SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF THE MELANCHOLY HUMOR

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION: THE BACKGROUND OF MELANCHOLIA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LOVE MELANCHOLY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE MALCONTENT</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MELANCHOLY DISILLUSION</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE BACKGROUND OF MELANCHOLIA

It has been only in recent years that criticism has called attention to the importance of Elizabethan psychology. This recent criticism has been concerned with Elizabethan psychology in general and melancholy in particular and with their influence on the English literature of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

The purpose of this study is to define what melancholy meant during the English Renaissance, to throw some light on the origin and types of melancholy which became dominant in the thought and literary expression of the period, and to examine the various melancholy types among Shakespeare's characters. Since "no other group of psychological ideas made so deep an impression on the Elizabethan mind as those related to melancholy,"¹ correct interpretation of the Elizabethan concept of melancholy is necessary if one is to understand Shakespeare's characters as his contemporaries did. Finally, this study will also show the fundamental unity of

the characters and explain the inconsistency of their actions which have puzzled many critics.

In recent years there have been a number of excellent studies of melancholia, most notably Lawrence Babb's book, *The Elizabethan Malady*. Some attention, of course, has been given by the critics to Shakespeare's use of the humors. Somewhat surprisingly, however, no thorough and exhaustive study has been made concerning Shakespeare's handling of melancholia. This study has been designed in part to fill that void and to place Shakespeare in the historical context of the development of the melancholy humor as a literary device in English letters.

The word "melancholy" in the Renaissance was a psychological and a medical term. According to the old physiology, melancholy is the name of one of the four essential humors—blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy or black bile—which were supposed to be the constituents of the body. The melancholy humor is cold and dry, earthy and gross, black, thick, and sour. Robert Burton, in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, describes melancholy thus:

Melancholy, cold and dry, thick, black and sour, begotten of the more feculent part of nourishment and purged from the spleen, is a bridle to the other two hot humours, blood and choler, preserving them in the blood, and nourishing the bones.²

Melancholy meant to the Elizabethans, as to us also, not only settled depression, sadness, downcast and dispirited dejection, distress, misery and hysteria, but also disease itself, not merely the symptoms of disease.\(^3\) The cause of the melancholic disease is the melancholy humor. If it becomes abnormally excessive in the body, it chills and dries the natural heat and moisture which reside in the blood and "produces physical debilities and mental morbidities."\(^4\) However, Dr. Timothy Bright gives another explanation to the cause of melancholic disease. According to his Treatise of Melancholy, melancholy is the result of indigestion; "as all humours rise of nourishment, so melancholic being a part of blood, from thence it springeth also."\(^5\)

The symptoms of the disease are many and various. The usual symptoms are grief, moodiness, fear, "irascibility, sullenness, despondency, hypochondria, morbidity, frenzy, and madness."\(^6\) The melancholy man is "alwaies fearefull and


\(^6\)Craig, p. vi.
trembling . . . afraid of every thing, yea and maketh himselfe a terrour vnto himselfe . . . with an vnseparable sadness, which oftentimes turneth into dispayre." In fact, there are many varieties of melancholy, so many that it is an impossible task to construct a complete, coherent, consistent body of medical doctrine from Elizabethan psychological and medical lore.

In any case, the physiological theories accepted in the Middle Ages still prevailed in the Renaissance. The dominant authority in medical literature was Galen. According to Galenic tradition, melancholy is a most wretched, degrading mental state. Burton says that there is

No torture of body like unto it! . . . All fears, griefs, suspicions, discontents . . . are swallowed up & drowned in . . . this Ocean of misery.  

Examples of this conception can also be found in the contemporary Elizabethan literature. The melancholy person who appears among the Overbury characters "is a man onely in shew, but comes short of the better part; a whole reasonable

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8Burton, I, 433-4.
soule, which is man's chief preeminence, and sole mark from creatures sensible."^9

In addition to Galenic tradition, there was another source of traditional melancholy which appeared in Elizabethan literature. It was the Aristotelian tradition. According to this tradition, melancholy is the most blessed and the happiest mental condition. It is a condition which endows one with intellectual acumen and profundity, with artistic ability, sometimes with divine inspiration.10 This Aristotelian doctrine was probably one of the causes of the popularity of melancholy in the Renaissance.

As to the immediate cause of the popularity of melancholy in the Renaissance, there is no agreement among modern scholars. Many scholars have ascribed the probable reasons to the political and social background of the last years of Elizabeth's reign: the constant threat of Spanish invasion after the defeat of the Armada in 1588, the rebellion and execution of Essex, economic depression, and the old queen's approaching death. All these factors produced fears of a foreign invasion and a civil war among Englishmen. C. J. Sisson says that "the spirit of the age was heroic and

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optimistic under Elizabeth, degenerating towards the end of her reign into the cynicism, disillusionment, and pessimism which marked the reign of James the First."\(^{11}\) However, G. B. Harrison states that the melancholy of the age, to a large extent, is "due to the unwilling agnosticism and a morbid fear of death which was increased . . . by the pompoms of the undertaker, the wormy circumstance of the charnal-house and uncertain hope of immortality."\(^{12}\) Whether or not these conditions were directly responsible for the creation of the melancholy characters in Renaissance literature would be difficult to determine.

Englishmen began to develop an interest in melancholy "at some time during the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign."\(^{13}\) Melancholy became the subject of interest among many Englishmen. The immediate influence on the vogue of melancholy seems to have been foreign travelers who affected melancholy, which had its origin in Italy. One of the most interesting characteristics of these foreign travelers was their black garb. From Italy the vogue for dressing in black was carried to France during the second half of the sixteenth century.


\(^{12}\) Harrison, p. 74.

\(^{13}\) Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 73.
century. Apparently it was brought to England by travelers from the Continent. Z. S. Fink gives a fitting comment on the traveler:

Our traveler is one who dresses in black and affects melancholy. He has lived a licentious life abroad and has picked up the characteristic vices of all nations. He is so corrupted that he sees even nature as tainted. Either because of this fact, or because of what he conceives to be the world's neglect, or because he has become a Catholic or an atheist and lost his love of his native country and his faith in life, he is also genuinely melancholy and discontented with everything. He rails at the abuses of the world when he is himself thoroughly polluted.15

Some of these people were genuinely melancholy, but some of them affected melancholy simply because it was much in vogue at that time. However, there were so many who declared themselves melancholy and discontented with everything that they formed a social group called the malcontent. This malcontent type will be discussed later.

Since literature in general reflects the thoughts of the age, the emergence of melancholy characters in Elizabethan drama might also be thought to be the reflection of the temper of the age. The vogue of melancholy began to stamp its imprint upon English drama with great frequency in the 1580's.


15 Ibid., pp. 244-5.
Melancholia (especially love melancholy) is conspicuous in the works of John Lyly, whose example seems to have influenced his contemporaries and successors to a considerable degree. In Lyly's *Midas* (1586), Motto, a barber who affects melancholy, is reprimanded for presuming so much:

Motto. I am as melancholy as a cat.
Licio. Melancholy? marie gup, is melancholy a word for a barbars mouth? thou shouldst say, heauie, dull and doltish: melancholy is the creast of Courtiers armes, and now euerie base companion, beeing in his muble fubles, sayes he is melancholy.\(^\text{17}\)

Various reasons have been given to account for the increase of melancholy characters and melancholy men in literature and in life in the late sixteenth century. There had been the Aristotelian tradition of melancholy for centuries in the background, according to which melancholy is the most blessed state of a man and endows him with an intellectual ability and divine inspiration. There was an air of uneasiness at the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign due to her approaching death, the threat from outside, and the fear of a civil war. There were many English travelers who had been to the Continent, where they imitated melancholy poses. All these conditions

\(^{16}\)Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady*, p. 73.

illuminate the subject to a great extent. However, no evidence can be given to account fully for the cause of the popularity of melancholy in the Renaissance. It is obvious that melancholy became of great interest among gentlemen and that melancholy types were often described by medical writers and playwrights of the period.

Apart from the unusually exceptional types, melancholy characters in Elizabethan drama fall into three main types: melancholy lovers, malcontents, and melancholy idealists. These three basic melancholy types may have various derivative subspecies.

In older bodies of literature no mention of melancholy can be found in connection with the lover's malady except in the works of Medieval writers, in which it is characterized as a melancholic ailment. With the exception of Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale," melancholy in connection with love did not appear in English literature before the 1580's. It would seem that the literary character affected by love melancholy had its origin mainly in prevailing psychological and medical theory.

Use of the physiological terms to describe passionate love is very common in Elizabethan drama. Some lovers of the drama suffer from strong passion. To the dramatists, the

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heat of love is not figurative; it is literal and painful. In a play by Kyd one character is tormented by "marrow burning loue." When Tellus in Lyly's Endimion fell in love, she says, she felt "a continuall burning in all my bowels, and a bursting almost in euerie vaine."

The cure of love melancholy comes either when the mistress accepts love or when the lover finds another mistress, as Romeo finds Juliet and Duke Orsino in Twelfth Night marries Viola. However, some of the melancholy lovers cannot be so easily cured. The outward signs of a melancholy lover are those described by Rosaline in As You Like It:

A lean cheek . . . a blue eye and sunken . . . a beard neglected . . . your hose . . . ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation. (III, ii, 392-403)

Hamlet also shows similar traits when he comes to see Ophelia in her closet, although this is part of his "antic" disposition.

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19 Ibid., p. 145.
21 Lyly, III, 74.
22 William Shakespeare, Shakespeare, The Complete Works, edited by G. B. Harrison (New York, 1952). All the future references to Shakespeare's plays will be to this edition. Hereafter, act, scene, and line numbers will be inserted immediately after the cited passage.
Many times in Elizabethan literature love is manifest in a psychological conflict between reason and passion. To the Elizabethan, a conflict between reason and love would necessarily be a conflict between virtue and vice. In this case, a respectable person falls in love with a married woman or with a woman betrothed to his friend. Sometimes he is in love with someone closely related to him by blood. In John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, Giovanni is in love with his own sister, Annabella. He struggles with his passion:

I have too long suppressed the hidden flames
That almost have consumed me: I have spent
Many a silent night in sighs and groans;
Ran over all my thoughts, despised my fate,
Reasoned against the reasons of my love,
Done all that smoothed-cheeked virtue could advise;
But found all bootless...^24

This struggle between the two moral opposites leads to moral disaster and often to tragedy.

The second major type of melancholy character that frequently appears in Elizabethan drama is the malcontent. He is one who is disappointed by the world's neglect of his talent and intellectual superiority and discontented not only with the political situation but with everything. The word "malcontent" often designated in Elizabethan usage the foreign

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traveler, but the words "melancholy" and "malcontent" were often in Elizabethan usage exactly synonymous, and they could be applied indifferently to any melancholy person. In any case the disgruntled or seditious traveler had apparently become well established as a social type by 1580, who in turn became the original melancholy malcontent.

As has already been indicated, the malcontent is usually dressed in black. He is surly, meditative, and seeks for solitude and darkness. He is usually preoccupied with lofty matters and shows neglect of his attire. He is so unsociable that ordinary humanity cannot furnish fit companionship for him. With the exception of black dress, all these symptoms of the malcontent are the very symptoms of the melancholy man found in the medical treatises.

Everything considered, there are three main examples of the malcontent type in Elizabethan drama: the melancholy traveler and his imitator, whose melancholy is either genuine or affected and who has traveled foreign countries and acquired melancholy poses; the melancholy cynic, who is embittered through the loss of fortune and rails against the world

25 Fink, p. 247, 39ff.
26 Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 75.
27 Ibid., p. 77.
without apparent cause; and the melancholy villain, who plots and intrigues because of his thwarted ambition.

One of the earliest to appear and one of the most common of the malcontents is the melancholy traveler. Often he is, or thinks he is, a talented and sagacious person. He rails at the world's neglect of his talent and ability. Most often he is frustrated by his wretched condition and thus disappointed with everything. Some of these malcontents assume the pose of the traveler and affect what they suppose the melancholy man should be. They assume the melancholy pose because it was much in vogue, and from it they gained status as an intellect. A typical example of this type of malcontent is the barber in Lyly's Midas.

The melancholy traveler and his imitator became the subject of laughter. He was not, on the whole, taken seriously, and writers of the time often made him the butt of satire. In Ben Jonson's Every Man Out of His Humour, Carlo Buffone tells the lout Sogliardo how to be a gentleman: "You must endeuour to feede cleanly at your Ordinarie, sit melancholy, and picke your teeth when you cannot speake."\textsuperscript{28}

Another frequent malcontent type, the melancholy cynic, is one who is disillusioned and embittered by the result of

his misfortune. He tends to be a misanthrope and turns against humanity. Like the court jester, he is granted the license which is naturally given to persons not considered responsible. Timon in *Timon of Athens* is one who rails at the world because misfortune has changed him into a bitter cynic and pessimist.

A variant of the melancholy cynic is one who is embittered without any external cause. He is the satirical ranter, who rants for the sake of ranting, not because he has been displaced or frustrated, but because ranting is the only thing he wants to do. Apemantus, a churlish philosopher in *Timon of Athens*, is a typical example. Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* is another of the same embittered type, who sees nothing but lechery in human life.

