Université de Montréal

"No Laughing Matter: Shakespearean Melancholy and the Transformation of Comedy"

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Résumé:

Mon projet de thèse démontre le rôle essentiel que tient la mélancolie dans les comédies de Shakespeare. J'analyse sa présence au travers de multiples pièces, des farces initiales, en passant par les comédies romantiques, jusqu'aux tragicomédies qui ponctuent les dernières années de sa carrière. Je dénote ainsi sa métamorphose au sein du genre comique, passant d'une représentation individuelle se rapportant à la théorie des humeurs, à un spectre émotionnel se greffant aux structures théâtrales dans lesquelles il évolue. Je suggère que cette progression s'apparent au cycle de joie et de tristesse qui forme la façon par laquelle Shakespeare dépeint l'émotion sur scène. Ma thèse délaisse donc les théories sur la mélancolie se rapportant aux humeurs et à la psychanalyse, afin de repositionner celle-ci dans un créneau shakespearien, comique, et historique, où le mot « mélancolie » évoque maintes définitions sur un plan social, scientifique, et surtout théâtrale.

Suite à un bref aperçu de sa prévalence en Angleterre durant la Renaissance lors de mon introduction, les chapitres suivants démontrent la surabondance de mélancolie dans les comédies de Shakespeare. A priori, j'explore les façons par lesquelles elle est développée au travers de *La Comedie des Erreurs* et *Peines d'Amour Perdues*. Les efforts infructueux des deux pièces à se débarrasser de leur mélancolie par l'entremise de couplage hétérosexuels indique le malaise que celle-ci transmet au style comique de Shakespere et ce, dès ces premiers efforts de la sorte. Le troisième chapitre soutient que *Beaucoup de Bruit pour Rien* et *Le Marchand de Venise* offrent des exemples parangons du phénomène par lequel des personnages mélancoliques refusent de tempérer leurs comportements afin de se joindre aux célébrations qui clouent chaque pièce. La mélancolie que l'on retrouve ici génère une ambiguïté émotionnelle qui complique sa présence au sein du genre comique. Le chapitre suivant identifie *Comme il vous plaira* et *La Nuit des Rois* comme l'apogée du traitement comique de la mélancolie entrepris par Shakespeare. Je suggère que ces pièces démontrent l'instant où les caractérisations corporelles de la mélancolie ne sont plus de mise pour le style dramatique vers lequel Shakespeare se tourne progressivement.

Le dernier chapitre analyse donc *Périclès, prince de Tyr* et *Le Conte d'Hiver* afin de démontrer que, dans la dernière phase de sa carrière théâtrale, Shakespeare a recours aux taxonomies comiques élucidées ultérieurement afin de créer une mélancolie spectrale qui s'attardent au-delà des pièces qu'elle hante. Cette caractérisation se rapporte aux principes de l'art impressionniste, puisqu'elle promeut l'abandon de la précision au niveau du texte pour favoriser les réponses émotionnelles que les pièces véhiculent. Finalement, ma conclusion démontre que *Les Deux Nobles Cousins* représente la culmination du développement de la mélancolie dans les comédies de Shakespeare, où l'incarnation spectrale du chapitre précèdent atteint son paroxysme. La nature collaborative de la pièce suggère également un certain rituel transitif entre la mélancolie dite Shakespearienne et celle développée par John Fletcher à l'intérieure de la même pièce.

Mots Clés : Shakespeare, mélancolie, comédie, humeurs, émotions, identité, performance.

Summary:

My dissertation argues for a reconsideration of melancholy as an integral component of Shakespearean comedy. I analyse its presence across the comic canon, from early farcical plays through mature comic works, to the late romances that conclude Shakespeare's career. In doing so, I denote its shift from an individual, humoural characterization to a more spectral incarnation that engrains itself in the dramatic fabric of the plays it inhabits. Ultimately, its manifestation purports to the cyclical nature of emotions and the mixture of mirth and sadness that the aforementioned late plays put forth. The thesis repositions Shakespearean melancholy away from humoural, psychoanalytical and other theoretical frameworks and towards an early modern context, where the term "melancholy" channels a plethora of social, scientific, and dramatic meanings. After a brief overview of the prevalence of melancholy in early modern England, the following chapters attest to the pervasiveness of melancholy within Shakespeare's comic corpus, suggesting that, rather than a mere foil to the spirits of mirth and revelry, it proves elemental to comic structures as an agent of dramatic progression that fundamentally alters its generic make-up. I initially consider the ways in which melancholy is developed in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, as an isolated condition, easily dismissible by what I refer to as the symmetrical structure of comic resolution. In both plays, I suggest, the failure to completely eradicate melancholy translates into highly ambiguous comic conclusions that pave the way for subsequent comic works, where melancholy's presence grows increasingly cumbersome. Chapter three reads *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Merchant of Venice* as prime dramatic examples of the phenomenon by which prominent comic characters not only fail to offer a clear cause for their overwhelming melancholy, but refuse to mitigate it for the benefit of the plays at hand. The melancholy found here creates emotional loose ends from which a sense of malaise that will take full effect in later comedies emanates.

In the next chapter, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are held as a landmark in Shakespeare's treatment of comic melancholy. The chapter suggests that these plays complete the break from individual melancholic characterization, which no longer seem suitable to the comic style towards which Shakespeare progressively turns. Consequently, the final chapter undertakes an analysis of *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* to demonstrate the fact that, in his concluding dramatic phase, Shakespeare returns to the comic taxonomies of melancholy in order to foster more forceful, lingering emotional impacts as a form of dramatic impressionism, a relinquishing of details in favour of more powerful emotional responses. In a brief coda, I read *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as the culmination of the dramatic treatment in melancholy in Shakespeare, where the spectral wistfulness that characterized the late plays reaches a breaking point. I suggest that the play bears witness to a passing of the torch, as it were, between the Shakespearean dramatization of melancholy and the one propounded by Fletcher, which was to become the norm within subsequent seventeenth-century tragicomic works.

Key Words: Shakespeare, melancholy, comedy, humours, emotions, identity, performance.

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To Emily,

the light of my life, who shared the mirth and melancholy of such a project with me, and without whom this dissertation would simply not have been possible.

I love you so very much.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: What's so Funny about Humour? An Introduction

A Melancholy Man is one that keeps the worst Company in the World, that is, his own.

Samuel Butler[1]

Melancholy is the crest of courtiers' arms, and now every base companion,
Being in his muble fubles, say he is melancholy.

Licio in *Midas*[2]

In the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly is tricked into thinking

that he is a wealthy Lord who "these fifteen years … have been in a dream" (II, 79).[3] A

servingman informs him that:

> Your honor's players, hearing your amendment,
> Are come to play a pleasant comedy,
> For so your doctors hold it very meet,
> Seeing too much sadness hath congealed your blood,
> And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.
> Therefore they though it good you hear a play
> And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
> Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life (Induction 2, 125-132).

The attendant's speech is couched in medical lexicon as he tells Sly that the play he is about to

witness has been recommended by physicians, so as to offset a medical condition: his blood is

apparently too cold, contaminated with the bodily substance known as melancholy (a

precursor to madness), and he is thus in dire need of mirth and merriment to nurse himself

back to health. More to the point, the passage's conflation of theatre and medicine hinges on

the familiarity of such an association, both on and off the stage. Dramatically, Sly is about to

witness the same play as Shakespeare's audience and the detailed description the servingman

provides, along with Sly's willingness to accept it, suggest that early modern audiences would

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[1] Samuel Butler, *Characters* (1759), ed. Charles W. Daves, Cleveland: P of Case Western Reserve U, 1970, 96-98, 96.

