage, I must abide the censure, I may not escape it. It is most true, our style bewrays us, and as hunters find their game by the trace, so is a man’s *genius* descried by his works; we judge much better of a man’s character by his words than by his features; ‘twas old Cato’s rule. (21)

If one thing is on the line for Burton in the criticism of his work, it is his genius. Perhaps it is a side effect of his particular melancholy that he desires some sort of approval; or

else, it is simply the inner thoughts of a business-minded writer, hyper aware of his critics, being manifested. He is particularly preoccupied with the opinion of readers: “Our writings are as so many dishes, our readers guests, our books like beauty, that which one admires, another rejects; so we are approved as man’s fancies are inclined” (21). On a deeper level, Burton could be tying the idea of writing to the theme of performance and creation; his readers are more than just viewers but also consumers. Just as an author is judged by everything he produces, so are individual people judged by everything they do. Across the population, there is an infinite mix of temperaments and personalities and various levels of imbalanced humours; some persons will find favor with society as a whole and some will not. In this way, Burton’s moments of self-awareness could be more about his reflections of being human and being melancholic than his thoughts on authorship.

Moving on to the second point of his intro, two factors seem to motivate Burton’s analysis: the argument that it is about time for melancholy, and the very concept of disease, to be redefined and for all men to realize they suffer from some degree of the “dark humour” (and that they have been for a very long time). It has already been made clear *what* Burton shall be writing on, but he also gives a glimpse of the deeper discussion he will explore later on in the work. He explains that “it is a disease of the soul on which I am to treat, and as much appertaining to a Divine as to a Physician” (29). With this, the *Anatomy* departs from the traditional medical text; Burton, though linking himself to Democritus, can no longer be discussed as a strict physician. The reader understands that the study is not of a physical ailment, but rather “folly, melancholy, madness, [which] are but one disease, *delirium* is a common name to all” (31).

Specifically defining his area of study leads Burton to explaining the why behind his work (beyond to help his fellow melancholics):

And who is not a fool? Who is free from melancholy? Who is not touched more or less in habit or disposition? If in disposition, *ill disposition begets habits, if they persevere*, saith Plutarch, habits either are or turn to diseases....for what is sickness, but as Gregory Tholosanus defines it, a *dissolution or perturbation of the bodily league which health combines*. (32)

His rhetorical questions may make him sound too confident of his own knowledge, but Burton retains a sense of authority through his references to other well-known men of science and philosophy. With both mental and physical aspects being factors of dispositions such as melancholy, it is impossible to say that a person does not contain one of the many possible combinations of perturbations. It is a basic and relevant question during this time when the study of man was leading to the birth of psychology: “In whom doth not passion, anger, envy, discontent, fear, and sorrow, reign?” (32) The definition of disease has been broadened; in fact, it could even be sin that he is speaking of. Burton’s conclusion is that everyone is affected by such ailments, in one way or another, which means everyone is touched by melancholy. In fact, he extends his diagnosis to not just individuals but the collective masses of society and nature:

You shall find that Kingdoms and Provinces are melancholy, cities and families, all creatures, vegetal, sensible, and rational, that all sorts, sects, ages, conditions, are out of tune...before they come into the world, they are intoxicated by error’s cup, from the highest to lowest have need of physic... (31)

Describing very non-sentient objects as suffering from this disposition would make many readers question Burton's approach, though it reveals that his discussion will be much broader than those of the past. While he makes many references to the past and the voices of the old physicians and philosophers, there is one thing that does not seem to change for him: "We change languages, habits, laws, customs, manners, but not vices, not diseases, not the symptoms of folly and madness..." (43). Burton would most likely support the notion that history repeats itself, or at least that old habits never die. Not only does the condition of the world carry over into the present, but also "as a river...ever runs, our times and persons alter, vices are the same, and will ever be" (43). The author of the *Anatomy* was not only writing for his contemporary readers, but maybe even for those who would come after him. Contained within its historical context, however, readers can only assume that Burton wanted to tackle the questions of the day; this was indeed his main task. At the end of his prologue, he describes exactly what the rest of his work shall aim to do:

My purpose & endeavor is, in the following discourse, to anatomize this humour of melancholy, through all his parts and species, as it is an habit, or an ordinary disease, and that philosophically, medicinally, to shew the causes, symptoms, and several cures of it, that it may be the better avoided;...as few there are that feel not the smart of it. (101)

In the following three partitions, Burton does exactly what he proposes, exploring all the "parts of species" of the disease that is Melancholy.

Burton is rather ambitious in his first partition, introducing the topic through a thorough discussion of the humours and how his modern readers would perceive them,

describing some types of melancholy, as well as the range of behavioral symptoms that the “disease” causes. Before he begins on the humours, the author continues the detailed discussion of diseases from the introduction, a logical transition that allows the readers to follow along with his extended arguments. He credits the physician Fernelius with defining a disease as “an affection of the body contrary to nature”; the philosopher Tholosanus said, “a dissolution of that league which is between body and soul, and a perturbation of it: as health is the perfection, and makes to the preservation of it”; and the thinker Labeo described it as “an ill habit of the body, opposite to nature, hindering the use of it” (119). If it was not apparent in the introduction, the first partition further shows this work to be riddled with quotations and even entire passages dedicated to repeating the ideas of past and contemporary writers, philosophers, and physicians. Though full of original ideas, it cannot be ignored that Burton’s work almost serves as an encyclopedia, full of his collected data from other men, their words compiled and connected to similar authorities. He has already established his opinion of the universality of melancholy, and he goes on further to say “Melancholy in this sense is the character of Mortality” (125). Burton then proceeds to dissect this disease of mortality.

Moving on to the specifics of this particular disease, Burton first explains exactly what is out of balance. This requires an in-depth look at the subjects of bodily humours, being “a liquid or fluent part of the body, comprehended in it, for the preservation of it” (129). He continues to lay out the four types, claiming they are analogous to the elements or stages in a man’s life: blood as the “hot, sweet, temperate, red humour...whose office is to nourish the whole body, to give it strength and colour”; phlegm being “cold and moist” and for the purpose of “nourish[ing] and moisten[ing] the members of the body”;

choler (or bile) as hot, dry, and bitter, and its purpose being to help “the natural heat and senses, and serves to the expelling of excrements”; and finally melancholy, the opposite of blood as it is “cold and dry, thick, black and sour,...a bridle to the other two hot humours,...preserving them in the blood, and nourishing the bones” (128-129). As the four elements all have their qualities but can be destructive when either lacking or in excess, so the four humours serve best when a balance exists between them. This emphasis on the benefits and genuine healthy contributions of each humour is key to breaking down the stereotype that some, like melancholy, are only negative and deserve to be completely flushed from the body. With his basic medical definition out of the way, Burton is able to move on to an extended image of melancholy in particular through painting a scene of different representations of the humour that his modern readers would recognize.

Burton presents melancholy in two ways, through connecting it to particular genres as well as a collection of the positive and negative attributes associated with the temperament. First, there seems to be a distinction between a spiritual, physical, and circumstantial ailment. Burton points to Biblical accounts to support his view that “God himself is a cause, for the punishment of sin, and satisfaction of his justice” and that “he brought down their heart through heaviness” and “stroke them with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart” (156). Using characters like Kings Saul and Nebuchadnezzar to make his point, Burton continues to act as a student of history, gathering up case studies and carefully using them in his arguments on the condition of man. He quotes other scholars to support the argument for an astrological source of melancholy:

This variety of melancholy symptoms proceeds from the stars, saith Melancthon: the most generous melancholy, as that of Augustus, comes from the conjunction of Saturn & Jupiter in Libra... He that shall have Saturn or Mars, the one culminating, the other in the 4th house, when he shall be born, shall be melancholy, of which he should be cured in time... (180)

For modern readers, this does not seem the most credible source; but for Burton's contemporary readers, living in a world where astrology was closely linked to human behavior and personality, this made complete sense. He also taps in to contemporary thought to support his argument surrounding the physical source of melancholy.

After quoting multiple ideas surrounding the pros and cons of not enough versus too much exercise, he settles on a basic physical cause being "want of exercise, the bane of body and mind, the nurse of naughtiness, stepmother of discipline, the chief author of all mischief, one of the seven deadly sins, and a sole cause of this and many other maladies" (210). Idleness is tied closely to the increase of melancholy, as it seems that the spirits require a certain regulation or tending to, much like any organic growth. Burton says quite plainly, "As fern grows in untilled grounds, and all matter of weeds, so do gross humours in an idle body" (211). In this way, work or activity is encouraged, to directly and indirectly help maintain the imbalance of the humours.

The third cause of melancholy seems to be simultaneously a product and further source of the perturbation: solitude. A key in the connection between thought and action, Burton makes sure to use this more circumstantial factor in his transition from explaining causes to exploring effects. Reminiscent of his abstract, he plots out the extremes of solitude which, like the humours, is acceptable in certain amounts. Starting with the

positive side, he explains that, “Voluntary solitariness is that which is familiar with Melancholy...most pleasant it is at first” (214). He gives the reader images of those prone to the temperament to succumb to a meditative state, lying in bed but also wandering alone beside brooks and through shady groves, consumed by “some delightsome and pleasant subject, which shall affect them most; happy madness and delightful illusion,” (214) which does not seem like destructive behavior in the slightest. Further, he admits that “there is some profitable meditation, contemplation, and kind of solitariness to be embraced...a Paradise, an Heaven on earth, if it be used aright, good for the body, and better for the soul...” (215). However, this happy interpretation of solitude is soon exhausted and Burton must share the truth about how such behavior can affect the imbalance of the fluids:

For as the body works upon the mind, by his bad humours, troubling the spirits, sending gross fumes into the brain, and so disturbing the soul and all the faculties of it... the mind most effectually works upon the body, producing by his passions and perturbations miraculous alterations, as melancholy, despair, cruel diseases, and sometimes death itself... (217-218)

There is a complex intertwining of the brain, body, and spirit. A change in one aspect of man leads to a chain reaction in the other areas, a disturbance in one trickles down to (or rather exponentially increases in) the others. This working upon the body and mind is Burton’s foundational cause as he leads his discussion into the specific outgrowths that proceed from a melancholic spirit.