Another malcontent type is the melancholy villain, one who is not satisfied with the political status quo, or who is, or thinks he is, "displaced from the social order." He is very ambitious, but frustrated and embittered because he finds no place in society. He may assume mental abnormality

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31 Ibid., p. 529.
as a disguise to insure his safety and sometimes use it as a mask for his evil deeds or plots. A typical example of this type is Malevole in John Marston's The Malcontent. His displacement from his dukedom has turned him into a malcontent. The usurping duke, Mendoza, says of him that he "is a strange villain; dangerous, very dangerous. You see how broad 'a speaks; a gross-jaw'd rogue."32

The third major type of melancholy character is the melancholy idealist. He is disillusioned because the world around him cannot quite come up to his ideals. He is weary and longs for death to relieve him of the cares of this world. There are two distinctive attributes characteristic of this type of melancholy character: he is an intellectual and he has a reflective turn of mind. Melancholy scholars are considered to possess the intellectual quality. The scholar is subject to melancholy because his continual study and mental labor consume "the heat and moisture of his body."33 He is poverty-stricken and ill-nourished. The fundamental trait of the melancholy scholar is a despondent, disillusioned lassitude, a sense of weariness and futility.34 Some critics

33 Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 97.
34 Ibid.
maintain that Hamlet belongs to this type. The Pilgrimage to Parnassus, the first of the Parnassus trilogy, gives the most elaborate treatment of scholar's melancholy. The anonymous author depicts the wretched existence of the scholar, but was apparently convinced that learning was worth all the sacrifices which it demanded.\textsuperscript{35} As apart from the intellect, the reflective person is often melancholy. He is usually preoccupied with profound thought. His contemplative habit usually dries the natural heat in the body and engenders the melancholy humor. Brutus in Julius Caesar is a good example of this type. Hamlet also belongs to this type. The two traits of melancholy disillusion, the intellectual and the reflective, go together and are inseparable in most cases.

Even in this cursory review, it becomes apparent that melancholy furnished various types of melancholy characters of Elizabethan drama. Since melancholy was a fashion in the Renaissance, contemporary writers might have had ample opportunity to observe melancholy figures in real life. Moreover, medical literature and lore provided them an abundance of information concerning melancholy. Shakespeare, who kept up with the prevalent ideas of his age and who in many ways was typical of his time, must have known the literary conventions

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 98.
of the day. He shows all the evidence in his plays that he was quite interested in the use of the four humors, especially the melancholy humor, for characterization and as a motivating force of the plot. Indeed, almost from the first play to the last he employed humor concepts. His employment of the humors grew more subtle and masterly as his characters became lifelike. Melancholy in his early comedies is treated lightly and regarded as an affectation. He usually pokes fun at the melancholy characters in his early plays. However, when he came to write tragedies such as Hamlet and Timon of Athens, melancholy was not the object of mirth and laughter but part of the basic thematic fiber of the play.
CHAPTER II

LOVE MELANCHOLY

There is no reason to assume that Shakespeare, who is so typical of his age in other respects, was not thoroughly acquainted with the love conventions of his time. On the contrary, the plays and the sonnets attest to the fact that Shakespeare was not only aware of but made full use of the literary love conventions of his time. His employment of the conventions, in fact, is so self-evident that critics frequently ignore the full significance. Nowhere is this neglect and misunderstanding more apparent than in his use of the various stages of the lover's melancholy. It is not enough to note only that, in this passage or that play, Shakespeare makes use of the conventions of the melancholy lover. It must be emphasized also that in some plays, most notably in Romeo and Juliet, the lover's malady plays a crucial part in both character and thematic development. It is a case, once again, as with the conventions of the Revenge play or the conventions of the professional fool, where Shakespeare found ready to hand a full set of attitudes and conventions that he could use, modify, or ignore as he chose.
To the Elizabethans, if their literature is an accurate index of their thinking, the expression "lovesick" meant literally what it said.\(^1\) To them it meant not only physical disorders and emotional perturbations, but also mental derangements, such as madness and frenzy. The Renaissance conception of lovesickness was, to a great extent, inherited from classical and medieval sources. The chief authority of this tradition was Galen, whose medical knowledge was "preserved in the Eastern Empire, and was afterwards acquired by the Arabs."\(^2\) And Renaissance medical theory was largely based on the Arabic versions of Galen. The study of Galen was not limited by any means to medical men; his writings were the common feeding-ground of Renaissance scholarship.\(^3\) The literary influence on the Elizabethan idea of love melancholy was as strong in some respects as the medical treatises. The Elizabethan idea of love melancholy may have been as much a product of literary as of scientific influences.\(^4\) In interpreting the Elizabethan representation of love melancholy,

\(^1\)Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 143.


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 9.

\(^4\)Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 156.
therefore, one must depend on medical treatises and the literary love conventions of the day.

According to Lawrence Babb, there are two stages of the lover's malady: a sanguine stage, in which the lover is hot and moist and abounds with blood; and a melancholy stage, in which he is cold and dry, weak and woebegone, and subject to all the physical debilities, the despondencies, and the mental vagaries which medical writers attribute to superabundance of the melancholy humor. Since sanguine lovesickness is not a melancholy disease, it is beyond the scope of this study. However, love melancholy often follows the sanguine stage of lovesickness, if the patient is not relieved "either by consummation or by medical intervention." Therefore, a discussion of love melancholy naturally involves the earlier phases of the lovesickness.

The Elizabethans held that a surplus of blood in the body inclines a person to love. Of all complexions, "Sanguine thence are soon caught, young folks most apt to love." "If they be young, fortunate, rich, high-fed, and idle withal," says Robert Burton, "it is almost impossible that they should live honest, nor rage, and precipitate themselves into these
inconveniences of burning lust." F. N. Coeffeteau gives a similar account:

[Youths] are hot and fiery by reason of the blood which boyles in their veines; and what they once desire they affect with vehemony. Yet they shew this heate more particularly in the motions of Loue, whereunto their age which is in the flower, giues them a violent inclination.9

Due to the lack of exercise, love "tyrannizeth in an idle person."10 However, the immediate cause of love is the beloved. According to Burton, the most familiar and usual cause of love is that which comes by sight, which conveys those admirable rays of beauty and pleasing graces to the heart.11 Love was conceived to proceed first from the eyes, so carried by our spirits, and kindled with imagination in the liver and heart.12 Once love enters through the eyes of the lover, it passes through the veins into the liver and causes the generation of blood. As a consequence, lovers suffer from the extreme heat. Because of their uncontrollable, overwhelming passion, lovers are given to folly and

8Ibid., III, 62.
10Burton, III, 62. 11Ibid., III, 65.
12Ibid., III, 57.
sometimes to evil. In the various works of ancient times, love is supposed to be an ignoble passion and a cause of evil deeds. Such is the love of Phaedra, of Medea, and of Dido. However, love is rarely associated with melancholy in these characters.

The lovesickness just described is not a melancholy disease. However, if the patient is not relieved of these symptoms by a proper treatment, his physical tortures and mental distresses will engender melancholy humors. Melancholy lovers can be recognized easily by their physiological symptoms. Outwardly they are pale and lean. According to Burton, lovers pine away, and look ill with waking, cares, sighs, with groans, griefs, sadness, dullness, and want of appetite. Their pulse is irregular. Fear and sorrow are the chief symptoms of love melancholy and, therefore, to be miserable, dejected, to wish for death, to complain, and to rave are the certain signs and actions of a lovesick person. According to Burton, love is "a plague, a torture, an hell, a bitter-sweet passion."

The physiological disorder of a lover naturally produces a psychological effect. Burton declares that lovers are

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13 Ibid., III, 133.
14 Ibid., III, 142 & 151.  
15 Ibid., III, 141.
"very slaves, dredges for the time, madmen, fools, dizzards, 
. . . beside themselves, and as blind as beetles."\textsuperscript{16} A 
lovesick person is so much preoccupied with the charms of 
his mistress that he neglects "all ordinary business."\textsuperscript{17} 
He is commonly his mistress' servant, slave, and captive. 
He usually avoids company and seeks solitude. In any case, 
the psychological effects on a melancholy lover's mind are 
so numerous that it is impossible to cite them in detail. 

Romantic love is not a frequent theme in the ancient 
drama, even though it appears occasionally. In the old drama 
love is "represented as a wasting disease."\textsuperscript{18} When the love 
theme does appear it is with no reference to melancholy. On 
the other hand, Medieval literature abounds in instances of 
love melancholy. The pining lover becomes a stereotype in 
romances, allegories, and lyric poetry. Chaucer, especially, 
shows that he was aware of love melancholy when he wrote 
"The Knight's Tale." The appearance of a pining lover in the 
literary works of the Medieval period is clearly due to the 
influence of the courtly love system, according to which de-
spondent sickness is a necessary concomitant of love.\textsuperscript{19} 

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., III, 153. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{17}Ibid., III, 151. 
\textsuperscript{18}Babb, \textit{The Elizabethan Malady}, p. 156. 
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 156.
The courtly love system had much in common with Medieval medical theory, but some distinctions may be made. Courtly love is "of a highly specialized sort, whose characteristics may be enumerated as Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love." Lu Emily Pearson briefly summarizes the effects of courtly love: sleeplessness, confusion and loss of speech in the lady's presence, trembling and pallor when near the loved one, and dread of detection by others. In addition Miss Pearson notes that the courtly lover assumed the following obligations: he became the lady's vassal and protested absolute submission and devotion to her, he gave his lady power over his life, he vowed his love to surpass all other things in value, and he was made rich by the slightest token from his lady.

Love melancholy as reflected in literature gained new impetus with the advent of Petrarchanism in English literature. With Petrarchan conventions superimposed onto courtly love conventions, lover's melancholy gained an added life and an added emphasis. It would not be rash to suggest that the

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22 Ibid.
great vogue for the melancholy lover in the sonnet sequences and in other lyric poetry in the last two decades of the sixteenth century accounts in large part for the emergence of love melancholy in Elizabethan drama.

Shakespeare's preoccupation with various love themes in his early and middle plays, in the narrative poems, and in the sonnets makes it almost inevitable that lover's melancholy would appear here and there, at least on a subordinate thematic level. There are, in fact, several instances of melancholy lovers in the early and middle comedies, and there is the crucial treatment of the melancholy Romeo in Act I of Romeo and Juliet. Romeo looms large enough to deserve separate treatment in the latter part of this chapter. The melancholy lovers of the early comedies are handled with a considerably lighter touch. In the comedies there is an air of gentle mockery in Shakespeare's treatment of the grief-stricken lovers. The treatment of love melancholia in Love's Labor's Lost is fairly typical of Shakespeare's early treatment of this convention.

In Love's Labor's Lost the King of Navarre and three lords attending on him swear "not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep." (I, i, 48) for three years. However, one of the lords, Berowne, knows that these are "barren tasks, too hard
to keep," (I, i, 47) but swears under protest. When the French King's daughter and her three ladies-in-waiting come to speak to the King of Navarre about the surrender of Aquitaine, the lords, including the King of Navarre, fall in love with them.

Berowne, who has fallen in love with Rosaline, finds love

. . . a plague
That Cupid will impose for my neglect
Of his almighty dreadful little might. (III, i, 203-5)

He realizes that he cannot escape the power of love and turns his scorn on himself.

And I, forsooth, in love! I, that have been love's whip--
A very beadle to a humorous sigh. . . . (III, i, 175-6)

He finally determines to love, to sue, and to seek a wife, and thus finds his equilibrium again.

Well, I will love, write, sigh, pray, sue and groan.
Some men must love my lady, and some Joan. (III, i, 206-7)

Berowne is a prototype of the more fully fleshed out Benedick. Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing has the same attitude as Berowne toward love at the beginning of the play. He intends to live a bachelor. He would look pale.

With anger, with sickness, or with hunger, . . . not with love. Prove that ever I lose more blood with love than I will get again with drinking, pick out mine eyes with a ballad-maker's pen, and hang me up at the door of a brothel house for the sign of blind Cupid. (I, i, 251-6)
Love teaches Berowne "to rhyme, and to be melancholy." (IV, iii, 13) However, his love for Rosaline becomes both more intense and more sincere as the play progresses, though he at first assumes the pose of melancholy lover. Beneath his delicate language, the elegance and the gaiety, lies a real passion, but Rosaline only sees artifice and pose. As a consequence, at the end of the play she prescribes for him one year of penance.

In addition to Berowne, there is another melancholy character in the same play, Don Armado, who "vaunts his 'humor' as a sign of elegance and fashion." In his letter to the King of Navarre to report on the first violator of the King's decree of banning woman's approach to the court, he says:

So it is, besieged with sable-colored melancholy, I did commend the black-pressing humor to the most wholesome physic of thy health-giving air; and, as I am a gentleman, betook myself to walk. (I, i, 233-6)

However, Armado's affected melancholy turns out to be love melancholy for the country wench Jaquenetta, whom he takes in the park as the first violator of the King's proclamation.