[2] John Lyly, "Midas," *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. Warwick Bond, Vol. 3, Oxford: Clarendon, 1902, 113-169, 155: V, ii. 103-104.

[3] This and all subsequent Shakespearean quotations, unless indicated otherwise, are taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, updated 4th edition, New York: Longman, 1997.

have been aware, at least culturally, of the diagnosis offered by the doctors. In a sense, this remains a jest played on Sly, who gullibly accepts whatever "information" his attendants provide him. The mention of melancholy stands as a throwaway line within the frame for the actual comedy that will subsequently unfold in *Taming* (one in which melancholy does not appear prevalently). Yet, the familiarity with which the passage refers to melancholy and theatre alerts us to a more intricate interplay between these notions, which represents a point of departure for the following analysis of melancholy within Shakespearean comedy.

On its broadest level, my dissertation accounts for the sizeable presence of melancholy in Shakespearean comedy. Indeed, if melancholy, by nature, seems an ideal fit for the sorrowful expectations dictated by tragedy, its presence in comedy (and Shakespearean comedy specifically) proves altogether different; one simply does not expect to encounter so many comic characters professing to be inexorably sad.[4] However, the notion pervades the comic corpus in an astonishing variety of ways, from deceptively casual mentions such as the one discussed above, through more obvious incursions (the melancholy Jaques in *As You Like It*), to perplexing manifestations, such as Antonio's enigmatic utterance of sadness at the onset of *The Merchant of Venice*. These instances have received critical attention over the years, but seldom have they been placed in dialogue with one another, as part of an explicit consideration of their comic functionality, as I do here.

This dissertation undertakes an explicit examination of comic melancholy, situating it as an integral component of Shakespearean comedy rather than its dramatic foil. I identify melancholy as a representational tool for dramatic characters specific to Shakespeare's comic

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[4] I am greatly indebted to my M.A. supervisor, Kevin Pask who, during a graduate seminar at Concordia University, asked why there were so many melancholic characters in Shakespearean comedy. For that and much more, I thank him wholeheartedly.

genre. The tonal dissonance created by the insertion of melancholy into the comic genre, I argue, sustains rather than impedes its progression. I thus read melancholy in broader terms than those afforded by humoural theory, psychoanalysis, or affect studies, in order to expand my focus beyond psychophysiological binaries. The dissertation repositions Shakespearean melancholy specifically within its early modern context, where the notion exists ubiquitously. During the Renaissance, the term "melancholy" channels a plethora of social, scientific, and, more importantly, dramatic meanings that allows it, to borrow from Stephen Greenblatt's terminology, to pervade, navigate, and even circumvent the period's multifarious spheres of knowledge.[5] I illustrate the way in which the concept shifts from an individual, overtly melancholic characterization, such as Don John in *Much Ado about Nothing,* into a more elusive sentiment that impresses itself onto the dramatic fabric of the plays it inhabits. My dissertation thus underlines a comic tradition of Shakespearean melancholy that ultimately ties together depictions in early plays such as *The Comedy of Errors* with the sorrowful undertones that characterize late works such as *The Winter's Tale*. In Shakespeare's final set of plays, I argue, the melancholic mood that persists beyond climactic celebrations finds its root in comic taxonomy rather than in the conventions of tragedy. This transformation purports a movement towards an understanding of emotions as cyclical, where mirth and sadness can succeed each other without conflict, which proves crucial to Shakespearean comedy. Through their sustained engagement with melancholy, the plays foster a perception of these seemingly oppositional emotions as equally integral components of everyday affective response; to be merry and melancholic, the plays suggest, is to be human. This emotional perception crystalizes in Shakespeare's late, tragicomic drama.

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[5] See Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: the Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Berkeley: U of California P, 1988, especially 1-20.

Shakespeare's development of melancholy proves simultaneously anchored in the prevalent scientific discourses of his time and remarkably innovative in the multiple departures he undertakes from this canon. A brief history of the concept of melancholy, from Antiquity to early modernity, will showcase the significant opportunism with which Shakespeare reworks and innovates upon the various socio-scientific understandings of melancholy available to him. Shakespeare effectively hopscotches between several authoritative sources as he fashions his own dramatic characterization of the notion that proves crucial to his developing comic style. Conversely, a survey of the criticism concerned with Shakespearean comedy will underscore the persistent presence of melancholy within the genre. Through subsequent rejections of humoural and psychoanalytic theories of melancholy, I will sketch out what this dissertation terms comic melancholy in Shakespeare, a rich and complex dramatic feature that suggests the distinctiveness of Shakespearean comedy within the early modern period's dramatic output. An overview of other comedic engagements with melancholy, from the humour plays of Ben Jonson to the tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, will pre-emptively attest to the uniqueness with which Shakespeare develops the notion. Ultimately, as the chapter breakdown will suggest, melancholy seeps into Shakespearean comedy throughout his career, evolving along with the plays themselves, until the spectral sense of wistfulness it comes to embody in Shakespeare's final set of plays becomes its prevalent dramatic mood.

'The same humours and inclinations as our predecessors': A brief history of melancholy

As the title of this section suggests, despite changes to scientific and cultural understandings of the affliction, early modern melancholy was entrenched in its classical

Greek heritage.[6] The concept of melancholy, which rose to prominence in Antiquity through

the writings of philosophers and physicians such as Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen, finds its

roots in the theory of humourality, which stipulated that the universe was composed of four

basic elements: fire, air, water, and earth. According to humoural theory, each of these

elements possessed a dominant characteristic (heat, coldness, moisture, and dryness,

respectively). This understanding formed the basis of the classical conception of anatomy, in

which the body was comprised of four humours, substances that embodied a specific

combination of the elements and traits listed above: blood (hot and dry), phlegm (cold and

wet), choler (hot and wet), and melancholy (cold and dryness). The principal humoural

doctrine was that of balance, both within the body itself and in relation to the external

universe. Humoural harmony signified "a concordance in the movements of air and fluid

[where] everything is in sympathy."[7] The body was thought to contain various other

substances and tissues such as bones, nerves, but the interplay among the four humours,

during which "the nutriment becomes altered in the veins by the innate heat, [where] blood is

produced when it is in moderation, and the other humours when it is not in proper

proportion,"[8] represented a central tenet of human health. The preponderance of a given

humour would determine a person's overall temperament. Melancholy, or black bile,[9] was

thought to produce a sorrowful demeanour.[10]

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[6] The quote is Robert Burton's who writes that when it comes to melancholy, "we are of the same humours and inclinations as our predecessors were; you shall find us all alike, much at one, we and our sons," "Democritus Junior to the Reader," *The Anatomy of Melanchol*y, ed. Holbrook Jackson, New York: New York Review, 2001, 13-123, 53.

[7] Galen, "On the Natural Faculties," in *Hippocrates/Galen*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, trans. Arthur John Brock, London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952, 167-215, 175: I, 13.

[8] Galen, 193.

[9] The word is an amalgamation of the classical Greek words for black (*melan*) and bile (*choler*).