Burton’s final task in this first partition is a great expounding of the numerous branches of the study of melancholy. In fact, he first gathers up almost every emotion

known to man, “love, joy, desire, hatred, sorrow, fear...anger, envy, emulation, pride, jealousy, anxiety, mercy, shame, discontent, despair, avarice, etc.” and claims that, “if they be immoderate, they consume the spirits, and melancholy is especially caused by them” (224). Burton is extremely extensive in his discussion, but if there is any focus, it lies on sorrow, anger, and self-love. He targets sorrow as “an inseparable companion, *the mother and daughter of melancholy, her epitome, symptom, and chief cause*” (225). This sadness is most often situational, caused by circumstances surrounding death or loss, usually of loved ones. It is this kind of individual who would thus seek solitude and isolation, and only worsen their condition. On another end of the emotional spectrum was anger, which was often rooted in fear, envy, or malice. Burton explains anger as “a perturbation, which carries the spirits outwards, preparing the body to melancholy, and madness itself: anger is temporary madness; and, as Piccolomineus accounts it, one of the three most violent passions” (233). Again, this behavior can be a result of the melancholic mind as well as a source of it. The cause and effect relationship is very fluid throughout Burton’s exploration of melancholy and it adds to an ambiguity about his very arguments. But we are not supposed to read the *Anatomy* as results of a scientific study as much as a human discussion.

Finally, Burton touches on self-love, which goes along with pride and vain-glory, which he more thoroughly discusses when other subgroups like romantic and religious melancholy are later explained. For now, Burton does emphasize the seeming innocence of this particular manifestation of the humour:

A great assault and cause of our present malady, although we do most part neglect, take no notice of it, yet this is a violent batterer of our souls, causeth

melancholy and dotage. This pleasing humour, this soft and whispering popular air, this delectable frenzy, most irrefragable passion, this delightful illusion, this acceptable disease, which so sweetly sets upon us, ravisheth our senses, lulls our souls asleep, puffs up our hearts like so many bladders, and that without all feeling, in so much that *those that are misaffected with it, never so much as once perceive it, or think of any cure.* (253)

This may remind the reader again of Burton's abstract, when he took time to describe the positive effects of melancholy. He gives both the before and after of an attitude of self-love: as a person becomes full of thoughts and musings about themselves, the overabundance leads to that which all overthinking has led to by this point: melancholy. It seems contradictory how Burton points out such a subtle transition. In his abstract, he implied that these psychological changes often happened rapidly. But here the reader follows a transition that is definitely less drastic and whose sad end is definitely unprecedented (at least by those affected). Throughout this extensive and seemingly endless discussion, it is clear that his own argument gets a bit lost in all of this. Burton was not just a social scientist, but he was also a storyteller. He even admits the possible infinity of such a topic as melancholy: "In this Labyrinth of accidental causes, the farther I wander, the more intricate I find the passage, & new causes as so many by-paths offer themselves to be discussed" (305). This picture of Burton as a wanderer plotting out the maze before him, like Theseus in the Minotaur's labyrinth, is similar to his character as a melancholic simply helping others like him. By going before his readers with the ball of thread, he is able to lead them down a path that would have been much more difficult. In fact, the detailed synopses before each of his partitions could even serve as maps. Though

this first partition is slightly convoluted and stuffed to the brim with all sorts of information, there is a clear notion of Burton's intention: to give his audience a full education of his topic.

Burton's second partition is much more focused and therefore a more succinct section of *The Anatomy*. In summary, it explores the topic of curing melancholy from every angle. It can be divided most cleanly into two sections: cure by reformation and cure by physic. There is also a third element of religious influence in these processes that he explains briefly at the start of the partition. Between seeking the help of God and physicians, Burton reaches a conclusion that balances the power of both:

Physicians, who are the dispenser of such treasures for our good, and to be honored for necessities' sake, God's intermediate Ministers, to whom in our infirmities we are to seek for help. Yet not so that we rely too much, or wholly upon them: *From Jove is our origin*; we must first begin with prayer, and then use physic; not one without the other, but both together...As we must pray for health of body and mind, so we must use our utmost endeavors to preserve and continue it. (384)

He gives a great amount of power to physicians, but his wording of honoring them out of necessity hints at a more satirical tone. It is as if physicians are, in the end, only second to the spiritual powers, a form of preservation that must be coupled with a spiritual wellness to be truly efficient. Calling them "God's intermediate Ministers," he assumes they have healing powers almost equal to that of God, who is obviously more potent than any self-made remedies. Yet, Burton does not shirk on instructions regarding common medicinal treatment. Between his two cures, there definitely exists a hierarchy. Physic, or medical

treatment, is put beneath the more behavioral or gastronomic remedies. As he puts it, “A wise Physician will not give Physick but upon necessity, & first try medicinal diet, before he proceeds to medicinal cure....To stir up the humour, and not to purge it, doth often more harm than good” (391). Purging the black humour of melancholy is more or less the main goal of any cures that Burton discusses here, whether it be through a change in eating behavior or a more drastic measure such as lobotomy.

The cures relating to behavioral reformation are centered on Burton’s earlier discussion of causes in his first partition. Simply put: avoiding behaviors or emotional situations related to the causes of melancholy is the easiest way to avoid the disposition on the first place. This includes remaining active, as “the heavens themselves run continually round...to their conservation no doubt, to teach us that we should ever be in action” (439) and utilizing music to lift the spirits, for it “hath [excellent power] to expel many other diseases, it is a sovereign remedy against Despair and Melancholy, and will drive away the Devil himself” (479). However, Burton relinquishes complete authority over the patient’s well-being as he concludes that the most powerful remedy will be found within the patient’s will:

From the Patient himself the first and chiefest remedy must be had; for if he be averse, peevish, waspish, give way wholly to his passions, will not seek to be helped, or be ruled by his friends, how is it possible he should be cured? But if he be willing at least, gentle, tractable, & desire his own good, no doubt but he may be rid of the greater part of his ills, be eased at least, if not cured. He himself must do his utmost endeavor to resist & withstand the beginnings. (468)

Much of the advice Burton gives to his readers would be pretty easy for even the layman to understand and follow. It is almost as if he is writing a lifestyle piece, since melancholy basically sums up a human life rooted in negative thoughts and behaviors. He even brushes aside the prescriptions of philosophers and physicians “to divert those fixed and intent cares and meditations” and instead provides his own receipt of sorts from a scholarly and human perspective: “but in my judgment none so present, none so powerful, none so apposite, as a cup of strong drink, mirth, musick, and merry company” (478). Burton’s behavioral remedy for melancholy is simply to be happy. But even in this, he speaks from a medical point of view, providing the transition between psychological and physical well-being. He quotes Vives in saying that “Mirth...purgeth the blood, confirms health, causeth a fresh, pleasing, and fine colour, prorogues life, whets the wit, makes the body young, lively, and fit for any manner of employment” (481). But Burton does not limit his advice to only activity, for some extremes of melancholy require more traditional medical help.

During the early modern period, physic was very much wrapped up in the chemistry, biology, and the other natural sciences. Many medicines were usually common foods or plants, but all would have a similar effect on the patient’s body. Burton begins to lay out the prescriptions he will cover as “Melanagoga, or melancholy purging medicines [are] either Simple or Compound, and that gently, or violently, [will be] purging upwards or downwards” (574). Similar to his grand list of causes and manifestations of the humour, he spends the majority of the partition listing countless flowers and weeds, recipes and mineral combinations, and more. However, if ingesting reactive elements is one way of purging fluids, then the other way is to just take them

right out. Because melancholy is to be found in the blood or in the brain, only two methods exist. The first is phlebotomy, treating the physical brain, and is “promiscuously used before and after Physick, commonly before and upon occasion is often reiterated, if there be any need at least of it” (584). The reader can assume that, just as Burton encouraged avoidance of most physic if it could be afforded, he also thought remedies like operation on the brain to be overused. The second direct way of purging is bloodletting. This is slightly more natural than the alternative, and thus it ties more closely to Burton’s other opinions of cures. He emphasizes that only “After blood-letting we must proceed to other medicines; first prepare and then purge, cleanse the Augean stables, make the body clean, before we hope to do any good” (585). The notion of intertwining elements is almost thematic at this point though, because whether Burton is arguing for psychological or physical cures, he somehow ends up making statements to support the other side as well. He seems to sum it up with one of his final pieces of advice:

Because this Humour is so malign of itself, and so hard to be removed, the reliques are to be cleansed, by Alternatives, Cordials, and such means; the temper is to be altered and amended, with such things as fortify and strengthen the heart and brain, which are commonly both affected in this malady, and do mutually misaffect one another... (590)

No matter the cure, it must affect either the temperament, the heart (body), or the brain (psychology) to be properly effective, since a change in one of these would assuredly lead to improvement in the others.

The third partition would be the most popular of Burton's book, mostly because the extremes of melancholy dealing with the more powerful passions would be the most tantalizing topic for his readers to indulge in. It is almost as if the author himself has been waiting to arrive at this section: "Love is a species of melancholy, and a necessary part of this my Treatise, which I may not omit..." (611). As he promises, the author writes in detail of the subgroups of love and religious melancholy. The poets have written on love for centuries, but Burton aims to explain the science behind it. This is a complex science even to him, as Colie points out:

It is easy to overlook the fact that Burton the solitary scholar, celibate by reason of his post, also wrote a praise of love the more moving because he was so manifestly acquainted with love's complicated pains. He knew the power and the extent of the passion of love...the self-hatred that unworthy love induces in the lover. (401)

If the rest of the *Anatomy* is a lifestyle guide, then this last partition would be an advice book on relationships. Compared to the other manifestations of melancholy, these two are fairly similar in their causes, symptoms, and cures. Regardless, there are some differences that make for a more engaging read. Burton defines love and its two melancholic extremes, revealing how his contemporaries and readership would understand these passions.