He asks his page Moth "what sign is it when a man of great spirit grows melancholy?" (I, ii, 1) Then, Armado bids Moth sing since his "spirit grows heavy in love." (I, ii, 127) He says that it is base for a soldier to love, and so he is in love with a base wench. And his valor gives place to "most rude melancholy." (III, i, 69) Don Armado, a gentleman and a parody of the romantic lover, affects all the sighing, moping melancholy of his kind, including the cult of poetry.25

In Love's Labor's Lost Berowne and Armado are remote from the courtly love conventions, even though some of the symptoms of their lovesicknesses, such as sighing, groaning, and rhyming, are similar to those of courtly love. Unlike a court lover, Berowne knows that Rosaline's beauty does not exceed that of other ladies. He says:

    ... to love the worst of all
    A whitely wanton with a velvet brow,
    With two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes--
    Aye, and, by Heaven, one that will do the deed
    Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard. (III, i, 197-201)

Furthermore, Armado calls Jaquenetta "the beggar" in his letter to her. He is proud and bold enough to ask her:


Armado even scorns her "lowliness." In this play, Shakespeare seems to satirize the whole convention of love and to mock the melancholy lovers without harshness.

In The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Valentine, at first, has the same attitude toward love as Berowne. He disdains love and pokes fun at his friend Proteus, who falls in love with Julia. Valentine says:

To be in love, where scorn is bought with groans,  
Coy looks with heart-sore sighs, one fading moment's mirth  
With twenty watchful, weary, tedious nights.  
If haply won, perhaps a hapless gain;  
If lost, why then a grievous labor won;  
However, but a folly bought with wit,  
Or else a wit by folly vanquished. (I, i, 29-35)

Love has taught Proteus to groan, to sigh, and to be melancholy. We find similar signs in Valentine when he falls in love with Silvia, the daughter of the Duke of Milan. Speed describes how he knows his master Valentine is in love:

[He has] learned . . . to relish a love song like a robin redbreast, to walk along like one that had the pestilence, to sigh like a schoolboy that has lost A B C, to weep like a young wench that had buried her grandma, to fast like one that takes diet. . . .  
(II, i, 18-25)

Indeed, Valentine has all the symptoms of love melancholy, such as sighing, weeping, seeking solitude, and fasting.
Moreover, his physical appearance has also changed. Speed tells Valentine,

now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, . . . when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master. (II, i, 31-3)

Valentine finds love "a mighty lord." He confesses to Proteus:

I have done penance for contemning Love, Whose high imperious thoughts have punished me With bitter fasts, with penitential groans, With nightly tears, and daily heart-sore sighs; For, in revenge of my contempt of love, Love hath chased sleep from my enthralled eyes, And made them watchers of mine own heart's sorrow. (II, iv, 129-35)

As one might expect from a melancholy lover, Valentine goes without food, groans for his love, sheds tears, sighs, and cannot sleep. However, Valentine's love is immediately returned, and he tells Proteus:

Now I can break my fast, dine, sup and sleep, Upon the very naked name of love. (II, iv, 141-2)

And Proteus understands what Valentine means and responds, "Enough. I read your fortune in your eye." (II, iv, 143)

But Valentine cannot enjoy his lady's favor long because of Proteus' betrayal. When the Duke, who prefers the foolish rival Thurio to Valentine, discovers Valentine's love affair with and attempted abduction of Silvia, he banishes Valentine from his court. Valentine's perturbation starts all over again when he is banished from the court where Silvia lives.
He exclaims: "why not death rather than living torment?"

(III, i, 170) He turns his love melancholy into meditation at the forest of Mantua.

This shadowy desert, unfrequented woods, I better brook than flourishing peopled towns. Here can I sit alone, unseen of any, And to the nightingale's complaining notes Tune my distresses and record my woes. (V, iv, 2-6)

Silvia is also woebegone when Valentine is banished. Her father indicates that she is "lumpish, heavy, melancholy." (III, ii, 62) Silvia says that her heart is "as full of sorrows as the sea of sands." (IV, iii, 33) When Proteus rescues Silvia from the outlaws at the forest of Mantua at the end of the play, Silvia says she is "miserable." And Proteus' approach makes her "most unhappy." As a result, Silvia's sorrow engenders melancholy.

Elizabethan writers often speak of the lover's "discontent" and describe him as "discontented," and think of the melancholy lover as a type related to the malcontent. As a result, the melancholy lover has borrowed the characteristic pose of the malcontent with clothing disordered and arms folded.26 In The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Speed describes the disordered attire of Proteus as "going ungartered."

Speed also tells Valentine,
you have learned, like Sir Proteus, to wreath your arms like a malcontent. . . . (II, i, 19)

In the same dialogue Speed points out Valentine's neglect of his appearance, "you being in love, cannot see to put on your hose." (II, i, 84) Rosalind in As You Like It describes at greater length what the garb of a lovesick person is: his hose ungartered, his bonnet unbanded, his sleeve unbuttoned, his shoe untied. Ophelia in Hamlet reports to her father Hamlet's careless appearance when Hamlet visits her in her closet:

. . . 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. (II, i, 77-84)

Polonius takes all these signs of Hamlet's neglect of outward appearance for love madness.

Although Valentine has all the traits characteristic of courtly love, such as groans, sighs, tears, sleeplessness, and adoration of his lady, his attitude toward love is somewhat different from that of a court lover. The lover in the courtly love tradition is perfectly devoted and submissive and faithful, and the end of his passion is possession.27

27 III, ii, 396-400.

Contrary to this, Valentine says:

And, that my love may appear plain and free,
All that was mine in Silvia I give thee Proteus.
(V, iv, 32-3)

He wants to marry Silvia, but he proves his friendship stronger than his love at the end of the play. In the court poetry the female heart is as a rule unportrayed, but Silvia is portrayed as a faithful mistress, who languishes for her banished lover. However, Shakespeare does not seem to take the lovers very seriously in this play, even though their loves are real enough to cause them suffering. The cases of their lovesickness are not very serious, but their melancholy disposition is no longer a mere affectation. When Shakespeare came to write *Twelfth Night*, his use of the melancholy humor for characterization grew more elaborate and more subtle.

In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare gives a more extended and more sympathetic picture of the melancholy lover, Duke Orsino. He is of a high birth, fortunate, rich, young, and lives at ease. Shakespeare delineates him "as sanguine, the humor proper to courtiers and nobles." The captain tells

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30 John W. Draper, *The Twelfth Night of Shakespeare's Audience* (Stanford University Press, 1950), p. 120.
Viola that he is "A noble Duke, in nature as in name." (I, ii, 25) Olivia also says:

Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth;
In voices well divulged, free, learned, and valiant;
And in dimension and the shape of nature
A gracious person. (I, v. 277-81)

It is not surprising that the person with such a sanguine disposition is in love. He does not love Olivia for her "quantity of dirty lands," (II, iv, 85) since he is not interested in her wealth. He loves Olivia

With adorations, fertile tears,
With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire.
(I, v, 274-5)

However, when his love is not returned, his sanguine temper succumbs to love melancholy. His tears, groans, and sighs are the very symptoms attributed to love melancholy by contemporary medical treatises.

Orsino's melancholy follows the medical authorities of the day in its origin, symptoms, and development and also in its effects on the psychology and the way of life of the sufferer. Orsino's malady first enters through his eyes, and from the first instant he sees Olivia his passion pursues him "like fell and cruel hounds." (I, i, 22) Infection usually enters through the eyes of a lover and passes into the heart,

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and there is a slight implication in Act I that the malady makes its progress to "liver, brain, and heart."

At the very beginning of the play Orsino is already suffering from love melancholy. He calls for music to relieve his melancholic disposition. Then he suddenly calls for silence. He blames his whimsical state on the spirit of love. He is

... as ... all true lovers are,
Unstaid and skittish in all motions else
Save in the constant image of the creature
That is beloved. (II, iv, 18-20)

Melancholy, however, was thought to impart a changeable and fickle disposition. Indeed, love melancholy makes Orsino unmannerly and unstable.

As one might expect from a lovesick person, Orsino never appears as a duke attending the affairs of the state in the play. His pains and tortures of love make him forget himself. Orsino appears "rather as a man than as a duke and rather as a lover than as a man, for his love has warped him from his normal self. His way of life has changed because of his melancholy disposition. He says that he is "best/When least in company." (I, iv, 38-9)

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., p. 128.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., p. 131.
Unlike other melancholy lovers, Orsino's suffering lasts throughout the play. His cure comes at the end of the play when he substitutes Viola for his love of Olivia. The whole course of Orsino's infatuation, from its beginning in his eyes, through months of suffering, to its conclusion when he weds Viola, runs true to the best authorities and must have seemed to the Elizabethans very realistic.\textsuperscript{34} Although his malady is not so serious as Romeo's when Romeo is in love with Rosaline, his physical symptoms show that he is sincerely in love with Olivia. However, Orsino's love melancholy is rather a mild case than a serious disease, and his suffering "seems rather a weary boredom than a sharp agony."\textsuperscript{35}

Orsino's love does not seem to be altogether in the courtly love tradition. Olivia is not a married woman. Neither is Viola, to whom Orsino turns when Olivia refuses him at the end of the play. Orsino does not enjoin secrecy as the court lover does. Throughout the play Orsino tries to win Olivia's love and to marry her. However, we cannot ignore the fact that his physical symptoms are similar to those attributed to the courtly love system. Tears, groans, and sighs are the very signs of courtly love.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 127.
The melancholy lovers of the early and middle comedies cannot be taken too seriously. In plays such as Love's Labor's Lost and The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Shakespeare is poking gentle fun at melancholy lovers in much the same way as he pokes fun at love in general in A Midsummer Night's Dream. In Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare gives his most extended portrayal of the melancholy lover. As is fitting for tragedy, of course, the tone is darker and treatment more meaningful. There is no doubt that Romeo in Romeo and Juliet suffers from love melancholy in Act I. However, most critics ignore Romeo's love affair with Rosaline or regard it as insincere and artificial. E. E. Stoll says that Romeo is "in love with love in the distant and cruel shape of Rosaline."\textsuperscript{36} William Meader says that Romeo is "suffering from hero's, but the disease is quite clearly artificial."\textsuperscript{37}

Like Orsino, Romeo is of a high birth, fortunate, young, and lives at ease. Although Romeo suffers love melancholy from thwarted love of Rosaline, the rest of the play clearly shows him to be naturally sanguine. When he finds genuine and reciprocal love in Juliet, he completely forgets Rosaline.


Moreover, he is himself again. His friend Mercutio says to Romeo:

> Why, is not this better now than groaning for love? Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature. (II, iv, 93-5)

Romeo's love melancholy, when he is in love with Rosaline, is easily recognized by his physiological symptoms. According to Elizabethan belief, excessive black bile, cold and dry, gross and heavy, makes the individual melancholy. In Act I, Romeo's humor is described as "black and portentous." Romeo says in Act I that he is "heavy" and that his love is "choking gall." He has "a soul of lead," which is associated with melancholy. Moreover, he finds love

> ... too rough,
> Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.
> (I, iv, 25-6)

And it has "Whipped and tormented [him]." (I, ii, 57) It would have been obvious to the Elizabethan playgoer that Romeo's physiological disorder conforms to the symptoms of love melancholy described in contemporary science.

Romeo's physiological disorder naturally produces a psychological effect. To Romeo "sad hours seem long." (I, i, 168) In Act I he finds love "a madness." Besides these, we can recognize other signs of love melancholy in Romeo. He grieves, groans, sighs, avoids daylight, seeks for solitude,
and cannot sleep at night. His father comments on him with much concern:

Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,
Adding to clouds more clouds with his deep sighs.
But all so soon as the all-cheering sun
Should in the farthest east begin to draw
The shady curtains from Aurora's bed,
Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And makes himself an artificial night. (I, i, 137-46)

Romeo finds his griefs "lie heavy in [his] breast." (I, i, 192) Indeed, Romeo has all the various symptoms characteristic of love melancholy.

Romeo's perturbation becomes the main concern of his family and his friends. When Benvolio learns the cause of his friend Romeo's affliction, he urges Romeo to go to Capulet's ball and to compare Rosaline with other beauties. Benvolio says to Romeo:

Go thither, and with unattainted eye
Compare her face with some that I shall show
And I will make thee think thy swan a crow. (I, ii, 89-91)

Benvolio wants to cure Romeo's melancholy by showing him all the admired beauties of Verona, thus diverting his attention from Rosaline. Benvolio tells Romeo that

... one fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessened by another's anguish. (I, ii, 46-7)

This suggested therapy has the desired effect. Romeo finds
another love at Capulet's festivity, and his passionate love for Juliet cures him of his love melancholy for Rosaline.

The symptoms of Romeo's malady are made clear and unmistakable in the play. There is no question that he suffers from love melancholy. The question as to whether Romeo's love for Rosaline is insincere is less certain. Some of the symptoms of the disease, such as paleness and tears, he could not feign. Moreover, other characters in the play regard his love melancholy as real, since they would "willingly give cure." (I, i, 161) The sincerity of his love seems to be beyond question.38

Several critics suggest that Romeo's love affair with Rosaline belongs in the context of Platonic love and of Medieval courtly love. Coleridge remarks that Rosaline was indeed only the Idea of love, and was not supposed to have existed in the flesh.39 The evidence of the play clearly contradicts Coleridge. If Rosaline is only the Idea of love, Capulet would not invite "my fair niece Rosaline" (I, ii, 72) to his feast. Moreover, Benvolio asks Romeo to go there since


At this same ancient feast of Capulet's
Sups the fair Rosaline. . . . (I, ii, 87-8)

All these allusions make it clear that Rosaline is not an
embodiment of Platonic conception of love but a real woman.
His is not Platonic love.\textsuperscript{40} Romeo's love for Rosaline is not
purely a spiritual exaltation of love. Exalted love, accord-
ing to Plato, is a state of the soul, not an appetite. In
theory at least Platonic love is a sort of spiritual enthusi-
asm, and marriage is incidental to it.\textsuperscript{41} When Romeo says
that Rosaline

\begin{center}
... is rich in beauty, only poor
That when she dies, with beauty dies her store, (I, i, 221-2)
\end{center}

he implies that his ultimate purpose is marriage. Everything
considered, Romeo's love for Rosaline cannot be regarded as
Platonic love.