[10] The other dispositions were sanguine, phlegmatic, or choleric. Lawrence Babb writes that "according to Renaissance physiology, the temperatures and humidities of men's bodies differ widely. The sanguine

Consequently, an abundance of the black bile by itself did not infer an illness. Greek thinkers effectively differentiated between what they deemed a natural state of melancholy (an abundance of the black bile within the body) and its unnatural, diseased manifestation. Classical anatomical philosophy conceded that perfect humoural balance constituted a theoretical ideal rather than a physical reality. According to humoural theory, a disease of melancholy "occur[ed] when a more extreme imbalance interfere[d] with the proper functioning of the digestive system, organs, and other parts of the body."[11] Humoural distempers resulted from the excessive heating of a given humour, which would produce noxious vapors that could harm the brain, a process referred to as adustion.[12] It was believed that the "intense local heat"[13] stemming from extremes of passions such as anger or despair had "the capacity through the heat they generate to burn the natural humors of the body, thereby changing them into adust states [creating] vapors and fumes; like smoke from a furnace, that circulate through the body.[14] Evidently, classical medical discourses were mainly concerned with the alleviation of the disease of melancholy rather than its natural humourous state.

Despite being discussed extensively in the classical period, melancholy came to be associated mainly with two writers. Galen's work on anatomy provided the underpinnings of a

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complexion is considered the most desirable, primarily because heat and moisture are the qualities of life. The melancholy temperament is usually considered the least enviable, for cold and dryness are opposite to the vital qualities," *The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642*, East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1965, 9.

[11] David F. Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1992.

[12] Hoeniger writes, for instance, that "passions like extreme grief, which produces excess melancholy humour, cause the heart to contract by its cold, so that being in urgent need of blood and spirit, the heart draws them away from the body's extremities and the face grows pale as a result … shortly before death, the blood and spirits rush back into the heart in order to aid it in its battle against the cold," 149.

[13] Galen, *On the Affected Parts*, trans. and ed. Rudolph E. Siegel, New York: Krager, 1975, 90.

[14] Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, "Jacques Ferrand and the Tradition of Love Melancholy in Western Culture," in Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on* Lovesickness, eds. and trans. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, New York: Syracuse UP, 1990, 1-202, 115.

humoural understanding of melancholy,[15] while Aristotle's writing introduced the idea that

melancholy beckoned intellectual proficiency and creativity. Combined, their works delineate

the primary doctrines of melancholy that were to eventually form the core of the early modern

understanding of the humour. From antiquity on, melancholy was most commonly associated

with the unfounded elicitation of fear and sorrow. Galen writes that "although each

melancholic patient acts quite differently than the others, all of them exhibit fear or

despondency."[16] Beyond this connection, the disease of melancholy proved difficult to

characterize since it channelled an overwhelming plethora of symptoms and putative causes

that rendered any treatment onerous; a multitude of factors, ranging from diet and exercise,

through natural elements such as air or flora, to a penchant for vice or luxury was thought to

have an influence on melancholy.[17] In his quintessential *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert

Burton epitomises such a feature when he asserts that "the Tower of Babel never yielded such

confusion of tongues, as this Chaos of Melancholy doth variety of symptoms."[18] Though the

prescribed remedies were as varied as the causes and symptoms, they mostly inferred a

physical cure revolving around the evacuation or purgation of humoural excesses.

   Though Aristotle's conceptualization of melancholy, like Galen's, is rooted in

humouralism, it distinguishes itself due to its insistence that the condition fostered creativity

and genius. The idea is encapsulated in Aristotle's oft quoted interrogation in *Problem XXX*:

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[15] The debt to Hippocrates that Galen incurs in his discourse on humoural theory is sometimes overlooked. See R. J. Hankinson, "Philosophy and Nature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. R. J. Hankinson, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008, 201-241, 211. In the same volume, Teun Tieleman concurs by remarking that "in synthesizing these various tradition [Galen] elaborated a powerful and in many respects original concept of medical procedure, powerful enough to put an end to the disagreement between the medical schools of his day and to pave the way for the modern concept of a unitary science," "Methodology," 49-65, 62-63.

[16] Galen, *On the Affected Parts*, 90.

[17] See Galen, "On the Causes of Diseases," in Ian Johnston, *Galen on Diseases and Symptoms*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, 157-179.

[18] Burton, I, 397.

"why is it that all those men who have become extraordinary in philosophy, politics, poetry, or the arts are obviously melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are seized by the illness that comes from black bile?"[19] This idea of the melancholic genius hinged on a distinction between the humour in its natural state and the exacerbated, ailing type of melancholy. Aristotle concludes his discussion of melancholy with the remark that

> because the power of the black bile is uneven, melancholic people are uneven… it produces certain qualities of character in us. But since it is possible that what is uneven is well tempered and in a fine condition, and when it should be the disposition is hotter and then again cold, or the opposite owing to there being an excess, all melancholic people are extraordinary, not owing to disease, but owing to nature.[20]

For Aristotle, the natural state of melancholy does not infer an ailment that occasionally plagues the philosopher or artists. Rather, as Julia Kristeva suggests, melancholy is understood by Aristotle as the "very nature [and] ethos" of the thinking man.[21]

While significant scientific progress occurred during the following centuries, the classical understanding of melancholy continued to resonate through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance. Its influence is easily identifiable in the work of Avicenna, perhaps the most famous proponent of melancholy in the Middle Ages, whose *Canon of Medicine* (c.1170-1187) "illustrates the way humoral theory and the symptom descriptions of melancholia traveled between ancient and medieval (western European) medicine by way of Arabic medicine."[22] Though Galenism came under attack during the early modern period, notably

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[19] Aristotle, "Problem XXX," *Problems: Books 20-38*, ed. and trans. Robert Mayhem, Harvard: Cambridge UP, 2011, 273-312, 277. As Mayhem mentions in the introduction, though Aristotle's authorship of the Problems remains debatable, "the author was clearly familiar with Aristotle's scattered remarks on melancholy," 275. In any case, early modern writers would have most likely attributed "Problem XXX" to Aristotle.

[20] Aristotle, 295.

[21] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia UP, 1989, 7.

[22] Jennifer Radden, "Avicenna," *The Nature of Melancholy from Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. Jennifer Radden, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000: 75-78, 75. Avicenna is the Latinised name of Arab physician Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā (980-

because of the rise of Paracelsian medicine,[23] it remained, as Gail Kern Paster puts it, a

"dominant physiological paradigm,"[24] a widespread cultural construct that endured well into

the seventeenth century in spite of a general forsaking of Galen as a medical authority. Rather,

early modern Galenism came to represent "a discursive field … not contained strictly, or even

loosely, by Galen's work, but rather by the aspects of this work that are developed, qualified,

and—in the process of legitimization—termed Galenic."[25] Likewise, though the Aristotelian

conception of melancholy was somewhat cast aside during the Middle Ages, the idea was

reintroduced into medical discourses by fifteenth-century Italian physician Marsilio Ficino,

whose work exerted considerable influential in England.[26] The English Renaissance developed

an immense fascination with the concept of melancholy, as evidenced by the multitude of

medical and philosophical treatises pertaining to the affliction that were produced in the

period. Early modern explorations of melancholy relied on a blending of Galenic and

Aristotelian philosophies, being couched in the humoural terminology of purgation and

1037). Radden also traces the evolution of melancholy through the works of John Cassian (ca. 360 – 435), 69-74, and Hiddelgard of Bingen (1098-1179), 79-85, before discussing its early modern history.