If the more solemn elements of melancholy are necessary to comprehending the mortality of human life, then love is the path to celebrating the brighter parts. In Burton's opinion, love is as foundational as the elements in both nature and society:

Love made the world, Love built the Cities, is the soul of the world, invented Arts, Sciences, and all good things, incites us to virtue and humanity, combines and quickens; keeps peace of earth, quietness by sea, mirth in the winds and elements, expels all fear, anger, and rusticity: is a round circle still from good to good; for Love is the beginner and end of all our actions... (623)

Like nature in Burton's time, love has a mysterious and possibly divine origin. Between God or some other divine realm ("some think it is the self same fire Prometheus fetched from heaven" (643)), love is clearly not of this world. But Burton disagrees, as he connects it to the same cause as any passion: the imbalance of humours.

According to Burton, there are two types of love melancholy, those that exist before and after marriage. Either one is no longer considered love: "but if it rage, it is no more Love, but burning Lust, a Disease, Phrensy, Madness, Hell" (651). He continues to condemn such habits as "a vehement perturbation of the mind, a monster of nature, wit, and art." Harking back to the definitions of disease in the first partition, such lust is seen as unnatural, even inhuman and instead rooted in some sort of animal nature. He explains that there is an honest love which lies within the boundaries of human decency, but this can potentially rage like "a candle in the Sun" especially in individuals that "are young and lusty, in the flower of their years, and nobly descended, high fed, such as live idly, and at ease..." (657). This perturbed passion is called jealousy if it continues after marriage and "Heroical Melancholy" if it take place before. This latter case is what Burton seems to take a greater interest in, for examples of such individuals were most prevalent in common tales (being the love madness most appropriate for most heroes). As with the other manifestations of the humour, idleness and meditation only allows the

illness to steep within the individual. But the signs of a heroic melancholic definitely stand out, including “hollow eyes, dryness,” (721) and “phantastical fits and passions” (751). However, a duality exists as this love may also benefit a person: “As it makes wise men fools, so many times it makes fools become wise...clowns, civil; cruel, gentle; wicked profane persons, to become religious; slovens, neat; churls, merciful; and dumb dogs, eloquent: your lazy drones, quick and nimble; love tames savage beasts” (751). Combined with any sort of madness, heroic love is only going to become more powerful. Burton was not a cynic when it came to love because he acknowledged the positive side of it, claiming “not courage only doth Love add, but, as I said, subtilty, wit, and many pretty devises” (753). But he clung to his role as a teacher to the public, and thus he had to reveal the darker sides of love melancholy.

Branching off from love melancholy is a “distinct species...no man hath ever doubted” (866) that is Religious Melancholy. Rosalind Colie noted that, “Since it was a disease of the soul, melancholy belonged quite literally in Burton’s professional purlieu, since by his ordination he was charged precisely with the cure of souls” (390). This is where Burton taps into his faith and those sections of it which fall under his scrutiny. Rather than attacking the excess of objectifying (for “we cannot love God too much”), he comes down on the lack or else defect of it in the form of “Impiety and Superstition, Idolatry and Atheism” (873). It is a slightly radical suggestion he makes, that faulty religion is not based in theological shortcomings but rather the excess of melancholy. For Burton, everything seems to tie to his topic of the humours; he denounces the extreme doctrine of “Sadducees, Herodians, Libertines, Politicians” but the worst is “that grand sin of Atheism or Impiety, Melancthon calls it, monstrous Melancholy; or poisoned

Melancholy” (925). How much is this a valid argument and how much is this entire partition solely a soapbox on which the author can stand and declare his opinions of society? For at its root, love is how people interact, and thus a study of love may be a study of society. Throughout these three partitions, Burton has moved from micro-melancholy to something more macro, encompassing its effects on civilization and religion as a whole.

The *Anatomy of Melancholy* was the first in a new era of the literary tradition surrounding the humours. It was a piece of literature that utilized new methods of relating science to society while capturing the culture of its time. Burton was three things: a sociologist, a storyteller, and an educator. However, in playing these three roles through his writing, he was also an actor. Though complex and extremely dense, Burton has given his readers a play of sorts, complete with a prologue and three acts. He presents the character of melancholy, and because this was a topic most interesting to his public, found it very happily received. Burton knew his audience and he knew his role as the object of their attention:

If ought to be otherwise than it should be, since I have now put myself upon the stage, I must undergo and abide the censure of it, the die is cast, and I may not escape it....I have laid myself open (I know it) in this Treatise, and shall be censured I doubt not, yet this is some comfort: our censures are as various as our palates. (973)

From the start, he knew his work may receive mixed reviews. But surely he could not have foreseen the massive impact that his grand analysis of this misunderstood humour

called melancholy would have on countless authors, playwrights, poets, and scholars of the future.

Chapter 2

The Caricatures of Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*

Before a work like Burton's *Anatomy*, drama presented a new way of educating the public on topics like politics and psychology, bringing to light the discussions that were often reserved for only the university-bred philosophers and physicians. In a sense, drama was the literature of the stage, accessible to even the illiterate as the playwright served as an author laying out his arguments through plot and his supporting ideas through character. Amongst late sixteenth century playwrights, Ben Jonson (1573-1637) is most well-known for the genre known as comedies of humours. Though known as simply a study of the four humours (as other physicians and philosopher had done), "what Jonson really did, was to raise the dramatic lampoon to an art, and make out of a casual burlesque and bit of mimicry a dramatic satire of literary pretensions and permanency" (Schelling). He utilized the stage for each and every one of his satirical purposes. If Burton gave detailed descriptions of the temperaments, then Jonson provided complete personifications of melancholy, cholera, and the rest of those passions that plagued contemporary discourse. If his plays were books, they were full of colorful illustrations with descriptions that the audience would happily fill in with their knowledge of popular culture surrounding the humours. Illustrations and appearance were indeed the theme of Jonson's work; as T.S. Eliot noted in his criticism, "to deal with the surface of life, as Jonson dealt with it, is to deal so deliberately that we too must be deliberate, in order to understand." Jonson required work of intellectual nature from his audiences; understanding the personalities in front of them would require some thoughtful analysis. In *Every Man Out of His Humour*, published in 1599, he creates a

cast of ridiculous personalities with each new member a little more insane than the last. However, there is a method to these extreme representations. Eliot also spoke of the characterizing power of Jonson's dialogue: "Men may not talk in that way, but the spirit of envy [and the other passions] does, and in the words of Jonson envy is a real and living person. It is not human life that informs envy and [the affected characters], but it is energy of which human life is only another variety." Jonson's audience is presented with a parade of abstract ideas realized in human form, from the humours to the very criticism directed at them. Such criticism comes in the form of his in-play narrator. As the plot progresses, not only is it paired with a commentary, but the very topic of the characters' humours is often criticized. Jonson offers a satire of society in that he offers this narrator in place of himself, but "Jonson's drama is only incidentally satire, because it is only incidentally a criticism on the actual world" (Eliot). The play is ripe with the very topics that Jonson's audience would be interested in, the topics their world was currently obsessed with, and therefore every sort of humour.

The character of Asper serves as the narrator and inserted version of Jonson himself. This "free spirit," as the character list describes him, is "eager and constant in reproof, without fear controlling the world's abuses" (281). To a degree, Asper anticipates the role Burton would play in the *Anatomy*: he is an advisor and critic of the behavior of his subjects, providing not only diagnoses but cures as well. He lectures a fellow viewer early on in the first act:

Why, humour, as 'tis *ens*, we thus define it

To be a quality of air or water...

That whatsoe'er hath fluxure and humidity,

As wanting power to contain itself,
Is humour. So in every human body
The choler, melancholy, phlegm, and blood,
By reason that they flow continually
In some one part, and are not continent,
Receive the name of humours. Now thus far
It may, by metaphor, apply itself
Unto the general disposition:
As when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
In their confluxions, all to run one way... (Prologue.88-108)

He covers multiple definitions of the humours, as if to catch the audience up in case they lack an understanding of the topic. Asper brings up a key point concerning the fact that a humour cannot be self-contained (continent) and thus it can express itself in one's disposition. In short, a humour is a physical element as well as a psychological one, at least having to do with disposition. This all mirrors the sentiment surrounding humours that is later seen so clearly in Burton's work. Like Asper, Jonson knew he could not continue with his play and the satire to follow if his audience did not first receive this refresher of sorts.

There are multiple characters that embody the personality of melancholy and the other temperaments. In this play, Jonson makes sure that everyone his audience encounters is very much out of his humour, or else showing signs of an excess of that

black bile or red sanguine. The playwright is interested in extremes and nothing less. One of the first characters sent forth into this parade is the old traveler and scholar Macilente.

He enters the scene and immediately displays a very melancholic nature:

Well I see,
I strive in vain to cure my wounded soul:
For every cordial that my thoughts apply
Turns to a corsive, and doth eat it farther.
There is no taste in philosophy... (I.i.4-9)

“Wounded soul” is not only overly dramatic but reveals that perhaps some trauma has taken place in Macilente’s life. For such a temperament, there is often a valid cause, as Burton discusses, in either circumstantial or spiritual trouble. But this character is not given such a cause, other than his very identity of a scholar; there seems a possible cause in his excess of studying philosophy. In fact, when two more characters enter the scene, they note Macilente’s silent and thoughtful mood while he sits in meditation with some contempt:

Carlo: Oh, he’s a black fellow; take heed on him.
Sogliardo: Is he a scholar or a soldier? (I.ii.182-183)

Jonson gives us visual cues to what these two would have seen when Macilente describes his condition:

Oh, they are thoughts that have transfix’d my heart,
And often, i’ the strength of apprehension,
Made my cold passion stand upon my face,
Like drops of dew on a stiff cake of ice. (I.i.29-31)

Macilente relates his complexion to that of a block of ice essentially: cold and wet. Such a description of sweat and paleness and probably some dishevelment ties in well to what the audience would identify as a melancholic, or at least someone suffering from a darker mood. The two characters which pass by could be simply echoing the audience's own reactions to a character such as Macilente. With such an appearance and temperament, he could only be a soldier or scholar, the better known archetypes of a melancholic individual, both having grown more deeply thoughtful or emotional due to their environments. Like someone of his nature, Macilente spends the play observing the other characters, not as a narrator but still in some way very similar to the role of Asper and his companions. Yet his observations are less comical, and he is in fact one of the only characters to speak in verse rather than prose. This suggests an old-fashioned way of thinking and speaking, like someone prone to romantic tendencies. He provides commentary on the events taking place around him, often when fellow characters are behaving as if they are also out of humour. However, the most interesting reflection is, in fact, his own. At the very end of this long sequence of events, a shift takes place within Macilente:

Why here's a change! Now is my soul at peace.
I am empty of all envy now
As they of merit to be envied at.
My humour, like a flame, no longer lasts
Than it hath stuff to feed it, and their folly,
Being now raked up in their repentant ashes,
Affords no ampler subject to my spleen. (V.xi.48-54)

The traveler finds that he no longer has a subject of study and meditation as the characters around him have solved their various problems (particularly the character Fastidious Brisk). Through this character, Jonson could be arguing that a cause of melancholy is often too much interest in the affairs of others, their secret or not-so-secret struggles and “merit to be envied at.” In this context, the definition of merit is ambiguous, as it could mean qualities deserving of praise *or* punishment. However, Macilente’s response is very clear: he has been cured of his imbalanced humour simply by not caring anymore. He declares, “I am so far from malicing their states,/ That I begin to pity them. It grieves me to think they have a being...but let them vanish, vapours!” (V.xi.55-57, 59). In one character, Jonson manages to provide a rather complete presentation of the cause, symptoms, and cure of melancholy, or at least one case of it. But this is why he provides multiple characters to portray the many facets of the humour and its effect on individuals.