On the other hand, Romeo's love for Rosaline has many
traits characteristic of courtly love. Such melancholy as
Romeo's was supposed to belong among the accompanying con-
ventions of courtly love.\textsuperscript{42} According to courtly love, love
is engendered through the eyes, and the cause of love is the

\textsuperscript{40}Cole, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{41}Pearson, pp. 165-6.
\textsuperscript{42}S. F. Barrow, The\textit{ Medieval Society Romances} (Columbia
beauty of the lady. Romeo has clearly been struck by Rosaline's beauty.

The all-seeing sun
Ne'er saw her match since first the world begun. (I, ii, 97-8)

In courtly love poetry the lady rarely appears as a personality but remains indistinct in the background; she is cold, disdainful, capricious and domineering. In the play Rosaline does not appear in person. She lives "unharmed" by love's bow and hath "forsworn to love." Romeo complains about Rosaline's coldness:

For beauty, starved with her severity,
Cuts beauty off from all posterity. (I, i, 225-6)

Like a courtly lover, Romeo finds himself "bound more than a madman is,/Shut up in prison." (I, ii, 55-6) There is a strong desire for secrecy in courtly love, and Romeo is "his own affection's counselor." (I, i, 153) Sleeplessness, tears sighs, and loss of appetite are the symptoms of courtly love, and Romeo has all the symptoms.

In view of Renaissance medical and psychological theory, Romeo's love for Rosaline is neither insincere nor an abstract ideal. There are some areas where Shakespeare departs from

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43 Mott, p. 8.

44 William G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1903), p. 12.
the courtly love system in his delineation of Romeo's love affair with Rosaline, but for the most part he closely follows it. According to the courtly love tradition, an old love ends when a new one begins, because no one can love two people at the same time.\textsuperscript{45} This fact clearly explains why Romeo completely forgets Rosaline when he falls in love with Juliet. Though Romeo's love melancholy in Act I is only transitory, his is much more intense than that of other melancholy lovers in Shakespeare's plays.

If the whole tradition of love melancholy is taken into account, much that is puzzling and much that seems misleading or superfluous about Romeo and Juliet can be resolved. That the Romeo-Rosaline relationship is important to the play as a whole is evidenced by the fact that Shakespeare devotes almost a whole act to it before Juliet ever arrives on the scene. He would not have been so shoddy in his workmanship nor so uneconomical in his plot had he not intended that the Rosaline affair be taken seriously and be considered meaningful. Obviously Shakespeare saw an opportunity to employ courtly love techniques and the convention of the melancholy lover as a sharp contrast to the fresher, more spontaneous,

and more genuine love for Juliet. It enhances his theme of the ennobling power of love and aids him in delineating character. Ultimately, it makes the Romeo-Juliet love affair more believable. A test of its effectiveness is to imagine that the play begins, not as it does, but with the Capulet ball. Those who find Romeo of the early part of the play merely silly, as some modern readers do, reveal mainly that they do not have the resources to understand what Shakespeare is attempting to do with his portrayal of the melancholy Romeo of Act I.

On the whole, love melancholy in Shakespeare's plays is treated as transitory and temporal. Most of the melancholy lovers are sanguine men who succumb to melancholy because of their unsatisfied love. Therefore, lovers are in general cured of their melancholy when they find a new love or when their love is immediately returned. In his earlier comedies, Shakespeare lightly mocks the affected melancholy lovers such as Don Armado and Berowne, whose melancholy becomes genuine as the play progresses. He does not seem to take Valentine and Silvia seriously, either. The melancholy of Orsino and Romeo, however, is more genuine than artificial and affected. More important their melancholy becomes an integral part of the fabric of the play. Their melancholy adds another dimension
to the play, and in the case of Romeo is vital to an adequate understanding of the play.

It is obvious that Shakespeare's melancholy lovers are not naturally melancholy, but have acquired it through unsatisfied and disappointed love. Therefore, they are presented as melancholy only temporarily. Shakespeare apparently accepted the medical theory which was prevalent at that time. Moreover, he followed the love conventions of his day in his portrayal of melancholy lovers so long as they did not contradict his own experience.
CHAPTER III.

THE MALCONTENT

The Elizabethan malcontent has not been satisfactorily described, and much of what has been written about him is misleading and often erroneous. To the Elizabethan mind the word "malcontent" implied melancholy, and the words "malcontent" and "melancholy" were used synonymously. The term "malcontent" could be applied to any melancholy person. From the Elizabethan point of view he was "a pathologically melancholy man" and had all the symptoms of melancholy described by Elizabethan writers. However, the Elizabethan malcontent was not merely a melancholy person. The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that the word "malcontent" was often associated with political discontent and that the person of this disposition was inclined to rebellion or mutiny, and was restless and disaffected. Somewhat surprisingly, it is sometimes used also with no apparent implication of melancholy, usually in reference to

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2 Fink, p. 247, footnote no. 39.
politically disaffected persons. In any case, it is undoubtedly true that the Elizabethan malcontent was a pathologically melancholy and politically discontented person. Even this, however, does not indicate the whole range of the common Elizabethan use of the word. In Elizabethan usage, the word "malcontent" sometimes specifically designated English travelers who imitated foreign manners, acquired the melancholy pose in Italy, and brought all the foreign vices home with them. The Italianate traveler, says Babb, was "the principal immediate cause of the melancholia in English life and literature. Melancholic travelers evidently were so numerous in Elizabethan London as to constitute a social type," and men of this type were commonly called malcontents.

An interesting feature of the Elizabethan malcontent is that he is usually black-suited. This is a foreign fashion brought to England by the traveler from the Continent. It has its origin in Italy, was later carried to France, then to England. At the same time, the malcontent demonstrates that he is so much preoccupied with lofty matter that he can hardly attend to his personal appearance. He usually displays his profundity through neglectful, disordered attire.

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The mannerisms of the malcontent are quite similar to the symptoms of melancholy described in the medical lore. The malcontent is anti-social and tends to seek solitude. He is meditative, even taciturn. At an extreme he is cynical, pessimistic, and misanthropic. The Elizabethan thought of melancholy persons as embittered, frustrated, desirous of revenge. They were apt to intrigue, and they might by devious means achieve high ambitions.

The malcontent in the Renaissance was a familiar figure in literature as well as in life. He is one who is discontented with everything and rails against humanity. Often he is, or thinks he is, an unusually intellectual and artistically talented person. Therefore, he rails against the world for its neglect of his superiority and of his talent. In literature as in life, some of the malcontents had never been abroad, but affected melancholy simply because it was much in vogue at that time and was thought to signify high social status. The malcontent is often described as "discontented" because his countrymen failed to recognize and to regard his superior ability and intellectual achievements which he thought he had. He is dissatisfied not only with the political status quo, but practically with everything else.

By the decade of the 1580's the melancholy malcontent had become established as a social stereotype. In the
literature of the period, however, the term "malcontent" is extended to melancholy types only tenuously connected with the returned traveler, sometimes even to the melancholy lovers. The variations of the malcontent type are numerous and often difficult to distinguish one from the other. Often the traits of the literary malcontent are inconsistent, but there are certain predominant types. Critics seem to find three malcontent types: the melancholy travelers and their imitators, the melancholy cynics, and the melancholy villains.

One of the most common types of the malcontent is the melancholy traveler. He has traveled foreign countries, especially Italy, and acquired the melancholy pose. He is one who has persuaded himself that he is a man of great achievements and intellect. He defiantly opposes the world because it has neglected his talents and his achievements. He is disappointed and frustrated because his countrymen cannot perceive the superior ability which he thinks he has. Because he thinks the world has treated him ill, he sometimes becomes enraged against the corrupted world, its sin, vice and folly. He is antisocial and avoids company. He is very taciturn and always preoccupied with lofty matter. He

\[ ^5 \text{Ibid., p. 75.} \]
advertises his sense of superiority through his melancholic mannerisms, such as his neglect of clothing.

More likely than not, the malcontent has achieved a very bad reputation. He has picked up vices from all the countries he has traveled in and has lived a licentious life while abroad. Because of his filthy vices and odious opinions, he is associated with libertinism, Machiavellian treachery, and devilish beliefs. In spite of these failings, he is the object of laughter and satire and is rarely treated seriously by Elizabethan writers. People around him may even take pleasure in his fantastic and caustic railings at human vice and absurdity.

A common type of the malcontent in Elizabethan drama is the melancholy cynic. He is usually disillusioned, disappointed, and embittered by misfortune. According to Robert Burton, "discontents, cares, crosses, miseries, or whatsoever it is that shall cause any molestation of spirits, grief, anguish, and perplexity may well be reduced to [melancholy]." The melancholy cynic is a sort of a philosopher whose thinking is tainted with pessimism and misanthropy. He appears in the play as a person of interesting and amusing peculiarities.

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6 Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 81.

7 Burton, I, 271.
He is often shaggy and disheveled; he is gruff and bearish; he is prone to taciturn moping in corners; if spoken to, he is likely to break out into misanthropic railings against human nature and human sin and vanity. He is granted a license somewhat similar to that of the court jester. He may be "as sour and surly as he pleases, as acidly satiric, even as offensive, as he pleases."  

A variant of the melancholy cynic is one who is embittered without any apparent cause. He is usually a satirical figure who rants for the sake of ranting, not because he has suffered great misfortune, but because ranting is the only thing he wants to do. He takes pleasure in condemning society and anyone he chooses. Moreover, he seems to be contented with his dissatisfied state.

A third malcontent type, the melancholy villain, is one who is unsatisfied with the political state of affairs and who finds no place in society he deems adequate to his potential. He thinks that he is removed from the social order and tries to overthrow the mandate of society. In Elizabethan drama, a melancholy villain may assume the pose of mental abnormality to convince others that he is helpless and harmless.

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9 Ibid., p. 92.
Thus he may either insure his security or take the opportunity to intrigue and to carry out his plots. According to Babb, the melancholy villain

is shrewd and ambitious, but frustrated, poverty-stricken, embittered. One would suppose that he could be bribed, either with money or with promise of preferment, to perform the greatest iniquities. His bitterness and his melancholy have smothered all his scruples; his needs are urgent; he has little to lose and everything to gain.¹⁰

Malevole in John Marston's The Malcontent is a typical example. He takes the pose of the malcontent and castigates everyone he pleases. Mendoza bribes him with money and asks him to kill Duke Pietro. Malevole pretends to be willing to do the evil task. Both the melancholy and the villainy are sometimes motivated by a specific factor of background or heredity. For instance, bastards, if not fully recognized by their fathers, often tend to do evil things. Edmund in Shakespeare's King Lear is a good example of this variation. Unlike the misanthrope who relieves himself chiefly through words, the melancholy villain plans action—revenge, or rebellion—against the order of society.¹¹

Examples of malcontents among Shakespeare's characters show that Shakespeare was thoroughly conscious of the literary

¹⁰Ibid., p. 85.

convention of the type. Even as early as *Titus Andronicus* the malcontent begins to show up in Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare treats the malcontents sometimes comically and sometimes tragically. In his comic treatment of the malcontents there is an air of caricature and satire. The treatment of Jaques in *As You Like It* is typical of Shakespeare's comic treatment of the malcontent type.

Jaques is a notable example of a melancholy traveler, whose delineation may be based on the contemporary foreign traveler. His melancholy is due to his travels on the Continent. He himself is sure that his melancholy is of a special kind.

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 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 humorous sadness. (IV, i, 10-20)

Fink believes that Jaques is based on the traveler, primarily on the complaining and railing type described by Marston, rather than on the active Machiavellian castigated by Lodge.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, Jaques has all the traits characteristic of the malcontent traveler. He apparently has traveled, has been "a

\textsuperscript{12} Fink, p. 251.
libertine," and has caught "all the embossed sores and headed evils" (II, vii, 67) from all the countries. He seeks solitude and avoids company. He asks Orlando to join him in railing "against our mistress the world, and all our misery." (III, ii, 295-6) Orlando calls him "Monsieur Melancholy."