[23] Vivian Nutton explains that the downfall of Galenism began in the Renaissance where medical progress undermined much of its theoretical application and it "became the symbol of useless therapeutic conservatism, as expensive as it was ineffective, the subject of satire on stage and in literature," "The Fortunes of Galen," in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. R. J. Hankinson, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008, 355-390, 378.

[24] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*, Ithaca (NY): Cornell UP, 1993, 2. The medical theories of Paracelsus (1493-1541) were held as the antipode of Galenism during the Renaissance since it eschewed the model of the four humours along with several other Galenic precepts. See Hoeniger, 117-127.

[25] Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004, 11. Hoeniger notes that the loss of several texts in the Middle Ages lead to a reshaping of Galen within the early modern period, 72.

[26] Radden ascribes to Ficino two major contributions to the early modern understanding of melancholy. First, she identifies his *Three Books of Life* as "the first work to revive the Aristotelian link between brilliance and melancholy, a link that, due to Ficino's influence," she writes, "was to become a resounding theme throughout Renaissance and later writing on melancholy." Secondly, she mentions how Ficino's work "was distinctive in developing the astrological significance of melancholy, particularly its relation to the planet Saturn," "Ficino," *The Nature of Melancholy from Aristotle to Kristeva*, ed. Jennifer Radden, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000: 87-93, 87. For a discussion of the astrological associations of melancholy with Saturn, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofksy and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, Cambridge: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964.

balance, while repeatedly inferring intellectual depth and ingenuity. Among these treatises, the

works of Timothy Bright and Robert Burton, as well as translations of French studies by

André Du Laurens and Jacques Ferrand, offer a concise overview the prevalent melancholic

discourses that circulate in early modern England at the time when Shakespeare writes his

comedies.

The majority of critics agree that the Renaissance represents a "golden age of

Melancholy,"[27] where virtually every medical theory addressed the issue in some fashion. The

statement proved particularly salient in England, where a "substantial appetite for treatises

dealing with melancholy"[28] was to inform much of the period's literary output.[29] This fixation

with diagnosing and treating melancholy, apparent as early as Thomas Elyot's *Castel of Helth*

(1539), became a staple of the English medical corpus. Although foreign discourses on the

subject (such as works by Ficino or Du Laurens) were eagerly translated and read, domestic

studies of melancholy proved far more popular and eventually came to play a crucial role in

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[27] Jean Starobinski, *A History of the Treatment of Melancholy from Earliest Times to 1900*, Basle: Geigy, 1962, 38. Quoted in Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Madness in Early Modern England*, Burlington (VT): Ashgate, 2007, 1. As Schmidt points out, however, other periods also laid similar claims: "the spiritual and moral analysis of melancholy continued to be articulated after the Renaissance and into the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries," he writes, "which have been singled out as constituting yet another 'Age of Melancholy,'" 3. See Cecil A. Moore, *Backgrounds of English Literature 1700-1760*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1953, 179-238. Julia Schiesari argues that the Renaissance period and our contemporary setting represent "the historical boundaries of a great age of melancholia … whose edges are coterminous with the historic rise and demise of 'the subject' as the organizing principle of knowledge and power," *Gendering Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992, 2.
[28] Beecher and Ciavolella, 15. The authors list a plethora of treatises that enjoyed tremendous popularity in England during the period (in addition to Ferrand's), such as Levinus Lemnius' *The Touchstone of Complexions* (1576) or Burton's *Anatomy (*1621).
[29] In his nineteenth-century study of the comic, Baudelaire remarked: "*pour trouver du comique féroce et très féroce, il faut passer la manche et visiter les royaumes brumeux du spleen*," [one must cross the English Channel and visit the foggy kingdoms of spleen in order to encounter a ferocious kind of comedy], *Curiosités Esthétiques, L'Art Romantique, et Autres Œuvres Critiques (1846)*, ed. Henri Lemaitre, Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962, 256-257.

appropriating melancholy within specifically English norms.[30] Adam Kitzes argues that

treatises such as Timothy Bright's were instrumental to the positioning of the humour as a

valid object of scientific inquiry, a movement, he contends, that contributed to the anglicising

of melancholy and the concomitant development of a budding sense of nationhood.[31] This

added sense of agency points to the dual framework of early modern medical works, in which

a careful scientific approach often dovetails with literary aspirations; in addition to their

factuality and educational quality, early modern medical volumes also sought to capitalize on

the immense popularity of melancholy in England. Treatises were thus partly metaphorical,

aiming to "entertain as well as instruct."[32] Such a structure contributed to the eventual

dislocation of melancholy from its purely humoural understanding within literary

representations of the concept. As will be discussed later on, most writers of the period—

Shakespeare first among them—similarly straddle medical and literary fields when reworking

the notion.

Both Bright's *Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) and Du Laurens' *Discourse of the*

Preseruation of the Sight (c. 1594, translated 1599) build upon Galenic notions of melancholy

to offer exhaustive portraits of English melancholy. Written for an unnamed personal friend,

Bright's discourse oscillates between a medical compendium of the sources, symptoms, and

cures for melancholy and a theological discourse on the properties of the soul. Bright

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[30] As Schmidt writes, "the History of the treatment of melancholy is thus in many ways a history of English culture more broadly, and it offers a window into, *inter alia*, the nature of the Elizabethan movement," 6.

[31] Adam H. Kitzes, *The Politic of Melancholy from Spenser to Milton*, New York: Routledge, 2006, 27-31. Kitzes also mentions that the translation of André Du Laurens' work on melancholy exerted a similar influence in England (though to a lesser extent). As Kitzes further explains, for Bright, "to write about health was to demonstrate that health was in fact a matter of defining a specifically national ethos," 31.

[32] Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy: Studies in Literary Treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England*, London: Routledge and Keagan & Paul, 1971, 15. Marion A. Wells points to the frequent references to literary works in medical studies, remarking that "even literary texts that have no pretensions to scientific or didactic status appear as corroborating 'evidence' in the medical exploration of the disease of love," *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and the Early Modern Romance*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007, 3.

describes melancholy as the "fullest of variety of passions [causing] strange symptoms of fancy and affection"[33] before positioning his anatomical model within an explicitly dogmatic framework primarily concerned with the soul, as the closest connective site between mankind and God. For him, the detriment that melancholy can inflict on the soul proves worse than any form of bodily harm it may cause.[34] Consequently, despite an extensive display of medical knowledge, the treatise identifies divine intervention as the overriding cure for melancholy, where faith leads the physician to a successful treatment and spiritual health takes precedence over physical well-being. In his concluding remarks, Bright conflates Christian doctrine and medical prognostication, asserting that the "discrete application of the wise physician (who is made of God for the health of men) shall bring [God's help] unto you … for medicine is like a tool and instrument of the sharpest edge, which not wisely guided nor handled with that cunning which thereto appertaineth, may bring present peril instead of health."[35] In other words, purges, diets, and concoctions might help to alleviate melancholic symptoms, but the ideal remedy is to be found in virtue and piety.

Though it does not rely on such a marked theological approach, Du Laurens' treatise resembles Bright's in the sense that it presents itself as both a medical *oeuvre* intended for a specific patient and an exhaustive survey of melancholy aimed at a larger readership.[36] His

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[33] Timothy Bright, *A treatise of melancholy containing the causes thereof, and reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies: with the physicke cure, and spirituall consolation for such as haue thereto adioyned afflicted conscience*, London: 1613, *Early English books online*, accessed March 6th, 2013, 123, eebo.chadwyck.com.