Jonson presents another case of being out of humour in the character of the courtier Fastidious Brisk. His very name could be a play on the way he quickly changes himself (and his disposition) particularly through clothes. Fastidious is not so much out of his own humour as he is constantly jumping between multiple expressions of himself. While preparing to encounter the court-lady Saviolina, the object of his desires, he changes between several outfits and accessories. Cordatus, observing him, asks Mitis (two of Asper’s fellow narrators), “Do you observe that, signior? There’s another humour has new cracked the shell” (II.iii.110-111). In Fastidious, there is an idea that the humours are more like personalities, or at least various imbalances directly relate to different identities. With each new outfit or accessory, a new side of him is coming out as that new element of performance correlates with the vying humours within him. His

inconstancy in appearance reveals the turmoil within his body. But the “cracked shell” imagery is not all negative; such an action can also refer to a birth or the arrival of a new facet of Fastidious’ character. An imbalance in his humours, even an influx of melancholy, could be seen as a possible positive for this character: a new part of him is being revealed and brought forth into the realm of the play. All the while, his actions are not much more than a calculated performance. Speaking about himself, Fastidious praises the very idea of apparel:

Why, assure you, signior, rich apparel has strange virtues: it makes him that hath it without means esteemed for an excellent wit: he that enjoys it with means puts the world in remembrance of his means: it helps the deformities of nature, and gives lustre to her beauties; makes continual holy day where it shines; sets the wits of ladies at work, that otherwise would be idle: furnisheth your two-shilling ordinary; takes possession of your stage at your new play... (II.iv.42-49)

This performance, or “costume” change if we are to speak in dramatic terms, serves to widen the viewers’ understanding of the character in that they come to know what lies beneath his outer shell: something much less perfect than the appearance he has curated. As Burton does later, Jonson could be subtly implying a positive use of the humours, especially when they manifest in their subjects, in that others can gain a better understanding of the patient’s internal being. Like books themselves, those suffering from melancholy and other imbalances could be easily read based on their actions and temperaments which seem to form a protective mask over their true identities. If one looks hard enough, one may see the telltale cracks within the surface.

Similar to Fastidious Brisk, in both disposition and use of a characterizing name, is the character of Shift. The exact personality Jonson wishes to present through this character is unclear. In the character list, Shift is described as a “threadbare shark,” a parasite and swindler by vocation, but a shabby one at that; and his actions support such a title, as “he is of that admirable and happy memory that he will salute one for an old acquaintance that he never saw in his life before,” but he also “usurps upon cheats, quarrels, and robberies, which he never did, only to get him a name” (283-284). In every sense of the word, he seems to earn his namesake. But when the play first introduces the character to the audience, his actions tie him to something like religious melancholy (as he is seen pacing the aisle of St. Paul’s cathedral), and for this reason he is treated with delicacy by the other characters. His encounter takes place in the center of an interaction between Carlo Buffone, a local jester, and Puntarvolo, a recently returned travelling knight. In helping the knight catch up on the culture and personalities of London, Carlo prepares him for an encounter with Shift:

A pimp, a pimp, that I have observed yonder, the rarest superficialities of a humour; he comes every morning to empty his lungs in Paul’s here: and offers up some five or six hecatombs of faces and sighs, and away again. Here he comes; nay, walk, walk, be not seen to note him, and we shall have excellent sport. (III.v.30-35)

This little bit of dialogue reveals much about how the characters, and the audience, would view Shift’s behavior. First, they recognize the insincerity in his religious actions and passionate offerings to God, repetitive as they may be. Second, Carlo implies that it is best to have nothing to do with him though he incites his companions to have some fun in

observing him. Like Jonson's other characters that have fallen out of humour, Shift serves as a spectacle to the audience within as well as without the storyline. In the next scene, he falls under the gaze of the same characters as he begins to move about the walkway of St. Paul's while swinging about his rapier. Carlo quips, quoting from some other work, "With that, the moody squire thumped his breast,/ And reared his eye to the heaven, for revenge" (III.vi.13-14). Before they even approach him, the characters looking on already know for a fact that Shift is either a soldier or squire or some person normally associated with melancholy because of his outburst of passion. Carlo, always quick to contribute to the mockery, comments, "Did you ever in your days observe better passion over a hilt?" (III.vi.6). It comes as no surprise when Shift is revealed to be a well-travelled squire, and confesses an attachment to the very rapier he is swinging about so fervently in his prayers. Jonson yet again has given his audience a walking, talking stereotype of an individual overcome by their imbalanced humour. But through the entourage of commentators, he also provides an image of how his viewers might act in their own interactions with the melancholic soldiers and scholars of London.

The final character that presents a clear image of imbalanced humour in this play is the farmer Sordido, successful but stingy with his profits. Though greediness could be criticized as the result of an ill-humour, Jonson portrays an even darker manifestation and uses it to provide an overarching criticism. Sordido's melancholy shows through most clearly during a scene where he attempts to take his own life (as Burton says, one of the worst of the humoural sins). The economic status of his inferiors becomes overwhelming, and, before hanging himself, he reveals the motivation for his desperate action:

Nay, God's precious, if the weather and season be so disrespectful that beggars shall live as well as their betters; and that my hunger and thirst for riches shall not make them hunger and thirst with poverty... 'Tis time that a cross should bear flesh and blood, since flesh and blood cannot bear this cross. (III.vii.1-4,6-7)

Sordido is presented as quite despicable, with all the traits that someone, especially a businessman, would have if they were out of humour. His melancholy has resulted in self-righteousness among other flaws, as he even refers to himself as a Christ-like figure bearing the burden of the sins of his fellows. What breaks him even more is a letter that arrives from his son, simply asking for assistance with the costs of marriage; the thought of showing benevolence to his son and daughter-in-law is unbearable to his mind and wallet. Unfortunately for Sordido, a group of rustics come by at the exact moment he begins to strangle himself and assist him through cutting the rope. Almost immediately after their rescue, the rustics realize whom they have just saved and regret their good deed. But, similar to Macilente, Sordido experiences a change of heart (or rather humour) following this encounter. First he realizes the problem:

What curses breathe these men! How have my deeds
Made my looks differ from another man's,
That they should thus detest and loathe my life!
Out on my wretched humour; it is that
Makes me thus monstrous in human eyes. (III.ix.33-36)

Sordido realizes that his greed-fueled disposition, or at least the perception that he is out of humour, is the lens through which others view him. Like Fastidious' apparel, this farmer's attitude and treatment of others has created a whole persona that characterizes

him. He just now realizes that these rustics, and the audience, see him only for his stereotype. The short monologue is, in fact, a little meta as Sordido understands the power that outward appearance (and the resulting manifestation of internal humours) has over people's perceptions and opinions. His newfound education leads him to a new spirit of benevolence as he gives up all his selfish behavior and promises to live more generously. In rhetoric that mirrors Macilente's change later on in the play, the farmer exclaims,

I am by wonder changed; come in with me

And witness my repentance: now I prove

'No life is blessed that is not graced with love.' (III.viii.50-53)

And in the next line, one of the rustics proclaims, "Oh miracle! See when a man has grace!" One of the cures Burton talks about in the *Anatomy* is God, which could be translated to grace or salvation. It was a miracle for Sordido to turn from being influenced by his wicked humour to becoming more of a decent human being, a change that could not have come about by physical or psychological means. Jonson's audience would have shared the belief that some imbalances could be remedied only by a greater power outside of themselves. Beyond his contribution to the spiritual melancholy discussion, the character of Sordido serves as a mechanism to turn the play onto the audience, putting words to the inherent judgment that was so tightly bound to an understanding of the genre of the humours.

Jonson paints vivid caricatures in *Every Man Out of His Humour*. They are easy to spot and dappled with more than one telltale sign of an excess of melancholy, or any imbalance of humours for that matter. The playwright's genius lies deeper still, beyond

his skillful creation of the cast, within the underlying themes he weaves through the work. With stereotypes comes criticism for the very characters that ridicule their fellows, and even the audience is not safe at times as the voyeurism of the presenters applies equally to them. By making every man out of his humour, Jonson reveals the culture of sixteenth century England that both revels in and despises the extremes of personalities and temperaments, and thus reveals the subconscious ideals and norms of their society as a whole.