Rosalind, the banished Duke's daughter, calls him "Monsieur Traveler," and says of him:

Look you lisp and wear strange suits. Disable all the benefits of your own country, be out of love with your nativity and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola. (IV, i, 33-8)

Jaques is a malcontent, a melancholy cynic and pessimist. He moralizes on the stricken deer, "augmenting" it with tears. He swears that the banished Duke and his followers "are mere usurpers, tyrants." He has lost faith and sees nothing but futility and absurdity in life. The Forest of Arden is no longer an ideal place for him. Traveler-libertine Jaques has had his day and now turns spectator-cynic and revenges himself on a world that can no longer afford him pleasure, by proving it foul and infected.13

... I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine. (II, vii, 59-61)

The Duke chides him:

Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin,

Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world. (II, vii, 64-9)

Jaques' vision is darkened and whatever he sees is not goodness and beauty, but the misery, vice, and cruelty of a diseased world. Therefore, he envies fools who "blow on" whom they please. He asks to have a motley coat so that he may have liberty to speak his mind. In fact, there is no need of asking for a motley coat since he already has the privileged license of a jester. He is a sort of homely philosopher. Even though his conversation is very lively, witty, and full of wisdom, his isolated set speeches show his essentially melancholy bias. He rails at the follies and abuses of society, at social classes, such as courtiers, and at "the world" in general. He contemplates the vanity and transitoriness of human pretensions, distinctions, and life itself.\textsuperscript{14}

Jaques is an amalgam of the affected malcontent and the true melancholic. In his first role he is aware of his melancholy and proud of it. He thinks that it is good to be sad and say nothing. He himself admits that he is a melancholy

\textsuperscript{14}Stoll, p. 282.

\textsuperscript{15}O. J. Campbell, \textit{Shakespeare's Satire} (Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 52.
person:

Rosalind. They say you are a melancholy fellow.
Jaques. I am so, I do love it better than laughing.
(IV, i, 3-4)

Other characters in the play take pleasure in his upbraidings of the world and in his grotesque wisdom. The banished Duke loves "to cope him" in his sullen fits, for then he is full of "matter." Jaques' melancholy and his disgust with everything are a pose that he might have acquired from his travels. Though Shakespeare does not give us any reason for his melancholy, one can guess that he has great reason to be sad. Rosalind may be right to say that Jaques has "sold [his] own lands to see other men's; then, to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands." (IV, i, 23-5) He has experience but is a "poor and broken bankrupt." His railings against mankind and against the world are not confined to the scenes when others are around, but occur at times when he is left alone. Moreover, his decision to seek the solitary religious life when the banished Duke and his followers happily return to the court shows his continuing melancholy disposition. Indeed, he is "for other than for dancing measures." (V, iv, 199)

Shakespeare does not seem to take Jaques seriously. The attitude of the other characters toward Jaques shows how
he should be taken. The Duke and his followers provoke him into cynical and grotesque admonitions for the sake of their pleasure. In short, he is the object of their ridicule and laughter. Though he is used as a device for deflating the poses of the other characters, Jaques is satirized in turn, and the principal method by which he is attacked is caricature, the process of seizing on his more ridiculous attitudes and magnifying them to the point where they are patently laughable. 16

Malvolio, the most famous of Shakespeare's comic malcontents, is handled in an altogether different vein than Jaques. He seems to be a composite figure, designed to satirize the whole convention of melancholy man. He is a humor character presumably based on Ben Jonson's humor characters. He is "sick of self-love" and tastes with a "dis-tempered appetite." He is very proud and arrogant toward others who work in Olivia's household and even to Sir Toby, his lady's uncle. He is

... the best persuaded of himself, so crammed as he thinks, with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him. (II, iii, 162-5)

Burton says that "self-love, pride, and vain glory, where neither anger, lust, covetousness, fear, sorrow, nor any

other perturbation can lay hold, will slyly and insensibly pervert one and make him melancholy."\(^{17}\) Malvolio is "the sour, discontented one."\(^{18}\) He displays antipathy to the revelers, and he takes no delight in the jests of Feste, the fool. Harold C. Goddard calls Malvolio the antitype of the revelers, their excess drawn out equally in the opposite direction. He further says:

> If they are levity, he is gravity—dignity, decency, decorum, servility and severity in the cause of "good order," carried to the third degree and beyond—and as such fair game for his tormentors.\(^{19}\)

There have been many critics who regard Malvolio as a puritan. Albert H. Tolman says that Shakespeare's audience did recognize Malvolio as a puritan.\(^{20}\) But it is only sometimes that Malvolio is "a kind of Puritan." His puritanism is a pose that he adopts to advance himself at a time when with his mistress puritanical mannerisms are in favor.\(^{21}\) His puritanical qualities are only incidental, but they

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\(^{17}\) Burton, I, 292.


\(^{19}\) Goddard, I, 298.

\(^{20}\) Tolman, p. 151.

contributed to his melancholy. His hostile attitude toward "cakes and ale" and his arrogant attitude toward the lighter people arouse resentment in them. Moreover, his presumptuous boldness and ambition to become his mistress' husband are the object of scorn to Sir Toby and his fellow plotters. Maria, Olivia's woman, writes a forged love letter whose characters are similar to those of Olivia and throws it in Malvolio's way. After Malvolio picks up the letter and reads it, he believes that his lady is in love with him. Malvolio says to himself:

I will be proud, I will read politic authors, I will baffle Sir Toby, I will wash off gross acquaintance, I will be point-device the very man. (II, v, 175-7)

As he is instructed in the letter, he wears crossed-gartered, yellow stockings, and constantly smiles in front of Olivia. He repeats some of the lines from the letter and shows ridiculous boldness before his lady. However, these are only signs of madness to Olivia. As a consequence, he is handed to Sir Toby and confined in a dark room. Even at this time he is not humble in spirit. He calls Sir Toby and the others "idle shallow things." His proud and arrogant manner is not changed even at the end of the play when he is called before Olivia. He protests to Olivia that he is notoriously wronged. Even when he knows the truth that the trickery has been
designed by Maria, not by Olivia, he warns the whole congregation that he will be "revenged on the whole pack of you."

J. B. Priestley gives fitting comment on Malvolio:

Malvolio is not a fool treated with indulgence, given leave to exhibit his folly at length, but is a serious character hunted down with contemptuous laughter. He represents a type that Shakespeare disliked, a cold and conceited fellow, sick with self-love and rotten with envy, and had the play that contains him been of a tragic cast, we might have seen Malvolio playing a very different part, one nearer that of Iago. As it is a comedy, he is laughed at, but the laughter is not the usual affectionate outburst but is keen and cutting.22

On the whole, it is true that Shakespeare does not take the malcontents seriously in his comedies with a possible exception of Much Ado About Nothing. His delineation of Jaques and Malvolio clearly shows that they are objects of ridicule and scorn, and sources of sport and mirth to the other characters. On the other hand, Shakespeare treats the malcontents with great seriousness in his tragedies. They are no longer the butts of laughter and ridicule but dangerous figures, calling for the careful and cautious attention of the other characters in the play.

Shakespeare presents typical melancholy cynics in two of his less well known tragedies: Timon and Apeamantus in Timon of Athens, and Thersites in Troilus and Cressida.

Of his melancholy cynics, Thersites is the bitterest. In these plays, Apemantus and Thersites play a very important role. According to one critic, Apemantus appears "to play the part of a buffoonish commentator." Thersites, too, is a sort of court jester who sometimes acts as a chorus. Both of them are genuine melancholy characters. On the other hand, Timon is not innately melancholy, nor is his dramatic role peripheral.

Timon is one whose misfortune has turned his sanguine disposition into melancholy. In Act I Timon plays the god who distributes fortune to his fellow human beings. One of the lords states that "Plutus, the God of Gold,/Is but his steward." (I, ii, 287-8) Timon gives "great gifts" to his friends until "His promises fly so beyond his state/That what he speaks is all in debt, he owes/For every word." (I, ii, 203-5) Timon says,

We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? Oh, what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many, like brothers, commanding one another's fortunes! (I, ii, 106-10)

Timon lives immoderately in his days of prosperity. He is very generous to his friends, who have turned out to be false friends and mere flatterers. He is deluded by their flattery, which he obviously takes for genuine love and friendship.

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Timon allows riches to isolate him in a privileged position, so he remains ignorant of the truth about men, and about himself. His failure to understand the true nature and condition of men in his days of prosperity is largely due to the fact that he is above all other men, aloof and detached. He lacks insight to see the truth about and the limitations of mankind. He does not heed the warning of the churlish philosopher, Apemantus,

... that men's ears should be
To counsel deaf, but not to flattery! (I, ii, 256-7)

It is interesting to note that Timon, when his friends are not open-handed in his need, goes to the opposite extreme. Instead of love and friendship, he turns to hate and curses. He is torn with bitterness toward his fellow human beings and turns into the complete misanthrope. He says,

I am Misanthropos and hate mankind. (IV, iii, 51)

He is utterly disillusioned with mankind because of ingratitude. In the first half of the play he plays the god, but in the second half he lives like a beast. He would rather join the beasts than live among men who, he thinks, are ungrateful monsters. Thus he banishes himself from society and retreats to the woods to live among beasts. When Apemantus visits him

24David Cook, "'Timon of Athens'," Shakespeare Survey, XVI (1963), 86.
in his cave, he says:

I am sick of this false world, and will love naught
   But even the mere necessities upon 't. (IV, iii, 376-7)

Timon never accepts man's conditions and his limitations, either in his days of prosperity or in his days of misery. He neither accepts the actuality of human condition nor tries to compromise himself to the terms of life. Apemantus tells him:

The middle of humanity thou never knewest, but the extremity of both ends. When thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity. In thy rags thou know'st none, but art despised for the contrary. (IV, iii, 300-4)

Timon's outburst of anger toward all mankind is a result of his loss of wealth and friends. Apemantus says:

This is in [Timon] a nature but infected,
   A poor unmanly melancholy sprung
   From change of fortune. (IV, iii, 202-4)

From this point Timon has nothing to do with mankind. He goes to the woods where he shall find the unkindest beast kinder than mankind. He detests all the Athenians and would rather be alone than have visitors. He is so disgusted and embittered with everything that "His discontents are unremovably/Coupled to nature." (V, i, 227-8)

Though Apemantus in the same play is a melancholy cynic, he is different from Timon in many ways. Unlike Timon, who is enforced to live in misery, Apemantus lives in "willing
misery." Unlike Timon, Apemantus is embittered without apparent cause, and rails upon society and humanity in general. Apemantus is "opposite to humanity." He is "the malcontent who rails and curses for the same reason that a dog barks or a snake bites." He takes pleasure in other's vexation. He is contented with his discontent and takes pride in his willing misery.

Nonetheless, Apemantus is the only one who sees through the pretentions of the people and speaks the truth. He comes to Timon's feast "to see meat fill knaves and wine heat fools." (I, i, 271) He observes men and things as they are and warns Timon that those friends he feeds are all flatterers who come to receive great gifts and material favors from Timon. In fact, Apemantus is a genuine melancholy cynic-philosopher who is by nature bitter, so bitter and so angry that "he does neither affect company, nor is he fit for 't indeed." (I, ii, 30-1) In his 'kennel wit' there is "much angry distraction and little laughter." David Cook comments on Apemantus thus:

... Apemantus seems to be cast in the philosophical tradition of a Diogenes; he serves as the relentless mentor in the play. He is neither taken in by the glitter

25 Kernan, p. 203.

26 O. J. Campbell, p. 188.
of society, nor does he withdraw from it, but stays to warn and moralize. His view of his fellows, if sometimes almost as black as Timon's is at the last, remains philosophic rather than petulant or personal; and he is engaged throughout in moral and prophetic admonition, never in self-glorification or self-pity.27

Apemantus somehow feels that he should rail upon society and that he should correct this false world of its sick and corrupted conscience. When Timon says that he will be nice to Apemantus if he is not surly, Apemantus replies:

... if I should be bribed too, there would be none left to rail upon thee, and then thou wouldst sin the faster. Thou givest so long, Timon, I fear me thou wilt give away thyself in paper shortly. What needs these feasts, pomps, and vainglories? (I, ii, 244-9)

With all his shortcomings, Apemantus has a keen insight into truth and reality. He goads Timon and others who are blinded by falsity. Even though he is disgusted with the pretensions of mankind, he does not run away from them. According to one commentator Apemantus is cast as the homilist, whose words become so impersonal that he seems to speak for the play rather than for himself.28

Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* is one who rails for the sake of railing. No reason is offered in the play as to why he rails or why he is embittered. Thersites himself admits that he is "a scurvy railing knave, a very filthy

27Cook, p. 89.  
28Ibid.
rogue." (V, iv, 30-1) He is a foul-mouthed railer, whose speeches are full of venomed hatred of human folly, hypocrisy, and ignorance. He sees "nothing but lechery" in the world. To him all the argument between Greeks and Trojans

... is a cuckold and a whore, a good quarrel to draw emulous factions and bleed to death upon. . . . And war and lechery confound all! (II, iii, 79-82)

Thersites is a malevolent force, a type of primal hatred and pride, and what Shakespeare has done is to take the conventional character of the satirist and strip away his pretensions to being a moral healer and intensify his basic loathing of all mankind.29 His loathing and curses go unchecked.

Thersites seems to take delight in upbraiding anyone who comes into his way. After he has been beaten by Ajax for his railing, he says to himself:

How now, Thersites! What, lost in the labyrinth of thy fury! Shall the elephant Ajax carry it thus? He beats me, and I rail at him, oh, worthy satisfaction! Would it were otherwise--that I could beat him whilst he rail-ed at me. 'Sfoot, I'll learn to conjure and raise devils, but I'll see some issue of my spiteful execra-tions. (II, iii, 1-7)

Thersites regards himself as subtle and intelligent, though his scheming has no other end but self-glorification and gets him nothing but beatings.30

29 Kernan, p. 196.

30 Ibid., p. 194.
One may surmise that the motives of Thersites' embittered ranting would be his envious nature, mixed with pride, disillusionment, frustration, and loathing of mankind. Furthermore, it has something to do with his physical deformity. However, it is foul-mouthed Thersites, paradoxically, who "seems at times to be the author's mouthpiece, acting as a sort of chorus and commentator on the action and the other dramatic persons."