[34] According to him, the soul is "the substance thereof …most pure and perfect, and far off removed from corruption, so it is indued with faculties of like quality, pure, immortal and answerable to so divine a subject, and carrieth with it, and instinct science, gotten neither by precept, nor practice, but naturally therewith furnished," 51.

[35] Bright, 323.

[36] In his dedication to the Duchess, Du Laurens explains how, as her personal physician, he has witnessed, diagnosed and treated "three of the most violent and extraordinary diseases that ever man hath seen," and managed to bring them down to "three ordinary diseases," hence the subject matter of the three sections that

discussion of melancholy relies heavily on classical tradition in observing the effects of the condition on the tripartite structure of human faculties (imagination, understanding, and memory).[37] More so than Bright, Du Laurens attests to the increasing popularity of melancholy for an English readership by providing detailed listings of particularly astonishing symptoms as a means of entertaining his readership. At the onset of chapter seven ("Histories of certain melancholic persons, which have had strange imaginations"), Du Laurens writes that "it behoves me now in this chapter (to the end that I may somewhat delight the reader) to set down some examples of such as have had the most fantastical and foolish imaginations of all others."[38] Thus, Bright and Du Laurens make significant contributions to the cultivation of melancholy as an object of interest that transcends both scientific and literary circles.

Jaques Ferrand's *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (1623, translated c.1640) and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) also exert a tremendous influence on early modern conceptions of melancholy. Though their publication dates exceed Shakespeare's lifetime, they represent a synthesis of ideas about melancholy that were circulating widely in early modern England throughout the sixteenth century. Ferrand's work is remarkable in that it focuses explicitly on the condition of lovesickness, providing an exhaustive study of the notion, whose "encyclopaedic scope … allows this work to stand over all contenders as the medical summa in the Renaissance on the disease of erotic love."[39] Ferrand posits that

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are to follow, "Dedication to Duchess of Uzez, and Countess of Tonerra," *A discourse of the preseruation of the sight: of melancholike diseases; of rheumes, and of old age,* trans Richard Surphlet, London, 1599, Early English Books Online, accessed March 1st, 2013, eebo.chadwyck.com.

[37] Du Laurens' treatise also provides a detailed examination of multiple sites of proliferation of the melancholic disease: the brain, the spleen, and within the whole body more generally, 72-81.

[38] Du Laurens, 101.

[39] Beecher and Ciavolella, 6. The authors note the influence of Du Laurens' work on Ferrand's treatise in this regard. They offer a brief survey of Ferrand's large bank of sources in piecing together his encyclopaedic treatise, notably in the "air of balance and authority based on silent choices and private reasoning" that characterize his treatment of love-melancholy, 104.

lovesickness supplants any other type of melancholic disease in its scope and noxiousness. He

maintains a primarily medical focus in diligently expounding the methods of diagnosing,

treating, and eventually curing lovesickness.[40] The end result is a thoroughly early modern

view of love-melancholy that combines a robust classical framework with innovative scientific

approaches.[41] Nevertheless, in its strict differentiation of natural and deviant incarnations of

melancholy, its caution against idleness, and its final praise of "the honing and perfection of

wisdom,"[42] Ferrand's treatise adopts an overall moralistic view of melancholy that recalls the

one propounded by Bright and Du Laurens, which similarly blurs the boundaries between

scientific, spiritual, and literary intentions.

　　With five editions during his lifetime and nearly a dozen throughout the seventeenth

century, Burton's *Anatomy* remains the epitome of the early modern literary enthrallment with

melancholy.[43] "I write of melancholy, by being busy to avoid melancholy," Burton famously

declares early on, "[since] there is no greater cause of melancholy than idleness." [44]

Immensely popular in England, *The Anatomy* delivers a gargantuan breadth of discourse that

incorporates all the aforementioned sources, including lengthy sections on romantic and

religious forms of melancholy. It proves encyclopaedic in the exhaustive collection of sources

and examples produced in its extensive delineation of the rampant presence of melancholy in

seventeenth-century society. For Burton, melancholy is a national concern that extends beyond

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[40] "The many vexations and perturbations that torture the soul of the passionate lover," Ferrand begins his second chapter, "bring about greater harms to men than all the other affections of the mind," "Of Lovesickness, or Erotic Melancholy," in Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, eds. Donald A Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella, New York: Syracuse UP, 1990, 203-366, 228.

[41] Beecher and Ciavolella note that the innovations of Ferrand's work concern primarily "the pharmaceutical treatments specifically intended for love melancholy," 135.

[42] Ferrand, 366.

[43] Following the original 1621 edition, *The Anatomy* was reprinted in 1624, 1628, 1632, and 1638 during Burton's lifetime. Six additional editions came out in the second half of the century (1651, 1653, three in 1660, and 1676), *The English Short Title Catalogue*, accessed April 17th, 2013, estc.bl.uk.

[44] Burton, "Democritus Junior to the Reader," 20.

the individual, evidenced by the fact, as he writes, that "kingdoms, provinces, and politic

bodies are likewise sensible and subject to this disease."[45] Such a focus accounts for the larger

preoccupation with both social and political reform in Burton's work.[46] Simultaneously, the

work appears introspective in its focus on the scholarly form of melancholy from which

Burton professes to be suffering. *The Anatomy* is thus no different than contemporaneous

treatises in the fluctuation between literary and scientific intentions that it betrays. The fact

that the overall study is embedded in a fictional narration (by "Democritus Junior") alerts us to

the inherent dangers of treating Burton's work as a straightforward encyclopaedia of

melancholy. It remains, however, the most renowned and sustained engagement with the issue

within the early modern period and beyond. In addition to providing an invaluable wealth of

information on the complex and often dizzying subject, it stands as a symbol of the

"remarkable stability" of melancholy discourse in the period.[47] Thus, early modern

melancholy proved synchronously constant in its scientific underpinnings, and yet

fundamentally unstable in its descriptiveness, acting as a referent for a whole gamut of

afflictions, from severe mental disturbances, through physical ailments, to being synonymous

with a more mundane sense of sadness.

It remains difficult to ascertain which, if any, of these treatises Shakespeare might have

read or drawn from explicitly in fashioning his own dramatic interpretation of the humour.

David Hoeniger assumes that Shakespeare would have been familiar with Bright's work and,

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[45] Burton, "Democritus Junior to the Reader," 79.

[46] For a thorough analysis of such overtones in *The Anatomy*, see Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.

[47] According to Gowland, such resiliency is due not only "to the generally undisputed status of Neo-Galenism institutionally sanctioned medical theory and practice, but was the result of both the restoration of Greek medical texts by humanist philologists, and of the endeavours of learned physicians in reconciling contradictions and reintegrating the teachings of these works to the existing synthesis," 96.

concurrently, with Thomas Wright's *Passions of the Minde* (1601), which examines the wide-ranging effects engendered by various extremes of passion.[48] Concurrently, Carol Falvo Heffernan identifies allusions to both Bright and Du Laurens in *Hamlet*,[49] intimating Shakespeare's familiarity with both works. While it is useful to identify particular sources, the treatises discussed here remain representative of the broader social understanding of melancholy. In this sense, Shakespeare could have been familiar with the discourses on melancholy without necessarily having read specific works.[50] More to the point, while medical allusions in Shakespeare "are frequently so detailed, subtle and accurate, however, as to suggest that [his] knowledge of medicine went beyond simply picking up the general notions of their day,"[51] his dramatic treatment of melancholy disjoints the notion from such scientific explorations. Though he never endorses either as a dominant doctrine for melancholic dramatizations, Shakespeare positions the writings of Aristotle and Galen on the same level as the various early modern medical treatises on the subject, as offering easily recognizable signposts of melancholy that can be subsequently adapted to suit precise dramatic requirements. The clearest echo is to be found, perhaps, in the ongoing conflation of scientific and literary aspirations that characterize the medical works discussed here. Shakespearean comedy undertakes a similar dovetailing in its depictions of melancholy, one that highlights

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[48] Hoeniger, 50-51. Wright's study of extremes of passions develops along a Galenic model which argues that when "these affections are stirring in our mindes, they alter the humours of our bodies, causing some passion or alteration in them," *The Passions of the Minde*, London: 1601, *Early English Books Online*, Accessed April 22nd, 2013, 13, eebo.chadwyck.com. Though he does not deal explicitly with melancholy, Wright identifies eleven basic passions, three of which (sadness, despair, and fear) can be thought of as being the "passions of melancholy," Hoeniger, 165.