Chapter 3

The Game of Melancholy in Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour*

Jonson approaches his famed topic in a very different way in *Every Man In His Humour*, which was published a year before *Every Man Out of His Humour*, and considered “‘the first’ of ‘the fruits’” by the other himself (Riggs 37). There are no absolutes in the world of Jonson, for his understanding of the multiplicity of life made that impossible. Richard McCabe wrote that “Jonson is not interested in mere definition,” but rather “to set before us ‘one by one all the various types into which men are divided’” (29). In fact, he almost applies a completely different and more interpretive definition to the very term of humour, and particularly melancholy. In a reprinting of the play, editor Robert Watson says:

Jonson's use of the term [“humours”] is unorthodox. Distinguished early critics of the play such as William Congreve set the tone by defining a humour as a man's unique and unchangeable self, yet closer study suggests that it is virtually the opposite: a conventional fictional disguise the self chooses, which is by no means his own, and often the opposite of his true nature. Though the play bears some structural analogies to a humoral cure, Jonson's characters are driven less by chemistry than by fantasy; they are less what they eat than what they read.... The idea that Jonson conceives the humours which control human action as essentially verbal rather than physical--not the fluids of one's body but the language of one's fluency--fits nicely with the evidence that he conceived the theatre and even the soul as more verbal than physical. (*Everyman In His Humour* xiii)

More so than his other comedy of humours, Jonson moves beyond stereotypes of melancholics to his character's roles in creating and maintaining these personas. In a sense, many of the characters in this play are similar, the difference between them being in their extremity to fit into the mold of melancholy. They compete to be the most obviously ill-humoured, or studious, or whatever manifestation suits them best. Like Fastidious Brisk in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, this set of players put on one costume after another. Only the character of Edward seems immune to the charade, mostly because he is an experienced actor in the show. While his motley cast of characters is hilarious and entertaining, I argue that Jonson's goal is to present three types of people: those who live blindly by this game of humours, those who have no understanding of it whatsoever, and those who see it for the petty competition it is.

Some of the most comical scenes of this play could be described as a "battle of humours," as multiple young men compete to one up each other in the area of melancholy. Edward, a protagonist of sorts, comes upon the group of scholarly youth he has become friends with in act III, and this is where the audience witnesses an unusual competition. Stephen, Edward's cousin from the country, must prove himself amongst the "professionals" that he encounters:

Matthew: But are you indeed, sir? So given to it?

Stephen: Aye, truly, sir, I am mightily given to melancholy.

M: Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir, your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir: I am melancholy myself divers times, sir, and then do I no more but take pen and paper presently, and overflow you half a score, or a dozen of sonnets, at a sitting.

Edward: [aside] Sure, he utters them then, by the gross.

S: Truly, sir, and I love such things, out of measure.

E: [aside] I' faith, better than in measure, I'll undertake.

M: Why, I pray you, sir, it's at your service.

S: I thank you sir, I shall be bold, I warrant you; have you a stool there, to be melancholy upon?

M: That I have, sir, and some papers there of mine own doing, at idle hours, that you'll say there's some sparks of wit in 'em, when you see them.

Wellbred: [aside] Would the sparks would kindle once, and become a fire amongst 't 'em, I might see the self-love burnt for her heresy.

S: Cousin, is it well? Am I melancholy enough?

E: Oh, aye, excellent!

W: Captain Bobadill: why muse you so?

E: He is melancholy, too. (III.iii.78-100)

There are several of layers of satire in this one passage. It is clear that certain elements of melancholy are left out of this dialogue, particularly in that none of the men refer to any of the negative effects of the humour. The topics of their discussion most likely mirrored similar conversations that would inspire Burton's own list of the positive elements of melancholy, including an increase in wit and thoughtfulness. Matthew claims that, in this state, he could give the world its next opus or great collection of poetry. These young scholars also seem to understand only the mildest manifestations of the humour, like sitting upon a stool to muse and interacting in intellectual dialogue with one another. As the character Wellbred notes, though not outright, their behavior is all really a show of

self-love. For each of these characters, their humour is a show, a carefully calculated performance to both impress and connect them with their peers. They do teach each other (Edward and his cousin are an obvious example), but the underlying competition seems ever present. It is similar to the ironic trend of putting lots of effort into making something look effortless. Jonson's characters could have written a book about the amount of thought that goes into being thoughtful or musings on the act of musing. Tip number one may be to find a stool on which to perch. They are painfully self-aware of their behavior and the importance that their manifestations of the humours play in how others perceive them. Yet, they are willing participants in this game. Jonson makes it clear that not everyone in this play falls into this category, for he faithfully portrays the lesser educated, or at least less aware, members of London society as well.

The young men that utilize melancholy for their own benefit cannot be assumed to represent the full spectrum of society in Jonson's play, for they exist within the realm of the upper class. Through characters like the merchant Kitley, his servant Cash, and a lowly water-bearer Cob, the audience sees the topic of humours through a new set of perspectives. Kitley, who could also be from a slightly older generation, does not understand the hype surrounding this new fad. Unlike the young men, he understands the destructive side to such a temperament:

A new disease? I know not, new or old,
But it may well be called poor mortal's plague:
For, like a pestilence, it doth infect
The houses of the brain. First, it begins
Solely to work upon the fantasy,

Filling her seat with such pestiferous air,
As soon corrupts the judgment; and from thence
Sends like contagion on the memory,
Still each to other giving the infection.
Confusedly, through every sensitive part,
Till not a thought or motion in the mind,
Be free from the black poison of suspect. (II.i.224-236)

Burton later echoes much of this, from the diagnosis of melancholy as a disease to the psychological effects on the patient. Through his acknowledgement of the larger implications of living under melancholy, Kately reveals that he is very much outside of the circle that Edward and his fellows have created for only the humoral elitists. Through this character, Jonson gave those educated, though still confused, members of his audience someone with whom to identify.

To offer further access to the theme of his play, he also creates the characters of Cash and Cob. First, Cash serves an example for how one can take the idea of melancholy too far. When he is entrusted with a secret and the necessary silence that must come with it, he overreacts, possibly in an attempt to fit in to the rest of society, even if only in his own mind. He quotes his master, Kately, then goes a couple steps farther:

‘Locked up in silence, midnight, buried here.’
Whence should this flood of passion (trow) take heed? Ha?
Best dream no longer of this running humour,
For fear I sink! The violence of the stream

Already hath transported me so far,

That I can feel no ground at all! (III.ii.139-144)

Cash tries to be current with his times. Perhaps he practices such an outburst in order to perform it later in the presence of others. In fact, his chance comes in the next moment when a flustered Cob the water-bearer comes along. There is a clear rift between the two characters as Cash tries to strike up a conversation using the humours as a talking point. He asks, “Why, how now, Cob, what moves you to this choler? Ha?” (III.ii.151), and Cob responds with “Collar, Master Thomas? I scorn your collar, I sir, none of your cart-horse, though I carry, and draw water” (152-153). After Cash corrects Cob’s mistake and explains himself, the man is still confused: “Humour? Mack, I think it be so indeed; what is that humour? Some rare thing, I warrant” (162-163). Jonson has brought us all the way to the end of his spectrum of knowledge surrounding melancholy, for here is a character who lacks any understanding of the topic. While engaging with his viewers who may be in Cob’s position, the playwright could also be criticizing them. Only the lower class would have absolutely no idea about such a prevalent piece of popular culture, and it was certainly considered ridiculous. Alternatively, Jonson could be also using Cob as a voice for the criticism surrounding the very definition of the word “humour.” Rather than being completely ignorant, he could just be skeptical of the newest definition of the word. Either way, Cob is the most unattractive character of the play, mostly because of how his position in the class structure puts him outside of any intellectual attention or esteem. Whether or not Jonson wanted to put down each of these three characters, he definitely succeeded in providing the alternative to those members that were obsessed with all things melancholy.

The most powerful characters in this play seem to be those that straddle the lines between the overly and under-engaged members of the cult of melancholy. These characters understand the fascination with the humours, but see it for what it is, Jonson's way of "sharpen[ing] the opposition between wit and folly wherever he could" (Riggs 38). Edward sees the truth of the game and his father Knowell, with the added experience of age, sees an even wider truth. At the start of the play, when he hears word of his son's behavior and the type of youth he is surrounded by, the old gentleman seems to understand Edward's situation:

How happy yet should I esteem myself
Could I (by any practice) wean the boy
From one vain course of study he affects.
He is a scholar, if a man may trust
The liberal voice of fame in her report
Of good account in both our universities...
Myself was once a student; and, indeed,
Fed with the self-same humour as he is now,
Dreaming on nought but idle poetry,
That fruitless and unprofitable art,
Good unto none... (I.ii.6-11, 15-19)

Knowell, with his advanced years, knows this is only a phase because he once went through the very same one. For Jonson to bring in a generational twist to his play certainly gives it more substance. With someone like old Knowell, the playwright says what Burton later reiterates: the humours and the concept of their imbalance have always

existed. The tension between the mind and body and the effects of environment (like a university full of scholars or a battalion full of soldiers) was not a new idea, but had simply been echoed in new ways throughout time and literature. Yet this does not limit the power of Jonson's current work, because it is more than simply a revision of past literature in the genre. The character of Edward serves as a translator for the common viewer; he guides the audience through an understanding of melancholy in the late sixteenth century. His understanding of the social value of humoural discourse is revealed when he convinces his country bumpkin of a cousin to engage in emotion-driven behavior:

Edward: ...let the Idea of what you are be portrayed i' your face, that men may read i' your physonomy, 'Here, within this place, is to be seen the true, rare, and accomplished monster, or miracle of nature,' which is all one. What you of this, coz?

Stephen: Why, I do think of it, and I will be more proud, and melancholy, and gentleman-like, than I have been: I'll ensure you.

E: Why, that's resolute, Master Stephen! [Aside] Now, if I can but hold him up to his height, as it is happily begun, it will do well for a suburb-humour: we may have a match with the City, and play him for forty pound. Come, coz. (I.ii.109-119)

Indulging in self-pride and acting like a gentleman are behaviors directly tied to melancholy; this is what Edward and his contemporaries would have known to be true; thus this is what he tries to teach his cousin. But his asides reveal his true thoughts about the temperament, that Stephen's induced attitude will serve well to challenge the other

scholars in London. Essentially, Edward wants to make money off of his gullible cousin. Jonson gives his audience a character who is very much playing all the angles. But Edward can only play this game so well because he understands all of its intricacies. After the character of Captain Bobadill preaches on the virtue of “the expulsion of rheums, raw humours, crudities, obstructions, with a thousand of this kind,” Edward quips, “This speech would ha’ done decently in a tobacco-trader’s mouth!” (III.iii.77-79, 84-85). The sum of the genre of the humours, from the discourse to the diagnoses to the remedies, is a product to be bought and sold, to be wrapped up and presented to a society that had been conditioned to consume it. Edward knew all this because Jonson had also reached such a level of understanding, the very thing that enabled him to craft a social criticism such as *Every Man in His Humour*.