Thus his speeches are directed to the effect upon the audience, not upon the other characters in the play. In any case, Thersites is somewhat closer to the privileged court jester than to a philosopher. His satirical speeches evoke at the same time amusement and aversion, and this form of derision, by lightening scorn with comfortable laughter, gives the play its comic substance. Alvin Kernan makes a good distinction between Thersites and Timon:

Where Thersites is simply a given, a dark energy who has not final explanation, Timon the satirist is a mutation, a distortion of a nature which was originally one of love and generosity.

Among Shakespeare's melancholy cynics, Timon is somewhat different from Jaques, Apemantus, and Thersites. Timon, in the last two acts, becomes almost a caricature of the now familiar figure of the malcontent satirist. However, he is

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31 Goddard, II, 3.  
32 O. J. Campbell, p. 106.  
33 Kernan, p. 198.  
34 O. J. Campbell, p. 189.
not a traditional satirist, who is rather a spectator than a participant. Timon is not a spectator-railer but an active participant, who undergoes the misery and suffers misfortune. On the other hand, Jaques, Apemantus, and Thersites are in the conventional satiric tradition, in which the satirist has no active part in the course of action. In their sharp tongues and cynical comments the melancholy cynics come close to being satirists.

The melancholy cynics so far considered are not figures so dangerous as to call for serious alarm among the other characters in the play. In spite of their pessimistic and satiric comments on human sins and vices, they are commonly harmless eccentrics. Unlike melancholy cynics, melancholy villains, such as Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Edmund in *King Lear*, Cassius in *Julius Caesar*, and Iago in *Othello*, are very dangerous and treacherous. They become involved in plots and sometimes unspeakable evil because they are embittered, frustrated, and disillusioned. Some of them are melancholic and villainous because of the stigma of their births or of their physical deformity. The earliest full rendering of this type is Richard III, who is "determined to prove a villain" (I, i, 30) because of his deformity. He needs little cause for his treacherous acts. He does evil
things for their own sakes and takes delight in them. Don John is similar to Richard III in the sense that he plots to please himself.

Don John is "a thorough-paced villain of the deliberate Machiavellian type." As he himself says in Act I, he is "not of many words." He admits that he is "a plain-dealing villain." When one of his followers, Borachio, gives him information of an intended marriage between Hero and Count Claudio, he immediately asks,

Will it serve for my model to build mischief on? (I, iii, 48)

When he learns that his half-brother, Prince Don Pedro, is to woo Hero for himself, win her consent, then give her to Claudio, he plots to cross Claudio. He says,

This may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way. (I, iii, 67-70)

However, one can perceive that his melancholy may be innate at birth, and it increases later because of the stigma of his being a bastard. Unless proper recognition were given by the father, the bastard was "expected to be evil and therefore melancholy." Don John himself confesses this:

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36 Draper, *Humors*, p. 74.
I cannot hide what I am. I must be sad when I have cause, and smile at no man's jests; eat when I have stomach, and wait for no man's leisure; sleep when I am drowsy, and tend on no man's business; laugh when I am merry, and claw no man in his humor. (I, iii, 14-9)

In the same dialogue he says:

There is no measure in the occasion that breeds, therefore the sadness is without limit. (I, iii, 4-5)

It is evident that Don John has not been on good terms with the Prince, Don Pedro, for some reason. Don John's discontent seems to stem from thwarted ambition. He plans to make use of his discontent to his own advantage. Conrade, one of his followers, insinuates that Don John should make use of his discontent.

You have of late stood out against your brother, and he hath ta'en you newly into his grace, where it is impossible you should take true root but by the fair weather that you make yourself. It is needful that you frame the season for your own harvest. (I, iii, 22-5)

When his false charge, that Don Pedro woos Hero for himself rather than for Claudio is discovered to be a treachery, he becomes sick with displeasure. He then sets out to cross the marriage between Hero and Claudio. He must be careful to convince Claudio and Don Pedro that Hero is not faithful. He pays Borachio a thousand ducats for wooing Margaret, Hero's maid, at Hero's window the night before the wedding so that Claudio and Don Pedro may overhear. 'His plot has the desired
effect, and Claudio shames Hero at the wedding. However, Benedick guesses the author of this villainous slander:

The practice of it lives in John the bastard, Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies. (IV, i, 190-1)

Since this is a comedy, the villainy must come to nothing. Later Borachio goes to a tavern with the money, gets drunk, and tells everything to his friend Conrade on the way home. The watch overhears what he says and arrests him for his treachery. In the end this is Much Ado that Ends Well, but Don John is surely a prototype of Edmund and Iago.

Edmund in King Lear is a bastard son of the Earl of Gloucester. He seems to be basically melancholy in nature like Don John. Unlike Don John, who has no redeeming features, Edmund at first seems to be loved and trusted by all the characters of the play. He has the absolute trust of his father and of his brother, Edgar. He has, according to one critic, in himself "that perfection of manly beauty which wins the confidence of men and exercises seduction upon women."

There is no doubt that he is intellectually brilliant and adaptable to every occasion. He seizes rapidly all the chances before him and turns them to his own advantage.

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At the beginning of the play he makes up his mind to take his inheritance by wit since he cannot get it by birth. When he meets Edgar after he makes his plan, he assumes the pose of "villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom 'o Bedlam." (I, ii, 147) He congratulates himself on having

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none, on whose foolish honesty
[His] practices ride easy. (I, ii, 195-8)

When Edmund shows his father the letter supposed to have been written by Edgar, his father readily believes the accusations of the letter without much question. After Edgar flees from his father, Edmund makes use of another occasion to his own advantage. He reveals the letter his father has received from France to the Duke of Cornwall, thus betraying his father as he has Edgar. He ponders:

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses, no less than all.
The younger rises when the old doth fall. (III, iii, 24-6)

Later, he promises his love to both Goneril and Regan, which brings a tragic end to both of them, each jealous of the other.

On the whole, Edmund is quite different from Don John in the sense that he does not engage in villainy just to please himself or simply to cross others. He plots and intrigues for the definite purposes of getting land or power. His plots
are not ends in themselves, but only means by which he may achieve his larger purpose. In a character that is as complex and subtle as Edmund, it is difficult to determine to what degree the villainy and the melancholy are related. That there is a relationship, however, is undeniable, though there are some cases, as with Edmund, where the villainy is stressed more than the melancholia.

Iago in Othello is Shakespeare's arch-villain. Many find him an evil spirit or a devil whose action is without any human motives. On the other hand, some critics find him to be all too human. C. F. T. Brooke says that Shakespeare evidently imagined Iago as a man of warm sympathetic qualities, begetting confidence in his acquaintances as instinctively and universally as Don John's coldness begot distrust.\textsuperscript{38} J. W. Draper found in Iago no inherent wickedness like that of Richard III, who needed little or no motive for his enormities.

Iago is a professional soldier who has climbed almost to the top. By order of seniority he is next to Othello and he naturally expects Othello to choose him as his lieutenant. However, he is passed over in favor of Cassio, whom he despises. When he realizes that his ambitions for a successful

career in the army have been thwarted once and for all, he turns malcontent. The frustration in Iago inevitably drives him to plot villainy. Even though he hates Othello from the beginning of the play, he does not seem to have any definite plan to avenge himself on Othello for the wrong and injustice done to him by Othello's preferment of Cassio. Iago says:

Though I do hate him as I do Hell pains,
Yet for necessity of present life
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. (I, i, 155-8)

Iago's outward pose of love and duty to Othello is only outward semblance to gain his personal end.

Iago has another reason to hold Othello in his hate.

I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office. I know not if 't be true,
But I for mere suspicion in that kind
Will do as if for surety. (I, iii, 392-6)

The Elizabethan regarded the cuckold with a scornful contempt, and made merry over his weakness and folly. Therefore, the mere rumor of Emilia's infidelity is a very serious matter to Iago and may serve as a cause for revenge. There is no other way to content his soul but to be even with Othello "wife for wife." In Act II he plans to put Othello into a jealousy by telling him that Cassio is Desdemona's lover. Even though

\[39\] J. Campbell, p. 160.

\[40\] Draper, "Honest Iago," p. 728.
Iago thinks that Desdemona is fair and virtuous, his only course is to get at Othello through Desdemona. He wants to disturb Othello's peace of mind, but he is "yet confused." However, it seems obvious at first that he does not mean any physical harm either to Othello or to Desdemona.

Iago's contempt for Cassio's inexperience in practical soldiership shows his envy of Cassio. He resents the idea that he should take orders from the new-made younger officer. He, therefore, will ease his anguish by plaguing those souls who have done him wrong. Iago uses his dupe Roderigo to insult Cassio upon the watch so that Cassio may be cast away by Othello. Iago promises Roderigo that he will make Roderigo enjoy Desdemona. Meantime, Iago enjoys Roderigo's purse under the excuse of what he has promised to do for him.

It is not easy to imagine Iago as having always been a masked villain. He could hardly have been such a villain during the years when he was known as "honest Iago" to the people around him. It is also evident that his wife, Emilia, has never thought of him as a villain. When Othello reveals to her that it was her husband who first imparted to him the idea of Desdemona's faithlessness, she says:

I know thou [Iago] didst not, thou'rt not such a villain. (V, ii, 174)

One must agree with Draper that Iago is indeed a "Vallaine"
as the first folio describes him; and yet, if Othello's trust in him means anything, this "Villaine" is not the normal Iago of their years of soldiering together, but a warped and twisted counterpart, the violent result of choler and jealousy. The only valid way to account for this villainy is in terms of the frustration that leads to deep melancholy and ultimately to the unspeakable villany itself. Shakespeare could probably have gone no further with the malcontent than Iago.

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41 John W. Draper, "The Jealousy of Iago," Neophilologus, XXV (1940), 59.
Melancholy disillusion is somewhat similar to melancholy misanthropy. Often it is very hard to draw a line between them, and, of course, disillusion may lead to misanthropy. The difference is largely a matter of degree. Certain human types seem most subject to fits of disillusionment. It can affect the scholar, the thinker, the philosopher, the introspective man. Above all, it may be found in the disillusioned idealist. Ultimately there may develop a genuine strain of disillusion, a feeling that life is futile, love nauseous, and even death no release. Occasionally the sufferer expresses his melancholy and analyses it with some subtlety; more often it is shown as a bitterness which is vague, uneasy and ill-defined.\(^1\)

Melancholy disillusion incorporates two kinds of distinctive attributes: the intellectual and the reflective. These two traits are often inseparable, though not always. An intellectual turn of mind is inevitably found in the melancholy scholar. According to Burton, scholars are subject

\(^1\) Harrison, p. 70.
to melancholy because of their continual study and night-waking. The fundamental state of the melancholy scholar is "a despondent, disillusioned lassitude, a sense of weariness and futility." He cannot escape melancholy because his mental labor consumes the heat and moisture of his body. It is small wonder that melancholy often afflicts

\[\ldots\] Studentes which at vnseasonable times sit at their Bookes & Studies. For through ouermuch agitation of mynd, natural heat is extinguished, & the Spyrits aswell Animall as Vitall, attenuated and vanish away: whereby it commeth to passe, that after their vitall iuyce is exhausted, they fall into a Colde & Drye constitution.\]

This is genuine melancholy humor. Lawrence Babb adds that "poverty, hard fare, disillusionment, and discouragement contribute to the scholar's melancholy." The association between melancholy and learning is so strong that not only do the scholars of the drama tend to be melancholy but melancholiacs tend to be scholarly.

Whether he is particularly scholarly or not, the introspective, meditative person, the man of a reflective turn of

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\(^2\) Burton, I, 301.

\(^3\) Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 97.


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 100.
mind, is often prone to melancholy. He becomes preoccupied with his own thought and may neglect all his ordinary business. He can hardly escape melancholy because his contemplative habit "dries the brain and extinguisheth the natural heat; for whilst the spirits are intent to meditation above the head, the stomach and liver are left destitute, and thence come black blood and crudities by defect of concoction. . . ."^7

As listed in medical treatises, the symptoms of melancholy disillusion are the same as those of the general melancholy malady. A person who suffers from melancholy disillusion, the treatises relate, is lean, quiet, thoughtful. He may actively seek solitude. He often suffers from hallucinations and may long for death. On the other hand, he is likely to be brave and witty.

The factors that bring on the melancholy disillusionment are varied. The focus of this chapter is not on the man who, like Timon, is a malcontent because of some specific, such as loss of fortune. Instead it concentrates on a group of melancholiacs who are disappointed with a world which does not quite come up to their ideals. Their ideals are so high that things cannot meet their standards. As a consequence, they suffer from ennui and may even long for death as a

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^7Burton, I, 302.
release from this world. Life seems futile to them. Their jaundiced view of the world leads to lethargic misery and wretchedness.

Representations of melancholy disillusion among Shakespeare's characters are highly sophisticated, and at times even profound. Shakespeare's presentation of this type of melancholy character is complex. The characters themselves are apt to be ambiguous. The psychological insight shown by Shakespeare in delineating them anticipates with almost uncanny prescience latter-day psychology. In presenting them he goes beyond the medical treatises and lore of his time. With them, he has reached the height of his skill at character delineation. The most striking of these is Hamlet, who will be treated last in this chapter. Others representatives of this type are Brutus and Antonio of The Merchant of Venice.