[49] Carol Falvo Heffernan, *The Melancholic Muse: Chaucer, Shakespeare and Early Medicine*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1995. For Bright's influence, see 125-129; for Du Laurens', see 129-135.

[50] As Hoeniger writes, "one can assume that Shakespeare learned orally of what he knew about physiology, illness salves, recipes, and other therapeutic means. Not only did the Elizabethan inherit traditions of folk medicine, but many simpler notions and practices derived from learned sources had found their way into popular literature and become part of common speech," 32.

[51] Heffernan, 3.

the limitations of a strictly humoural approach to the issue. As the following chapters will demonstrate, comic melancholy in Shakespeare can seldom be accommodated through medical prognosis and cure. Its relationship to the dramatic genre it occupies, in spite of its seemingly antithetic nature to comedy, proves intrinsic to the process of characterization.

'How canst thou part sadness and melancholy'?

Armado's question to his page Mote in *Love's Labor's Lost* (I, ii. 7), quoted above introduces an inherent conundrum to a consideration of melancholy in Shakespearean comedy: are all references to sadness to be considered as melancholy? Certainly, not every utterance of sorrow in comedy immediately translates into a melancholic affectation that poses a serious threat to the comic spirit. If the genre can be conceived, as Northrop Frye's explains it, as "a structure embodying a variety of moods, the majority of which are comic in the sense of festive or funny, but a minority of which, in any well-constructed comedy, are not,"[52] then a sorrowful premise can not only exist in comedy, but also serve to intensify the eventual celebratory climax (as it often does in Shakespeare).[53] On some level, early modern dramatists use terms such as melancholy, sorrow, or sad somewhat interchangeably; they all belong to a

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[52] Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, New York: Columbia UP, 1965, 92.

[53] Conversely, though this project revolves on the inherent humour in humours, I wish to avoid for my readers the sort of confusion that brought on blank stares from colleagues and acquaintances when I mentioned that I was interested in working on humour in comedy. For the purpose of clarity, I will use the term "humour" only in reference to matters of humourality, so as to not confound it with its alternative connotation (as a synonym for comedy). The latter connotation actually emerges from the concept of bodily humours near the beginning of the 1680s, where 'humour' begins to refer to "that quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement; oddity, jocularity, facetiousness, comicality, fun." Humour could also refer to one's ability to comprehend or appreciate such amusement, hence the expression "possessing a sense of humour," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "humour," accessed Tuesday, April 3rd, 2013, oed.com.

larger lexical field communicating sadness.[54] This practice develops concurrently with a

widespread reliance on humoural language as a dramatic tool of self-representation. Hence,

Mistress Ford's question to her husband "why art thou / Melancholy?" (II, i. 41-42) in *The*

Merry Wives of Windsor and Antonio's declaration at the onset of the *Merchant of Venice* that

he "know[s] not why I am so sad" (I, i, 1) can be understood to refer to the same emotion. Yet

Ford's question is soon forgotten, while Antonio's unresolved melancholy, as I argue later,

represents one of the play's salient features. Though the word "melancholy" and its

derivations are used extensively within the comic canon,[55] I focus on instances that carry a

larger function that an inferring of sadness would suggest. My dissertation is interested in the

unequivocal examples of melancholy as much as in its more understated allusions to the extent

that they operate as an essential cog in the mechanism of Shakespearean comedy, reflective of

the genre's various permutations over the years. More often than not, this infers an unnatural

melancholy that ultimately problematizes the comedies in which it develops. Within this

frame, I use the lexical fields of melancholy and sadness somewhat reciprocally. Conversely,

in later chapters (particularly chapter five), I rely on 'wistfulness' as a synonym of the more

spectral sense of melancholy that pervades Shakespeare's final set of plays since the term's

association with mournful longing represents this last notion particularly well.

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[54] Both classical and early modern scientific discourses elaborated a hierarchy that differentiated between the various categories pertaining to emotions (passions, humours, temperaments, dispositions, etc). For a detailed examination of Renaissance physiology and psychology, see Babb, 1-20. For a discussion of the various lexical and theoretical fields related to emotions, see Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, "Reading the Early Modern Passions," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 1-20.

[55] Melancholy and its derivatives (such as melancholies) appear over forty times in Shakespearean comedy, slightly less than the word "sad" (fifty-two occurrences), *The Shakespeare Concordance*, accessed April 15th, 2013, opensourceshakespeare.org.

The idea that Shakespearean comedy contains an inherent duality of mirthful and sorrowful elements is far from a novel one. As early as 1765, Samuel Johnson remarked that "Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind, but in one composition. Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter."[56] This polarity of affect, predicated on a distinction between amiable and antagonistic characters, is central to most examinations of Shakespearean comedy. The archetypical works of C. L. Barber and Northrop Frye on the subject brought about an understanding of Shakespeare's comic genre as inherently exclusionary, a dramatic world where the driving comic force distinguishes between characters who embrace festivity and those who oppose it. Despite the restrictiveness of such a frame, the readings of Shakespearean comedy that Frye and Barber provide shaped much of the subsequent criticism of the genre. Barber's study of festivity as the linchpin of comic structure has brought several of the keystones of Shakespearean comedy to the critical forefront. His elaboration of the "the saturnalian pattern [as] a basic movement which can be summarized in the formula, through release to clarification"[57] has provided the original caveat on which to interpret Shakespearean comedy as the opposition of mirthful and pessimistic forces. Conversely, Northrop Frye's study of the communal dimension of comedy, where much (if not all) of the genre's success rests on the establishment of the new social order by the end of a play, provides an additional lens through which to examine seemingly disparate comic works. According to Frye, "comedy ends at a point when a new society is crystallized,

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[56] Samuel Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare's Plays*, Whitefish (MT): Kessinger, 2010, 9.
[57] C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedies: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Context*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1959, 4.

usually by the marriage or betrothal of hero and heroine. The birth of the new society," he

adds, "is symbolized by a closing festive scene."[58]

Within each of these seminal models of Shakespearean comedy, melancholic

characters are perceived inevitably as nemeses of festivity. Barber writes of the Jaques in *As*

You Like It that his "factitious melancholy, which critics have made too much of as a

'psychology,' serves primarily to set him at odds both with society and with Arden and so

motivate contemplative mockery."[59] There is nothing wrong *per se* with such a reading of the

character, but it drastically overlooks melancholy's incredible potency in the play. Likewise,

Shakespearean melancholics fall within the category of characters whom Frye terms *idiotes*,

and who represent "the focus of the anticomic mood [and] withdrawal from the comic

society."[60] Frye maintains that such characters hinder or threaten the genre's self-discovery

process. As he explains, an *idiotes*

> is usually isolated from the action by being the focus of the anticomic mood, and so
> may be the technical villain, like Don John, the butt, like Malvolio and Falstaff, or
> simply opposed by temperament to festivity, like Jaques. Although the villainous, the
> ridiculous, and the misanthropic are closely associated in comedy, there is enough
> variety of motivation to indicate that *idiotes* is not a character type, like the clown,
> though typical features recur, but a structural device that may use a variety of
> characters.