I do not believe Jonson took the subject of the humours lightly. We as readers can see him in many of the characters. However, the character of Kitley seems to hold a position most similar to where Jonson would stand. He seems to understand that these excesses of the humours were undoubtedly detrimental to society on a macro and micro level. David Riggs argues that “the comedy of humours was an adaptive mechanism that enabled Jonson to cope with his own lust and aggressiveness” (44); perhaps he meant this to be the case for his audience as well, an experience of theatrical catharsis. At the end of the play, an old magistrate named Clement serves as a *deus ex machina* as he clears up any remaining problems between the larger cast of players. He tells the group:

Come, I conjure the rest to put off all discontent. You, Master Downright, you anger; you Master Knowell, your cares; Master Kitley, and his wife, their jealousy.

For, I must tell you both, while that is fed,

Horns i' the mind are worse than o' the head. (V.i.268-273)

If Clement is to serve as a voice of reason, then the only manifestations that are really important for people to be wary of are anger, pride, and jealousy, all results of more internal issues, or “horns i' the mind.” These could each fit into Burton’s categories of general, self-pride or religious, and heroical love melancholy. Jonson seemed most concerned with ill-humours that affected immediate relations, because he knew from his observations of society that these could evolve into diseases that permeated all of culture. Beyond these criticisms he offers no additional didactic sentiments; he simply “studies and observes, painfully embodying the results in sharp outlines” (Elder 18). It also seems that Burton would later fill in these hollow caricatures for those who found it difficult to navigate the outright satire and sometimes deep-set critiques of Jonson’s comedies.

Chapter 4

Visions of Real World Melancholy in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*

The genius of Shakespeare was the accuracy of his theater; the opinion that he holds a mirror up to his audience is so common it has become a literary adage at this point. Samuel Johnson, one of his well-known critics, points out not only his skill but the genuineness behind it:

Shakespeare, whether life or nature be his subject, shews plainly, that he has seen with his own eyes; he gives the image which he receives, not weakened or distorted by the intervention of any other mind; the ignorant feel his representations to be just, and the learned see that they are compleat. (21)

One such subject of life that Shakespeare must have studied well is love, a common theme in many of his plays; it propels the plots of both his tragedies and comedies. With love often comes madness or, if we are to use Burton's terminology, the melancholy that sprouts from heroic love. In *As You Like It*, we see several representations of individuals across the spectrum of the manifestations of melancholy, from the hyperemotional Jacques to the lovelorn Orlando, some characters being touched by the deeper mental effects of the humour and some being influenced by the romantic notions. Shakespeare does not give caricatures of the humours as Jonson does, but rather, he shows the integration of melancholy in everyday interactions. Johnson said of Shakespeare's universality:

[He] is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places...they are the

genuine progeny of common humanity...His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species. (3)

He injects his characters with varying amounts of melancholy, and thus a variety of worldviews when it comes to the subject of love, family, and even identity. Some of his characters are more vocal than others, and consequently represent the most prevalent examples of melancholy, or at least individuals who have distinct opinions of the humour and its influence on those around them. Three of these characters are the two main protagonists and the play's token poet: Orlando, Rosalind, and Jacques. Between these three, Shakespeare manages to present a comprehensive range of personalities, and it is clear that their temperament is related in some way to their view of melancholy, and their level of awareness to their own condition.

From the start of the play, Orlando is set up as a character prone to some sort of imbalance of humours; and as the play progresses, it is no surprise that he falls headlong into the madness of love. The first act actually begins with the audience's introduction to our "hero," and his current situation is made very clear. Describing his father's treatment, he tells his man Adam:

And there begins my sadness. My brother Jacques he keeps at school, and report speaks goldenly of his profit. For my part, he keeps me rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays me here at home unkempt; for call you that 'keeping' for a gentleman of my birth, that differs not from the stalling of an ox? (I.i.4-10)

His only fault seems to be idleness, and to make it worse this “keeping” has been imposed on him. Anyone treated like an animal will begin to act like one, or at least be affected by the baser humours. But the audience learns that despite his condition, Orlando is the darling of the family. He has risen above his status as the rustic brother, redeeming himself with his inner qualities that shine through in his character. His own brother references this, saying, “Yet he’s gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so much so in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him...” (I.ii.163-167). This elder brother, Oliver, serves as a foil to Orlando: he is conniving, selfish, and ambitious to a fault. He represents the opposite of gentleness and inherent goodness, the alternative of being schooled yet never learning how to interact with his fellow man. Though Oliver has his own journey in this play, which need not be discussed here, he plays an important role in introducing his brother. In fact, Orlando is not only un-melancholic by nature, but he seems averse to anything associated with that sadder temperament. When he comes across the exiled Duke Senior and his entourage in the forest, he at once notices, “But whate’er you are/ That in this desert inaccessible,/ Under the shade of melancholy boughs,/ Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time...” (II.vii.114-117). He seems suspicious of the multiple trademarks of melancholy and their abandonment of normal society. Orlando shows similar contempt for Jacques, the main melancholic of the play, which is seen through the irritation and clashing of personalities that underlies their banter. Even more than in his relationship to Oliver, Orlando stands at complete odds with the musing poet:

Jacques: I thank you for your company, but good faith, I had as lief have been myself alone.

Orlando: And so had I, but yet, for fashion sake, I thank you too for your society.

J: God be wi' you. Let's meet as little as we can.

O: I do desire we may be better strangers.

J: I pray you no more mar trees with writing love songs in their bark.

O: I pray you no mar no more of my verses with reading them ill-favoredly.

(III.ii.258-267)

The two depart, Jacques calling Orlando “Signior Love” and he calling the poet “Monsieur Melancholy.” When set up against one another, perhaps the two are not so different after all. Orlando is most assuredly consumed by a passion, that being heroical love. Its manifestation may be different from the humour that affects Jacques, but it has a hold on him nonetheless. Now, it must be noted that Orlando’s madness is really not that extreme; Shakespeare gives a fairly tame portrayal of a man in love. Other than wandering the woods and writing love notes on the trees, he shows no desire to die for his lover or commit any other sort of crime. Shakespeare creates a more or less relatable character for his audience, an accessible portrayal of the subtleness of melancholy’s effect in everyday life. Orlando’s humour makes him silly, but also a thoughtful and generally optimistic person. His role in the play is key: he serves as a model for the positive end of the melancholy spectrum.

If Orlando is most affected by the “happy madness and delightful illusions” of melancholy, then Jacques the poet experiences the more sober effects of the humour. As

expected, Jacques first appears already in one of his moods. Some of Duke Senior's lords spy "the melancholy Jacques" and describe what they saw:

He lay along
Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood;
To which the place a poor sequestered stag
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt
Did come to languish. (II.i.31-36)

Immediately we see the character's fascination with nature as well as death. The Duke asks, "But what said Jacques?/ Did he not moralize this spectacle?" and the lord responds, "O yes, into a thousand similes" (II.i.45-47). Jacques does not present a crazed or troubled version of melancholy, but rather a deeply thoughtful one. He is even respected for his humour, and the effects it has on his view of the world and its affairs. Duke Senior declares, "I love to cope with him in these sullen fits,/ For then he's full of matter" (II.i.71-72). In a sense, Jacques is a meta-melancholic; he seems to indulge in the study of the humours as much as he is affected by them. He tells one of the Duke's musicians, "More [music], I prithee, more, I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs" (II.v.13-14). Even if a topic is not melancholic on the surface, he boasts the ability to pull out its true nature, even if it means a little effort. Jacques intensely studies the passion, as a poet should, and his observations might take work but they make an important addition to the content of the play. As Orlando served as an example of love melancholy in real life, Jacques could be considered the everyday cynic that people in Shakespeare's London might often encounter. He assumes to have certain

knowledge of the world and its humoural disease, but, whether out of goodwill or arrogance, he also proposes how he might help:

Invest in my motley. Give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine. (II.v.60-64)

As Orlando showed how a heroic lover might appear in the modern Elizabethan world, so Jacques serves as an example of the type of individual that should be considered melancholic. Poets, scholars, and maybe musicians; all of these could act the way this Monsieur Melancholy does and still hold respectable positions in society. In fact, Jacques almost acts as an educator. He shares his understanding of humanity and the element of performance in life, in the well-known lines: "All the world's a stage,/ And all men and women merely players./ They have their exits and their entrances,/ And one man in his time plays many parts" (II.vii.142-149). Coming from a character in a drama, and most likely on a stage himself, this passage is a reflection that transcends the space of the play. In this moment, there is a sense that Jacques could be a third party narrator, or at least a character capable of stepping in and out of several roles. This mode of moving in and out of one's individual experience always seems linked to some sort of melancholy; perhaps because this posture of deep thoughtfulness enables someone like Jacques to do it so effectively. There is a similar moment in a later scene, when he describes to Rosalind the various categories of melancholy:

I have neither the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician's,
which is fantastical; nor the courtier's, which is proud; nor the soldier's, which is

ambitious; nor the lawyer's, which is politic; nor the lady's, which is nice; nor the lover's, which is all of these; but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humourous sadness. (IV.i.13-22)

The poet seems to cover all the types of melancholy presented in the play, or at least those portrayals that permeated the culture of Shakespeare's London. Again in reflection of his happy counterpart, Jacques gives the viewers a manageable vision of the more profound manifestations of melancholy: he is thoughtful but not depressing, averse to silly love but not ignorant of the nature of humanity. Jacques is more or less approachable, and thus the humour he emulates is human enough for the audience to embrace.