At the opening scene of The Merchant of Venice, Antonio is sad and depressed. No explicit reason is given throughout the play as to why he is so. Antonio himself does not know the origin and the cause of his melancholy. In Act I, scene i, he tells his friends Salarino and Salanio:

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.  
It wearies me, you say it wearies you:  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.  
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me  
That I have much ado to know myself.  (I, i, l-7)
To this they respond that Antonio is sad because of his anxiety for his merchandise at sea. But he denies their suggestion:

My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place, nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year.
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad. (I, i, 42-5)

Then Salarino concludes that Antonio is in love. Again Antonio denies it. However, his friends recognize that his appearance has been "marvelously changed." Finally, with more insight than they may be conscious of, the friends conclude, "then let us say you are sad/Because you are not merry." (I, i, 48-9)

Many critics have regarded Antonio's melancholy as a presentiment of the loss of his friend Bassanio through marriage. E. K. Chambers suggests that Antonio was going to lose something much dearer to him than riches, his friend Bassanio, who had told him of his intended marriage, and it was this that made him sad. It seems quite obvious that Antonio has knowledge of Bassanio's intended marriage before the play starts. As soon as they are left alone at their first meeting in the play, Antonio turns to Bassanio and asks:

Well, tell me now, what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage
That you today promised to tell me of? (I, i, 119-21)

8 Chambers, p. 116.
Robert Burton, in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, regards parting of friends as one of the causes of melancholy. He says:

>This is so grievous a torment for the time, that it takes away their appetite, desire of life, extinguisheth all delights, it causeth deep sighs and groans, tears, exclamations.9

In view of Burton's explanation, Chambers' view has some validity. If Antonio's melancholy is caused by the fear of losing his friend Bassanio, it is an uneconomical treatment of the theme of friendship. In any case, it is hard to document from the play itself.

Harold C. Goddard explains the cause of Antonio's melancholy a somewhat different way. Though Bassanio's intended marriage may have accentuated it at the moment, Antonio's depression, he thinks, has all the marks of something older and deeper.10 He argues that since Antonio has never married, he has invested in gentle friendship emotions that nature intended should blossom into love. But however tender and loyal, it is a slightly sentimental friendship, far from being an equivalent of love. Therefore, both it and the argosies, Goddard suggests, are at bottom opiates.11 He maintains that

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9 Burton, I, 358.  
10 Goddard, I, 87.  
11 Ibid., I, 92.
those who drown themselves in business or other work in order to forget what refuses to be forgotten are generally characterized by a quiet melancholy interrupted occasionally by spells of irritation or sudden spasms of passion directed at some person or thing that, if analyzed, is found to be a symbol of the error that has spoiled their lives.\(^{12}\) Antonio is noble and high-minded, but given to trade for money-making that he despises. Antonio would not take "direct interest" like Shylock, but the ultimate end of his trade is to make profit, which has close kinship to usury. Antonio catches his own reflection in Shylock's face, and anger at himself is directed against Shylock with bitter and fierce outbursts.\(^{13}\) Antonio was created for nobler things, and so he suffers from that homesickness of the soul that ultimately attacks everyone who consecrates his life to something below his spiritual level.\(^{14}\) Goddard's view is sophisticated and convincing, but again evidence is lacking.

However, it is obvious that Shakespeare created Antonio as a world-weary man who longs for death. As the play progresses, his melancholy becomes more intense and more profound. When Bassanio asks Salerio how Antonio does, he answers,

\(^{12}\text{Ibid.}\) \(^{13}\text{Ibid., p. 88.}\) \(^{14}\text{Ibid., p. 91.}\)
"Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind,/Nor well, unless in mind." (III, ii, 237-8) If Bassanio comes to see him pay his debt, says Antonio, "then I care not!" (III, iii, 36) What he really seems to care for is the affection of Bassanio. It is probable that the cause of Antonio's melancholy, as Goddard suggests, is his disappointment in the love that has existed between Bassanio and him. In any case, his melancholy renders him puzzlingly passive at the trial scene. Antonio says to Bassanio,

I am a tainted wether of the flock,  
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit  
Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me. (IV, i, 114-6)

Shakespeare's choice of words is provocative. The words "tainted," "meetest," and "weakest" suggest that Antonio's problem goes beyond melancholy to some deep-seated guilt feelings. But the cause of Antonio's despondency has not fully come to light and will probably remain a mystery. Yet one thing is certain, that Antonio, like Shylock, is "a victim of forces from far below the threshold of consciousness."\(^{15}\)

Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, somewhat like Antonio, is one who undertakes a task that is not apt to his nature. Brutus is considered a virtuous and high-minded idealist, and he

himself is conscious of his virtue. He loves "the name of honor" more than he fears death. Ironically, it is by his "honor" and his "virtue" that Cassius draws him into the conspiracy. Cassius assumes that Brutus will do anything if it does not violate his honor and is for the general good. However, Brutus seems to arrive at the decision to kill Caesar independent of Cassius' persuasion. The play does not reveal how he has reached the final decision, but he is resolute at the opening scene of Act II.

It must be by his death and for my part
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general. (II, i, 10-2)

Finding nothing in Caesar's past behavior to justify the assassination, he fashions it thus:

... what he is, augmented,
Would run to those and these extremities.
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which hatched would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell. (II, i, 30-4)

Brutus is deluded by the view that Caesar will abuse his power if he is crowned and that in the end he would be a tyrant. He deluded himself by mistaking the potential Caesar for the actual Caesar. However visionary and wrong-headed it may be, his ideal of Rome has been shattered by Caesar's rise to power. Beneath his rationalization and his plausible justification for the murder, however, Brutus unconsciously envies Caesar.
At the bottom of his heart he knows that once Caesar "is become a god," he would find himself a wretched creature.

But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face.
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascent. So Caesar may. (II, i, 21-7)

Burton regards jealousy as a symptom of melancholy. In
the play, Brutus is never overruled by anyone. He is made
the leader of conspirators, and has his way over others. He
overrules Cassius when Cassius wants the conspirators to
swear an oath of allegiance and when Cassius wants to kill
Antony together with Caesar. Now he cannot endure the idea
that Caesar grows so great that he would be completely over-
shadowed by Caesar. This unstated and hidden jealousy of
Brutus may be regarded as one of the symptoms of his melan-
choly.

Also Brutus is a highly meditative person, and this trait
has something to do with his melancholy disposition. In
Act II, Brutus suffers obvious inner turmoil. In his solil-
oquy he says,

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing

16 Burton, I, 391.
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.
The Genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection. (II, i, 61-9)

Indeed, he has all the symptoms of melancholy: sleeplessness, hideous dreams, mental suffering, and emotional turmoil. It is worth noting that even before Cassius directs him against Caesar, he shows symptoms similar to these. It is revealed that he is not "gamesome," that he is "with himself at war," and "forgets the shows of love to other men." (I, ii, 46-7)

He admits his emotional perturbations:

    Vexed I am
Of late with passions of some difference,
Conceptions only proper to myself,
Which give some soil perhaps to my behaviours. (I, ii, 39-42)

He is so much preoccupied with his thought that he neglects to show the proper regard for his friends.

Brutus' melancholy seems to come mainly from his highly contemplative nature, which naturally engenders black bile in his body. However, his meditative habit does not inhibit his action. It is a mistake to see Brutus as the unworldly scholar, blind to political realities, devoid of a knowledge of life as distinct from letters, called from his books to assume a task for which he is not fitted.17

natural tendency to melancholy is his disillusionment with the world around him, which does not meet the standard of his ideals. He wants to have freedom and liberty in his ideal republic of Rome instead of fear under tyranny. Obviously he has thought of some kind of remedy even before the play starts. He says to Cassius:

Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us. (I, ii, 172-5)

His inner conflicts continue until the assassination, taking the shape of dreadful dreams and of night-waking. But once he has reached the final decision, it is not the confusion of his private and public loyalties, but the deed itself that causes his inner conflict. He maneuvers to find a way to call the deed something other than what it is—political murder. His gentle, noble, and contemplative nature stands in the way of the deed itself. To save himself from the stigma of murder, he attempts to make the assassination a sacrifice by ritualizing it as much as possible.

Ironically, the bitterest and the strongest disillusionment in Brutus is shown in the quarrel scene with Cassius before the battle of Philippi. He castigates Cassius for taking bribes, among other things. Brutus reminds Cassius of the ideal of March.
Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
What villain touched his body that did stab,
And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers, shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honors
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a dog and bay the moon
Than such a Roman. (IV, iii, 19-28)

He realizes at last that he has merely exchanged one corrupted
world for another. His "ideal republic" is more of an illusion than ever.

Hamlet's melancholy has always been a controversial
subject and a matter of confusion among commentators. Opinions
concerning the cause of Hamlet's melancholy are so numerous
and various that it is almost impossible to enumerate them.
Yet the correct interpretation of it is the key to the understanding of Hamlet's character and of the play itself.

Hamlet has most of the symptoms of the melancholy man
as listed in the contemporary medical treatises. He remains
witty and quick of mind, but his melancholy is indicated by
his sighing, and seeking solitude. He says that he is "dull"
and "muddy-mettled," and is "very proud, revengeful, ambitious." (III, i, 126) The treatises maintain that a melancholy person
is commonly susceptible to delusion and hallucination. Hamlet's
hesitation and delay are more plausible in view of his melancholy symptoms. In view of his tendency to hallucination,
he questions whether the Ghost is the Devil working on his weakness to condemn him.

The spirit that I have seen
May be the Devil, and the Devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape. 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, 627-32)

As one might expect from a melancholy man, Hamlet conceives of death as a dreadful thing, and yet at times he longs for death. With Hamlet, it is not so much fear of death itself that gives him pause, but the prospect that the "sleep of death" should be disturbed by bad dreams.\(^1\) His soliloquies such as "To be, or not to be" (III, i, 56-88) and "What a piece of work" (II, ii, 315-20) clearly show Hamlet's lethargy and pessimism. As a consequence, he denies himself this means of escape from the "sterile promontory" and all the uses of this world.

At the beginning of the play we see Hamlet in deep mourning. He says that his "inky cloak," tears, downcast countenance, together "with all forms, moods, shapes of grief," (I, ii, 82) can denote him truly. It is important to note that Hamlet was melancholy even before the Ghost revealed to him the dreadful secret of his murder. Ostensibly his melancholy seems to be caused by his father's death and his

\(^1\) Harrison, p. 74.
mother's hasty marriage to his uncle, Claudius. Especially after his mother's marriage, which he rationalizes as incestuous, he is utterly disillusioned with everything. The ideal world he has in the past constructed around his father and mother has shattered. To Hamlet all the uses of this world seem "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." (I, ii, 133) This world has become "an unweeded garden" (I, ii, 135) and nothing pleases him.

I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises, and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory. (II, ii, 306-10)

In Hamlet, as in Timon, we are shown a "genuine disturbance of the spirit, the obverse of generous idealism, not to be compared for a moment with the mere melancholy temperament, or with the fantastic habit of melancholy." He now sees in the world around him "the reality of evil underneath the appearance of good." 

Hamlet's melancholy before the revelation of the Ghost is marked by his lethargic lassitude, which is "a purely

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19 Sisson, p. 12.

intellectual phenomenon." In the "too too solid flesh" (I, ii, 129-59) soliloquy, Hamlet does indeed "feed his melancholy with his thoughts of his mother's frailty, thus following the accepted formula of being brought to a loathing of the world, to a condition where he takes delight only in increasing his melancholy, and to desire to kill himself to escape such a world."  

Hamlet's already notable melancholy is compounded by the revelations of the ghost of his father, and the melancholy is manifested in various ways, such as morbid brooding, bitter and cynical satire and mockery against human vanity and corruption. The melancholy is not totally unrelieved, however. Hamlet goes from the depths of melancholic depression, disgust with the world, and self-condemnation, to the heights of euphoria, delight with the world, and self-congratulation. In spite of the extremes of emotion to which Hamlet is subjected, he is not altogether unaware of his dilemma. Hamlet is conscious of some of its causes and becomes the more


melancholy because he sees a problem which he can neither solve nor at times even define.\textsuperscript{24}

The depth and strength of Hamlet's melancholy should not becloud the fact that Hamlet has not been always melancholy. Others in the play remember vividly what he had been before melancholy set in. Ophelia especially, who has loved him and still loves him, remembers him for what he was, and is both puzzled and shocked by the change. She describes him as a courtier, a soldier, and a scholar. She says that Hamlet is

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\ldots \text{[the]} \text{ rose of the fair state,} \\
\text{The glass of fashion and the mold of form,} \\
\text{The observed of all observers.} \ldots \text{ (III, i, 160-3)}
\]

Like Orsino, Hamlet must have been a man of sanguine temperament before he becomes melancholy through the change of circumstances.