Though it also proves too diminutive, Frye's model gets us closer to a proper understanding of

the function of melancholic characters in Shakespearean comedy. As will become clear in

later chapters, with the exception of Falstaff, the characters listed in the passage above are all

connected to an exploration of melancholy within their respective plays, suggesting that comic

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[58] Frye, 72.

[59] Barber, 228.

[60] Frye, 93. Frye's model is also inherently Galenic, in the sense that it advocates for comedy's fostering of self-discovery and the advent of "a kind of self-knowledge which releases a character from the bondage of his humour" and allows him or her to integrate the newly formed society, 79.

melancholy in Shakespeare, on some level, may be conceived of as a "structural device [within a] variety of characters." Still, the inherent binary of inclusion and exclusion present in these understandings of Shakespearean comedy fail to properly delineate the function of melancholy, which is never easily or successfully excluded from comic celebrations.

Most considerations of comic characters that follow Frye and Barber seek to designate them as either facilitating or impeding comic resolution. Harry Levin contends that comedy consists of a competition between "playboys" and "killjoys."[61] In his own celebrated examination of Shakespearean comedy, Kenneth Muir establishes a further distinction between noxious characters he deems to be simply undesirable, the ones that are "tacitly excluded from the general harmony," and the "evil ones who threaten the comic resolution"[62] For critics such as Richard Levin, it is this particular dichotomy that also drives the genre. As part of a system of competition for social reward, Levin writes that Shakespearean comedy sets up an opposition "between socially ostracized or marginal characters and the predominant society [where a] moral blurring tends to render ambiguous the affective structure of the comedies."[63] In each of these readings, melancholic characters are disregarded somewhat, erased into the larger category of anticomic foils.[64] Shakespearean melancholics transcend such classification, however, since they permeate numerous groupings within in the plays; they are men, women, merchants, dukes, jesters, heiress, lovers, heroes, or villains.

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[61] Harry Levin, *Playboys and Killjoys: An Essay on the Theory & Practice of Comedy*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987, 40-41.

[62] Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*, Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1979, 52.

[63] Richard A. Levin, *Love and Society in Shakespearean Comedies: a Study of Dramatic Form and Content*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985, 15. Levin's interpretation roots the comedies in the socio-historical context of early modern England as well, noting that, at the time, "only a few privileged positions existed [and] the possibility of exclusion and the fear of exclusion were correspondingly greater than they are now … To protect against this self-doubt," he writes, "characters locate a critical lack in another person; he should be excluded, and not they themselves," 27.

[64] Muir, for example, writes of Jaques that his "melancholy outlook is contradicted by the play as a whole, as well as by the situation which evokes it," 86.

Jeremy Lopez's concept of a failing comic resolution in Shakespeare offers a more potent avenue through which to consider these melancholic characters. Lopez writes that "a resolution involving reconciliation and inclusion is inevitable at the end of a comedy, but the inclusion is never complete: it is the presence of characters who stand outside of the resolution … that makes the resolution meaningful."[65] Each of the readings examined here communicates the idea that noxious characters represent an ideal foil to comic characters who manage to emerge 'victorious,' but Lopez's argument indicates that this 'triumph' requires a reminder of what has been evacuated, so as to heighten the celebrations. It also identifies this last notion as a self-defeating endeavour, the absence of certain characters from the comic conclusion amounting to a sense of comic failure. Lopez concludes that

> the interest these plays show in the extra-comic possibilities of characters like Jaques or Malvolio or Caliban is what makes Shakespeare's comedies feel heavier, less comic than the plays of his contemporaries … characters, whose bizarrely wrong energy is allowed to pervade the play to the point where they have an interpretative effect disproportionate to what the genre would seem to require of them.[66]

The unique position held by melancholic characters in Shakespearean comedy echoes Lopez's concept, since their very presence problematizes the comic genre's drive for resolution. Though the need to eradicate their affliction inevitably manifests itself, the ambiguous success of such a process testifies to the complexity of the melancholy with which Shakespeare endows his comedies. An explicit consideration of melancholy repositions this failure as necessary dramatic instilling of emotional ambiguity.

This dissertation argues that melancholic characters are emblematic of the blend of mirthful and unhappy elements that characterize Shakespearean comedy in general. It

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[65] Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, 190.
[66] Lopez, 210-211.

contends that the genre finds its nexus in tonal dissonance, in the symbiotic conflation of comic and uncomic elements. In other words, if comic scenes can populate Shakespeare's tragedy and history plays—the porter scene in *Macbeth* or Falstaff's involvement in the history plays, for example—the reciprocal association may hold true as well, if only on the level of dramatic make-up. This thwarting of generic structures, what Lopez identities as the "thematization of laughter by means of ostentatiously introducing into its movement episodes that are not funny but are structurally presented as though they are,"[67] advocates that some elements found in Shakespearean comedy are not intrinsically comic, *nor do they need to be*. By considering Shakespearean comedy as an amalgamation of different thematic and tonal fragments, the understanding of comic melancholy as a valid mode of self-representation concretizes itself.

Why so serious? Melan-Comic Characterizations in Shakespeare

Melancholic characters in Shakespearean comedy have received a substantial amount of critical attention over the years, but this effort has been mainly undertaken within larger interpretations of specific plays. Most readings of *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, offer a cause for Antonio's sadness, but do so in a manner that betrays a certain critical anxiousness to address the issue and move on to other concerns. In such analyses, melancholy becomes a stepping stone to various other lines of inquiry. I do not necessarily reject this interpretive strategy, but seek to move beyond it by considering the functionality of melancholy within the *genre* of Shakespearean comedy, rather than within individual works.[68] My interpretation of

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[67] Lopez, 5.
[68] One of the only explicit studies of melancholy in Shakespeare I have come across is William I. D. Scott's *Shakespeare's Melancholics*, London: Mills & Boon, 1962, which is built on the contention that "Shakespeare

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comic melancholy in Shakespeare echoes Katherine Maus' assertion that early modern drama proves "radically synecdochic" in its encouragement of "theatregoers' capacity to use partial and limited presentation as a basis for conjecture about what is undisplayed or undisplayable."[69] Maus' definition of dramatic representations of inwardness as a dyad comprised of "an unexpressed interior and a theatricalized exterior"[70] offers an interesting lens through which to consider the manifold melancholic characters that populate the comic stage. In most cases, their melancholy appears as a moniker of an exteriorized theatricality for which they clamour insistently. Though they do not appear as reticent as Iago or Hamlet to divulge their inner selves, the opacity with which they describe their melancholy is concordant with the duality Maus ascribes to dramatic identity. Her model falls short of encompassing the bulk of Shakespearean comic melancholy, however, since the notion extends beyond self-representation and towards the creation of a lingering emotional aftertaste.