If there exists a stand-in for the audience in *As You Like It*, it would be, or at least the audience would hope it to be, the heroine Rosalind. She is clever, witty, resilient, and knows how to get exactly what she wants, yet has a complex combination of personality and desires. As critical as she seems of love and the melancholy it produces, she too gives in to her heart's desire for Orlando. She is a brilliant example of the type of person who tries with all their might to resist the pressures of society, but cannot help herself in the end. In fact, she is immediately taken with Orlando at his wrestling match, telling him, "Sir, you have wrestled well and overthrown/ More than your enemies" (I.ii.254-255). Like her counterpart, Rosalind is also shown in an emotionally compromising situation at the start of the play. Her father, Duke Senior, has been betrayed and exiled from his land, and she is basically kept as a prisoner by her traitorous uncle. Such circumstances create

a fertile ground where a number of humoural imbalances could come forth. Should we approach Rosalind's infatuation as such a manifestation of her deeper melancholy? I would argue that she is too self-aware for that. For she could not hope to cure the "quotidian of love" if she believed she suffered from the same madness. Her self-acclaimed role of a physician of love is obvious whenever she interacts with Orlando:

Rosalind: I would give him some good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.

Orlando: What were his marks?

R: A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not... Then your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation. (III.ii.370-371, 379-388)

This general description of a man unkempt and distracted echoes the popular image of a man in love, unable to concern himself with even basic hygiene or proper dress. Rosalind is repeating the stereotype society has already taught her. There is an overwhelming element of performance here, as Rosalind is disguised as Ganymede whenever she speaks with Orlando. So her views on love might not be as genuine as the audience believes, and as fervent as they sound. Indeed, she delivers her lines as if they are scientific truths: "Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well as dark house and a whip as madmen do...the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too. Yet I profess curing it by counsel" (III.ii.407-411). In the same way, the prescription she proposes could be Rosalind's own satire on the very idea that something like love can be dealt with

medically. She assures Orlando that, if he is truly suffering from love, she can help him with her specialized treatment:

I drave my suitor from his mad humour of love to a living humour of
madness...And thus I cured him, and this way will I take upon me to wash your
liver as clean as a sound sheep's heart, and there shall not be one spot of love in
't. (II.ii.425-431)

The “disease” of love is no mystery to Rosalind (or at least to Ganymede), so it is no surprise that her wisdom and promises of a cure seem to gain a following of two pastoral locals, the shepherd Silvius and his love Phoebe.

These two stand in contrast to Rosalind, Silvius in particular serving as a genuine voice of opinion in regards to love and the reality of its emotional and psychological implications. There is a mixing with religious melancholy as Rosalind points out the shepherd's behavior: “Look upon him; he worships you” (V.ii.86). Besides being uncomfortable with the possibility of Phoebe becoming attracted to her façade, the audience is a little unsure of Rosalind's stance on these two lovers and the validity of their relationship. Perhaps beyond all the other characters, Rosalind seems to be learning about love the most. In her performative role as a teacher, she has opened herself up to learning more. The tables are turned at one point, with the two instead educating Rosalind/Ganymede:

Phoebe: Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

Silvius: It is to be all made of fantasy,
All made of passion and all of wishes,
All adoration, duty, and observance,

All humbleness, all patience and impatience,

All purity, all trial, all observance... (V.ii.86, 98-102)

Rosalind appears to play the role of an actor in any of Shakespeare's dramas: she provides a performance that the audience can live through and learn from. She is a very realistic character, caught up in the idea of love but aware that she still has much to learn, and therefore serving as an excellent portal between those on the stage and those sitting in the theater. But Rosalind is more complex than a narrator that exists outside of the plot because she is very intertwined with the story and the characters that surround her. She is a very human authority on love melancholy by the end of the play, because she has encountered it in so many forms, including her own and that of Orlando. Of all the characters, the audience probably admires Rosalind the most (a similar theme with many of Shakespeare's women characters), as she deals with the puzzle of love and melancholy as any pragmatic woman in the early seventeenth century London would.

As You Like It is a strange portrayal of love melancholy, mostly because the two main characters are sure of their feelings from the very first act. This allows Shakespeare to use the rest of the play as a grand display of the varying views and reactions to the foolish acts that are prompted by love. One reason the characters might seem more realistic than the caricatures of Jonson is that they represent multiple-dimensional personalities. Orlando is preoccupied by his love, but it is not the reason he escaped to the pastures in the first place, and he never comes to understand Jacques' cynicism. The poet himself does not identify with any particular melancholy other than his own unique blend. Even Oliver, who begins as Orlando's antagonist, redeems himself after falling in love with Rosalind's cousin and travelling companion. In fact, as in most of

Shakespeare's comedies, there are no villains by the end of the play. *As You Like It* presents not the world as it is, but as the audience would like it to be. Therefore, the characters are not extremes but models for the moderate manifestations of the humours in the real world, the playwright's very tools for teaching his audience about the ideal role of melancholy.

Chapter 5

The Discourse of Melancholy in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

While many of Shakespeare's plays engage with melancholy and madness in some way, *Hamlet* most thoroughly covers the nuances surrounding the perception of the humour. Eliot said that Shakespeare's characters "represent a more complex tissue of feelings and desires, as well as a more supple, a more susceptible temperament" (6). Such complexity is explicit in multiple areas of this play in particular. The name of the titular character is often interchangeable with mad or vengeful, but also tortured, divided, and moody. It is Hamlet that enables the play to stand apart from the rest of Shakespeare's canon, as his "struggle for self-knowledge is a subject of utmost importance...forc[ing] us to approach it through the hero's baffling and baffled consciousness" (Soellner 175). The story is well-known, a classic tale of betrayal and psychological turmoil, adopted and reinterpreted by many, from Freud to Disney. However, upon closer inspection of this original play, there are many lenses through which the audience sees Hamlet. The play is less about melancholy and the affiliated madness, and more about the perceptions of those afflicted. If *As You Like It* covered the contemporary manifestations of melancholy, then *Hamlet* covers early seventeenth century rhetoric and attitude surrounding madness, that from both the perspective of the patient and those around them. This is seen in three ways: the responses to Hamlet's genuine and performed humoral imbalance, and his own perception of himself. Though it begins as an act, both Hamlet and his family begin to see the reality of his madness and the deeper issues that they are rooted in. There is something to be applied to the nature of discourse in Soellner's observation that "it is not a tragedy of lack of self-knowledge so much as a tragedy of the problematic nature of the

quest for self-knowledge” (194). Shakespeare illuminates this quest to understanding madness but also the stereotypes that were forced onto certain individuals along the way. Therefore, *Hamlet* is an interesting study of not just a fictional family, but the culture of discourse surrounding melancholy in seventeenth century London, a time when most people would be at either the giving or receiving end of some opinion on humours.

Like Orlando and Rosalind, Hamlet is introduced as a man in an emotionally and psychologically comprising situation. His father has been murdered and his mother is remarried to his most definitely traitorous uncle. It is only natural that such pain and anger would show in the countenance of such a character. His uncle and mother notice this very early: King Claudius asks “how is it that clouds still hang on you?” (I.ii.68), and the queen tries to encourage, saying, “good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off” (70). In response to his mother’s question of why he seems to be troubled by his father’s assumed natural death, he gives a long answer touching on the line between outward and inward emotion:

‘Seems,’ madam? Nay, it is. I know not ‘seems.’
‘Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,
No, nor the dejected havior of the visage,
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,
That can denote me truly. These indeed “seem,”
For they are actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passes show,

These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (I.ii.79-89)

Hamlet emphasizes that the outer appearance is not what matters, but rather the inner condition of the mind. His visage could be as much a costume as his cloak, foreshadowing the fact that his behavior later in the play is partly an act. Following suit, the king retorts “Tis unmanly grief./ It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,/ A heart unfortified, a mind impatient” (I.ii.98-100). But King Claudius seems uninterested with agreeing with his nephew, and more concerned with using Hamlet’s point to criticize his own behavior. He connects his emotion to weakness and even implies its connection to madness. This is how extreme grief would have been classified, as something that compromises power or authority as well as the gender norms that men like Hamlet would be subject to.

The theme of clothing and costume portraying the inner state of person continues when Ophelia, Hamlet’s lover, describes his appearance and very quickly associates it with his recent abnormal behavior. She describes an encounter to her father:

Ophelia: My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors--he comes before me.

Polonius: Mad for thy love? (II.ii.87-95)

This description perfectly sums up the common stereotype of a melancholic. As Burton points out in his *Anatomy*, “everyone that loves be pale, for lovers ‘tis the proper hue” (721). When anything diverts from the healthy or societal norm, it is dubbed as madness. Ophelia’s father immediately translates Hamlet’s actions as an indicator of an imbalance in his emotions and mental state. But the idea of a costume here in key because it ties to the possibility of Hamlet’s behavior being some part of a ruse.

In speaking with two of Hamlet’s friends, the king refers to the change in behavior as a transformation: “Sith nor th’ exterior or the inward man/ Resembles that it was” (II.ii.6-7). There is a sense that Hamlet’s change is so sudden that it is highly questionable. The king seems to represent the view that no madness is as unexplainable as Hamlet’s seems to be; he suspects the existence of some catalyst for such a transmutation of character and temperament. When Polonius submits his input, it is clear that he is convinced that the reason behind Hamlet’s actions is pure madness: “Your noble son is mad./“Mad” call I it, for, to define true madness,/ What is’t but to be nothing else but mad?” (II.ii.99-101). There is no question in his mind until he observes the young prince further. After a strange conversation with Hamlet, he concludes in an aside, “Though this be madness, yet there is a method in’t” (II.ii.223-224). After this conversation, the audience too notices that Hamlet approaches all his interactions with a certain attitude, as if reading off a script he has written for himself. The supporting characters are not the only ones to suspect Hamlet’s performance; the audience has been granted access to view the titular character in multiple lights, including his soliloquies. Though we are still uncertain of his true motives, his true nature seems clear, and we are able to distinguish it from his performance.