The crucial question in the tragedy that most critics are concerned with is the reason for Hamlet's delay in revenge of his father's murder. Here again we have various contradictory opinions. A. C. Bradley holds that Hamlet's melancholy accounts for Hamlet's inaction.\textsuperscript{25} He apparently thinks that Hamlet's speculative habit is an indirect cause of the morbid

\textsuperscript{24}Harrison, p. 76.

state which hindered action. Contrary to Bradley's view, J. W. Draper maintains that the Elizabethans "thought of melancholy as a consequence rather than a cause of inactivity." Murray W. Bundy agrees with Draper that melancholy "would not for the Elizabethan necessarily inhibit action." Whatever the final interpretation, it is clear enough that Shakespeare intended Hamlet's melancholy to be related to the delay. Furthermore, it is related to plot motivation. His melancholy is a dangerous sign that cannot be overlooked. Neither Shakespeare nor Claudius takes Hamlet's melancholy lightly. The King says to Polonius that there is

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\text{... something in his [Hamlet's] soul}
\]
\[
\text{O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,}
\]
\[
\text{And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose}
\]
\[
\text{Will be some danger. (III, i, 172-5)}
\]

Hamlet's melancholy is "a state of mind that belongs, not to the harmless dreamer but to the dangerous conspirator, who is thwarted either in his personal ambition or in some other desired activity." That is why the King sends Hamlet to England where he is supposed to be executed.

26 Ibid., p. 117.  
27 Draper, *The Hamlet*, p. 179.  
29 Draper, *The Hamlet*, p. 182.
In the first part of the play Hamlet hesitates to kill the King because of his doubt about the identity of the Ghost. He is not sure whether it is an "honest" ghost. In the latter part he cannot find apt opportunity to revenge. It is apparent that Hamlet's melancholy is "the direct result of the exasperation which dominates him when circumstances prevent his rushing to revenge." Because of this enforced inaction, Hamlet becomes moody, and his already deep vein of melancholy is increased.

Hamlet's melancholy grows through the first half of the play and, with it, his readiness to suspicion, which is one of the symptoms of melancholy. Weston Babcock believes that Shakespeare saw that the readiness to suspicion would be dramatically useful and would inevitably lead to intrigue. Its dramatic quality lies in the fact that

... the chain of suspicions and counter-suspicions that forms the surface plot is forged, not by a suspicion in Hamlet's mind, but by a suspicion of Hamlet in the mind of Claudius, a suspicion aroused by Hamlet's bitter tongue and repartee.

What Babcock's comment correctly emphasizes is that in some of his more complex plays and especially with some of his more sophisticated characters Shakespeare employs traits

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30 J. Campbell, p. 159.
31 Babcock, p. 20.
32 Ibid.
of melancholy as a motivating force. The melancholy of such characters as Antonio, Brutus, and Hamlet is carefully integrated into the whole fabric of the play to such an extent that it could not be altered or omitted without destroying the play as we have it. There is a vast difference in the use he makes of Hamlet's melancholy, for instance, and the more superficial treatment of melancholy in a character such as Jaques or even Malvolio. By the time of the great plays of his middle period it is clear that Shakespeare has converted what was a rather superficial doctrine of humors into profound insight into the deepest wellsprings of human emotion and motivation.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

From the plays themselves the evidence is overwhelming that Shakespeare was well acquainted with the prevailing attitudes toward melancholia. The plays show that he kept pace with the evolving concepts of melancholy. Indeed, a chronological view reveals that he used melancholia in one form or another from the earliest plays to the last. The evidence of the plays confirms that he accepted the contemporary medical and psychological theory so far as it did not contradict his experience and his sense of what is dramatically fitting. At his best he adapted the contemporary doctrine of melancholia to the purposes of his dramatic art, and employed it to enhance character and provide motivation.

When Shakespeare came to write his plays, the concept of melancholy was readily available to him. Melancholy at that time had become in some circles a fashion, brought from the Continent, especially from Italy, by English travelers. Behind the vogue of melancholy there was ancient medical and psychological theory which had its origin in the classical and medieval sources. The Renaissance concept of melancholy
is so many-sided and various that it is impossible to generalize to make a consistent body of doctrine out of it. However, there were two prominent, yet different, conceptions of melancholy handed down from the Greeks. One of them was dominant in the medical treatises and lore. Its source is in the tradition of Galen, according to which melancholy is the most wretched and miserable condition of man, always associated with sorrow and fear. In this view it may be characterized as a morbid brooding, mental abnormality, leading to lethargic misery, and fearful delusion. On the other hand, there was an Aristotelian doctrine of melancholy, according to which melancholy is the happiest state of man and endows one with intellectual capacity and mental profundity. Shakespeare's plays reveal that he makes use of both of these conceptions where it suits his purposes.

A comprehensive view indicates that Shakespeare presents three main types of melancholy among his characters: the melancholy lover, who suffers from unsatisfied and disappointed love; the malcontent, who is embittered and discontented because of his travel, of his loss of fortune, of his physical infirmity, of his frustrated ambition, and sometimes without any cause; and the melancholy idealist, who is disillusioned with the world around him because things cannot meet the
standard of his ideals. All the variants fall under one or the other of these categories.

In his treatment of melancholy lovers, Shakespeare accepted not only the causes and the symptoms of melancholy but also its accepted cure as listed in the contemporary medical treatises. Berowne, who takes the pose of a melancholy lover at the beginning of Love's Labor's Lost, comes apparently to suffer from genuine love melancholy as the play progresses. He sighs, groans, rhymes, and becomes melancholy. On the other hand, Don Armado in the same play affects love melancholy simply to signify his superior social status and elegance.

Shakespeare pokes gentle fun at these melancholy lovers and satirizes them without much harshness. Valentine in The Two Gentlemen of Verona also has all the symptoms of a melancholy lover, especially when he is banished from the court of the Duke of Milan where his love Silvia lives. He seeks solitude, cannot sleep, and groans. However, his friendship proves to be stronger than his love at the end of the play and even yields Silvia to his treacherous friend Proteus when he repents what he has done to Valentine. Unlike the love of these melancholy lovers, Orsino's love melancholy in Twelfth Night lasts throughout the play until he substitutes Viola for Olivia. He cures himself of his melancholy when he falls in love with
and marries Viola. On the whole, the portrayal of his love melancholy is treated more sympathetically than similar cases in the earlier comedies. In all these comedies love melancholy is not taken very seriously, though the loves of these characters, with the possible exception of Don Armado, are real and sincere enough to make them suffer for the time.

Unlike melancholy lovers in the comedies, Romeo in Romeo and Juliet closely follows the medieval courtly love tradition. The traits of the courtly love are similar to those of love melancholy. In Act I Romeo suffers from thwarted love, as is expected from a courtly lover. Unlike other melancholy lovers, who find some way of communication with their mistresses, Romeo's love for Rosaline is disdained or unrecognized and never returned. Because of Rosaline's coldness or indifference toward Romeo, he falls into the classic pattern of the lover's malady. The nature of his suffering is more violent and more intense than that of melancholy lovers in the comedies. Romeo's early melancholy is vital not only to a proper understanding of his character but to the thematic implications of the play. An awareness of Romeo's love melancholy is essential to the understanding of the theme of the ennobling power of love. Romeo's love affair with Rosaline is set as a contrast to the romantic love of Romeo and Juliet.
and becomes an important device for developing the main
thematic thread of the play.

On the whole Shakespeare's portrayal of the malcontent
is handled with more gravity than the melancholy lover. The
malcontent type stems more from a literary development rather
than from prevailing medical lore. The malcontent is com-
monly dissatisfied with everything and frustrated through
some change of circumstances in the course of his life. Some
of the malcontents become melancholy as a result of travel.

Jaques in *As You Like It* is a typical malcontent traveler
whose delineation is based mainly on the contemporary foreign
traveler. He is also a melancholy cynic, a sort of philoso-
pher who sees nothing but vice and folly in human nature.
His affectations are excessive but he is a genuine melancho-
liac. Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is another malcontent, sour
and discontented. His presumptuous ambition to be his lady's
husband becomes the object of scorn and laughter to the other
characters of the play. The biting humor of his portrayal
reflects Shakespeare's reaction to the sham and hypocrisy of
the affected melancholic. In other plays Shakespeare shows
that he recognized the dramatic potential of certain kinds
of malcontents. The genuine melancholy cynic is not treated
as a butt of satire and laughter. In one notable instance
Shakespeare builds his whole play around the melancholy cynic-philosopher. Timon in *Timon of Athens*, who is sanguine by nature, turns into a melancholy cynic and misanthropist when his fortune is all wasted and his friends turn out to be false. His love and generosity turn to hate and he joins the beasts in the wood. Since he cannot find terms to compromise himself with life, he seeks for death. In contrast, Apemantus in *Timon of Athens* and Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida* rail for the sake of railing. In terms of the play they do not suffer any great misfortune. In the context of their respective plays, they play lesser roles, but quite important ones. Apemantus is a sort of philosopher who tells truth and moralizes and comments on the actions of the other characters, especially Timon. He is bitter by nature and is contented with his discontentment, but he accepts the limitations of human conditions and does not withdraw as Timon does. Thersites, who is also bitter and foul-mouthed, plays a role similar to that of a court jester. He rails at whom he pleases for self-glorification as much as anything else. He acts as a chorus, whose speech has effects upon the audience more than upon the other characters of the play. Though he is caustic and bitter, he is relatively harmless. On the contrary, another malcontent type, the melancholy villain, is a
very dangerous figure. He makes plots and intrigues either
to overthrow the social order or to achieve his nefarious
purpose. Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing* is one rendering
of the melancholy villain. He clouds the play as a figure
brooding in the background. He is given a rudimentary motiva-
tion. He has the stigma of being a bastard, and his discontent
comes in part from his thwarted ambition for political
power. He does evil things to cross others and takes delight
in his villainy. Like Don John, Edmund in *King Lear* is also
a bastard. He assumes the pose of "villainous melancholy"
and gains by wit what he cannot gain by birth. Iago in
*Othello* is not an innately melancholy character. He has
acquired melancholy through the changes in certain aspects
of his life. He seems to be "honest" before he is passed
over by Cassio in preferment. His frustrated ambition in
his career and his wife's supposed adultery with Othello
prompt him to avenge himself on Othello. He is not an embodi-
ment of evil as some critics tend to believe. Shakespeare
has provided him with believable motivation. His acts are
made much more credible by his melancholy frame of mind.

Shakespeare's most profound and philosophical treatment
of melancholy can be found in his treatment of the melancholy
idealistic. In dealing with this type Shakespeare is very much
concerned with the psychology of the characters rather than only their actions in the play. Because things have fallen short of his ideal the melancholy idealist feels that life is weary and futile, and he may long for death. The melancholy idealist commonly has two attributes: the intellectual and the reflective. Most often these two qualities are inseparable. Shakespeare's representation of this type is very sophisticated and complex. In his portrayal of the melancholy idealists he goes beyond the contemporary medical theory and shows his psychological insight into the characters. Antonio's melancholy in The Merchant of Venice is not satisfactorily explained, but it certainly sets the undertone beneath the gaiety of the play. There is something deeper and stronger than the obvious causes that disturbs his soul, though Antonio himself does not know its origin or its cause.

It may be that Antonio, like Brutus in Julius Caesar, undertakes a task which his noble and virtuous nature opposes. Brutus is a high-minded idealist whose ideal of Rome has been shattered by Caesar's growing and overwhelming power. Moreover, he is unconsciously jealous of Caesar. Therefore, he decides to kill Caesar and attempts to make the political murder a sacrifice so that he could square it with his ideal and with his conscience. His emotional
perturbations continue until the assassination, and even after his final decision is made, the deed itself troubles him. Ironically, his murder of Caesar only brings chaos and tyranny instead of freedom and liberty which he has envisioned.

In Act IV the bitter disillusionment in Brutus is once again revealed at the quarrel scene with Cassius. His suicide at the end of the play seems to be the only fitting end for his melancholy disillusionment. Hamlet has a philosophical, intellectual, and reflective turn of mind like Brutus. He has constructed an ideal world around his father and mother, but it now begins to shatter especially after his father's death and his mother's hasty marriage. He falls increasingly into a deep melancholy that affects both his feelings and his action. Even before the revelation of the Ghost he clearly shows his desire to kill himself to escape this world. Later his melancholy leads him at times into bitter and cynical satire, morbid brooding, and mockery against human corruption. Whether Hamlet's melancholy is the cause of his delay to revenge his father's murder or the consequence of it, one thing is clear: his melancholy is a dangerous sign to Claudius that cannot be overlooked. It is also obvious that his melancholy is certainly related to his delay. Equally important Shakespeare used traits of melancholy in Hamlet as a motivating
force. As Babcock suggests, Shakespeare knew that the readiness to suspicion, which is one of the symptoms of melancholy, would be dramatically useful and would inevitably lead to intrigue.

The evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates several things of considerable importance. It amply shows Shakespeare's thorough acquaintance with the medical and folk doctrine of his time as it relates to melancholy and to the dramatic character types based upon it. The thesis has demonstrated also that in his whole range of treatment of melancholia he employs all the major melancholy types. These for the first time in Shakespearean scholarship have been arranged and categorized in an orderly fashion. Most important, the thesis gives the evidence that Shakespeare moved from rather conventional and even stereotyped treatment of melancholy in the earlier plays to profound and psychologically shrewd delineations in characters such as Brutus and Hamlet. In these more sophisticated and complex renderings of melancholy, the melancholy becomes an integral part of the plot motivation and the thematic development of the play.
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