As the tragedy progresses, it becomes possible that Hamlet's condition is no longer just an act. To help the audience better understand the main character, Polonius's son Laertes is brought into the dialogue of the play. In the last scene of the play, Hamlet summarizes Laertes's role and relationship, something that could have been stated at the very start: "I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine, ignorance/ Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,/ Stick fiery off indeed"(V.ii.272-274). This could not be truer, as the generally noble and intelligent Laertes stands in contrast to Hamlet in many ways. From the start, he shows that he better understands the nature of the humours, which may explain his better control of his own. Concerning Hamlet's behavior, he tells his sister Ophelia, "For nature, crescent, does not grow alone/ In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes,/ The inward service of the mind and soul/ Grows wide withal" (I.iii.14-17). Laertes might be the first to discuss Hamlet's behavior as something natural to his own personality as a person, like himself, struggling with middle stage adulthood. To him, a change in the balance of humours is as natural as the physical side of aging. Unlike Hamlet, Laertes seems to have control of his emotional maturation. As his foil, he shows the audience that Hamlet's behavior comes from his lack of control over himself and his psychology.

Another perspective about the reality of Hamlet's condition comes from King Claudius. There is a sense that he never fully gives in to the notion that Hamlet's madness was an act, and that he always saw a deeper problem. In conversation with Ophelia, who still thinks it is love melancholy that has altered Hamlet's mood, he argues a more sinister cause:

Love? His affections do not that way tend

Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger...

...

Haply the seas, and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. (III.i.176-181, 185-189)

He proposes that a trip would benefit Hamlet, as it could be an internal disturbance coupled with his environment that is affecting him. Claudius believes something deeper than even melancholy is troubling his nephew, a “settled matter in his heart.” If there is still any suggestion of a performance on Hamlet’s part, it is brought on by a very real condition of his brain.

The argument for his genuine madness is not without very convincing evidence. As the plot and the paranoia builds, Hamlet’s overactive passion leads to the murder of Polonius. Though the murder was more or less accidental, it was a product of his growing madness that had now crossed the line from being merely an act to being very real. The queen describes the moment and Hamlet’s behavior:

Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,

Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat,'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man. (IV.i.7-12)

His mind is divided, two parts at odds with each other, like the sea and sky in a storm. His heedless action toward Polonius was the manifestation of the passion that was pressing on his brain. If Hamlet was trying to act out his melancholy until this point, his family and friends have now broken down the charade and see his condition for what it is. Whether they engage with the idea of Hamlet's madness as an act or a genuine condition, each make the same mistake of failing to include him in their conversation. Granted, the prince was consumed with angst and wild distrust that was implanted by who he believed to be the ghost of his father, so the desire to share his feelings was not altogether strong. Nonetheless, at least from the audience's perspective, Hamlet is the only character who can give the most accurate insight to his mental state.

As his family develops an increased awareness for his condition, Hamlet seems to go through a similar journey of self-discovery. From the start, he stands against the opinions of those around him, "nauseated by the identities that others assume and by that which they wish to thrust upon him" (Soellner 173). It seems his every intention to be in complete control of himself and his plot for vengeance. But this resolve seems to crumble as "his melancholy, his bitterness and disillusionment, his feigned madness and real nervous shock give additional impulses to churning intellect that cannot identify itself totally with anything" (Soellner 174). In this vein, he explains early on that man's inner

faults and contradictions often come to the surface at one point or another. In reference to the king drinking (and possibly foreshadowing his own change), Hamlet tells Horatio:

And, indeed, it takes
From our achievements, though performed at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin),
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion
(Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason),
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausible manners-- (I.iv.22-33)

Although he does not yet grasp the idea of his own condition being that “o’ergrowth of some complexion” that he describes, he is keenly aware of the danger around actions and habit being guided completely by the emotions. Hamlet has a very clear idea of his motivation at the start: to avenge his father as commanded by his tormented ghost. His initial madness is assuredly a show in order to divert his uncle’s attention from the ultimate goal of regicide. At every chance he gets, he tries to convince those around him of the charade; however, he also drops hints of the truth in his witty banter. When speaking with two of his friends, he declares, “I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw” (II.ii.402-403). He implies that his

madness is true only at certain times, or, in other words, that it is completely within his control.

But this confidence dwindles as his passions develop. After observing a particularly talented actor, Hamlet questions his own performance and why he cannot seem to summon up the drive necessary to act out his plan of killing his uncle. Once alone with his thoughts, he wrestles with his lack of emotion:

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage waned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit--and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
...
What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have! (II.ii.577-585,587-589)

Hamlet's desire for the full manifestation of his humours further shows his lack of understanding concerning the dark power that he is harboring in his angst- and revenge-filled soul. Several of the traits he describes from the actor are not only typical signs of a humoral imbalance, but also elements of a controlled release of passion. Though Hamlet

still does not fully comprehend the array of tumultuous humours inside of him, he is coming to terms with the fact that he is not in control of their translation into action, for better or worse. He is also becoming aware of the reality of his overall condition, and that he may have never been in control of his thoughts even at the beginning. He begins to doubt the validity of the commands of his father's ghost: "...yea, and perhaps,/ Out of my weakness and my melancholy,/ As he is very potent with such spirits,/ Abuses me to damn me" (II.ii.649-632). Internally, Hamlet begins to exist in a state of doubt, but on the outside he remains adamant that his madness is merely a performance on his part. If the characters of this particular play all represent various approaches to melancholy, then Hamlet is surely self-diagnosis, covering a range of stages from hypochondria to self-denial. By the middle of the play, he verbally confirms that his behavior has been an act, but the audience is immediately dubious of whether or not his condition is actually imaginary. First he defends himself when confronted by his mother:

Ecstasy?

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,
And I the matter will reword, which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,

Infects unseen. (III.iv.160-170)

He directs the conversation away from his extreme and more towards his mother's indisputable treachery towards his father. Pointing out the aspects of himself which are entirely sane, he insists that she instead apply her diagnosis of some inner infection to her own depraved condition. However, the audience knows that Hamlet still struggles to understand his own motivations and possible madness. Ironically, this whole conversation takes place after Hamlet has already killed Polonius (albeit accidentally) and is arguing that the action meant nothing compared to the queen's compliant role in her husband's murder. Despite his eloquent rhetoric, his speech stands in very stark contrast to his actions.

Hamlet is most famous for this character's many soliloquies, as these are his most raw and genuine analyses of his condition. This is also where his most complex character development takes place, as he both recognizes and loses sight of himself at the same time. Soellner sums it up as: "Hamlet's passion and reason cannot be easily distinguished; both drive him on to be the speculative, analytic, restless, and tortured figure he is" (179). Unfortunately, both passion and reason seem to melt away in the end, and all is clouded by madness and revenge. Even Hamlet understands this as he tells Laertes before their fatal duel:

What have I done

That might your nature, honor, and exception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim with madness.

Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness. (V.ii.244-251)

This passage clearly shows the ambiguity surrounding the prince's understanding of himself. At the same time he separates himself from madness, he sounds very insane. Speaking of himself in third person is strange enough, but he goes on to completely dissociate his identity from his actions, particularly those that may offend Laertes. The dialogue echoes the idea that Hamlet exists as a foil to Laertes. Perhaps he is instead the true hero, being the more balanced individual. When Hamlet sets himself up against Laertes, he reveals a better understanding of his true nature: the opposite of a collection of balanced humours, but rather an overwhelmed melancholic. Hamlet gives a very realistic picture of self-diagnosis, including the well-paced shift from denial to acceptance and buildup of thoughts finally leading to action. While he engages with others concerning his madness, often veiled in his performance, he seems to dedicate most of his effort to this internal struggle. Johnson said in his criticism that "Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: Even when the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life" (4). According to this play, the people of seventeenth century London liked to discuss melancholy only when it did not directly affect them. If the humour was as rampant as everyone thought, maybe it would have been much more hidden.

The reactions to melancholy and madness in *Hamlet* are more informative than the presentation of the behavior itself, and much more demonstrative of their roles in

early seventeenth century discourse. Shakespeare was not as much a satirist as Jonson was, though he also held a mirror up to his audience. However, he often gave them a more complex reflection, with layers of emotions, motivations, and flaws in his characters that are too many to count. As in his portrayal of Hamlet, he often wrote heroes and villains that were still trying to characterize themselves. This was similar to the very study of humours, people trying to categorize themselves, a basic method of self-discovery. We can only imagine that this culture and the dramatic creations like Hamlet were major inspirations to works like the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Perhaps Shakespeare's stage sparked the interest and the contemporary literature provided an additional platform of education for those that identified a Hamlet in their lives or within their own personality.

Bibliography

- Babb, Lawrence. "Melancholy and the Man of Letters." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 4.3 (Apr 1941): 247-261. JSTOR. Web. 12 Jan. 2015.
- Burton, Robert. *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith. New York: Farrar & Rineheart, 1927. Print.
- Colie, Rosalie. "Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and the Structure of Paradox." *Seventeenth Century Prose*. Ed. Stanley E. Fish. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. 388-412. Print.
- Elder, Paul & Company. *Elizabethan Humours and the Comedy of Ben Jonson*. San Francisco: The Tomoyé Press, 1903. HathiTrust. Web. 4 April 2016.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "Ben Jonson." *The Sacred Wood*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921. Bartleby.com, 1996. Web. 4 April 2016.
- Jonson, Ben. *Every Man In His Humour*. Ed. Robert N. Watson. London: A & C Black Limited, 1998. Print.
- "Every Man Out of His Humour." *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson*. Ed. G. A. Wilkes. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981. Print.
- Johnson, Samuel. "The Preface to Shakespeare." *Preface to Shakespeare*. Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2014. eBooks@Adelaide. eBook. 16 Feb. 2016.
- McCabe, Richard A. "Ben Jonson, Theophrastus, and the Comedy of Humours." *Hermathena* 146 (Summer 1989): 25-37. JSTOR. Web. 8 April, 2016.
- Riggs, David. *Ben Jonson*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989. Print.
- Schelling, Felix. "Introduction." *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Every Man Out of His*

Humour. By Ben Jonson, 1599. PFD eBook. Web. 9 Jan. 2013.

http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3695/3695/-h/3695.htm#link2H_INTR. Accessed

4 April 2016.

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2009. Print.

--*Hamlet*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2012. Print.

Soellner, Rolf. "Hamlet: Probing a Restless Self." *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*. By Soellner. Ohio State University Press, 1972. Print.

Stover, Laren. "The Case for Melancholy." *The New York Times*. 7 Nov. 2015. Web. 7 Nov. 2016.

Wittkower, Rudolf & Margot. *Born Under Saturn*. New York: Random House, 1963. Print.