This framework requires a novel positioning of melancholic characters that deviate from the humoural and psychoanalytical veins of criticism generally associated with melancholy. Shakespearean characters often refer to themselves humourally, but the depictions of comic melancholy range beyond psychological considerations. This divergence is particularly salient in mature romantic comedies and later tragicomic plays, which eventually do away with individual characterizations of melancholy altogether in favour of more wistful, intangible emotional representations. Likewise, psychoanalysis pushes its consideration of melancholy too far within the subject to properly examine its influence within

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wrote his plays with particular characters in mind, which he was incapable of falsifying to meet the exigencies of plot or within a psychoanalytic framework," 13. Scott examines eight Shakespearean characters, six of them 'comic' ones, treating each of them as if they were an actual patient. Needless to say, with chapter titles such as "Leontes the Paranoid," Scott's study provides very little valuable literary analysis.

[69] Katherine E. Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995, 32.
[70] Maus, 2.

a fundamentally social dramatic genre. The focus on psychic loss and subjugation prevents an account of melancholic characters that prove integral to the comedic structures they occupy. Both humoural and psychoanalytic theories also fail to delineate the extent to which melancholy operates in Shakespearean comedy.

Michael Schoenfeldt and Gail Kern Paster have contributed greatly to an understanding of the ways in which humoural theory pervades the discursive, social, and medical spheres of early modern England, not merely in moments of emotional or physical trauma, but, as Schoenfeldt puts it, within the realm of "mundane activities."[71] Nevertheless, their emphasis on humourality prevents them from uncovering the specific dynamics of a comic development of melancholy. Echoing Maus, Schoenfeldt recognizes in Shakespearean characters a particularly salient reflection of the process he terms an "inner reality via external demeanor."[72] His interpretation of Shakespearean comedy as a binary of self-control and emotional release comes close to unearthing the functionality of comic melancholy, particularly in the idea that the genesis of identity stems "from the success one experiences at controlling a series of undifferentiated and undifferentiating desires [where] giving way to one's various passions, moreover, is to yield the self to … inconstancy."[73] Conversely, Gail Kern Paster's work has revealed the fundamentally social nature of humourality within the period, where emotional experiences are "transactional not only in being a response to a stimulus … but also in occurring, almost inevitably, within a dense cultural social context."[74]

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[71] Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, 15.

[72] Schoenfeldt, 75.

[73] Schoenfeldt, 89. "The point of Shakespearean comedy,' he adds, "is to find a way to direct such desire to socially approved ends," 90.

[74] Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004, 8.

Her work attests to the ways in which the early modern humoural system infers an inescapably public body, steeped in cultural constructs and subservient to what she refers to as "society's cumulative, continuous interpellation … an internal orientation of the physical self within the socially available discourses of the body."[75] Paster contrasts Schoenfeldt's conception of the humoural body as embedded in daily regulatory practices by stressing its basic instability. As she explains, "the humoural body should be characterized not only by its physical openness but also by its emotional instability and volatility, by an internal microclimate knowable like climates in the outer world, more for changeability than for stasis."[76] For Paster, passions are unruly and inevitably threaten the subject's mastery of his abilities.[77]

There exists commensurate value in both critics' reinterpretation of humoural theories. As my dissertation demonstrates, Shakespearean characters rely on humoural terminology to express their emotional states. Thinking back to the passage from *The Taming of the Shrew* cited earlier, the vocabulary of comic characters is often inherently Galenic. Nevertheless, their melancholy is not a predominantly humoural issue. Its gradual transformation into an intangible sense of wistfulness resituates it as a generic concern. In other words, the focus of this dissertation is not so much melancholic characters as it is comic characters that are melancholic. While they may discuss their melancholy in humoural terms, validating the claims made by Paster and Schoenfeldt, these characters represent a larger dramatic device that complexifies, problematizes, and transforms the comic genre through recurrent iterations.

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[75] Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 5-6.

[76] Paster, Humoring the Body, 19.

[77] "The language of the humoural body constructs a bodily self-experience that is often tumultuous and dramatic even when function is normal," she writes, "humoural physiology ascribes to the workings of the internal organs as aspect of agency, purposiveness and plenitude to which the subject's own will is often decidedly irrelevant," *The Body Embarrassed*, 10.

My project concurrently eschews psychoanalytical readings of melancholia, echoing

Mark Breitenberg's rejection of "the view of melancholy as a clinical term describing a

particular pathological condition, as if psychological categories and descriptions were

somehow free of the cultures that develop and utilize them."[78] There exists an interesting

interplay between the works of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham on the clinical nature of

melancholia and Shakespearean melancholy.[79] Specifically, Freud's conception of the disorder

of melancholia as "the loss of an object that is withdrawn from consciousness,"[80] along with

the connotations to narcissism he subsequently draws, find particular resonance within some

of the comic characters this dissertation examines.[81] For the most part, however, this project

does not account for a psychoanalytic reading of melancholia in Shakespearean comedy. The

concepts of melancholy and melancholia, though related, are fundamentally different notions

that cannot be dealt with interchangeably.[82] Despite putative literary applications, studies such

as Freud's, or its subsequent revision by Melanie Klein,[83] remain too clinical to accommodate

[78] Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1996, 36.

[79] Freud in particular seems to have enjoyed Shakespeare's plays, as allusions to *Hamlet*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, or *The Tempest*, are peppered throughout his writings. While works such as *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* offer great sources for psychoanalytic treatments of melancholia, there remains little engagement with the comedies on the subject.

[80] Sigmund Freud, "Of Mourning and Melancholia," in *On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, London: Penguin, 2005, 203-218, 205.

[81] The complex of melancholia," Freud writes, "behaves like an open wound, drawing investments to itself from all sides … and draining the ego to the point of complete impoverishment," 212. According to Radden, these notions attest to Freud's awareness of early modern theories of melancholy in fashioning his own. "Freud's exemplar of the melancholiac was Hamlet," she writes, "and, as this suggests, he was familiar with the rich vein of European literary traditions, regarding several languages, including Shakespeare's and Burton's English," "Love and Loss in Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia': a Rereading," in *Moody Minds Distempered: Essays of Melancholy and Depression*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009, 147-165, 153. Nonetheless," Radden later cautions, "while conceding certain similar themes in earlier writing, I think it a mistake to overemphasize theses similarities. It is implausible because Freud's ideas on loss in 'Mourning and Melancholia' can be shown to derive from earlier work on melancholia and loss in the letters to his friend Wilhelm Fliess," 158.

[82] See Jennifer Radden, "Melancholy and Melancholia." In *Pathologies of the Modern Self: Postmodern Studies in Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and Depression*, ed. David Michael Levin, New York: New York UP, 1987, 231-250.

[83] Klein's most significant revision to Freud's theory is its integration within her discussion of infantile melancholia in "Mourning and its relation to Manic-Depressive States" (1940). In focusing especially on the

early modern dramatic texts. In the plays this dissertation interprets, the root cause of melancholy is of little concern vis-à-vis its dramatic impact.

Likewise, more recent feminist reflections on melancholia by Julia Kristeva, Juliana Schiesari, or Judith Butler, despite numerous engagements with literary texts, maintain a predominantly psychoanalytic focus that would do a disservice to the generic scope of this study.[84] Among these, however, Butler's contention that the performance of gender hinges on the principle that "if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane asocial audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief,"[85] highlights an interesting tenet of Shakespeare's treatment of comic melancholy. One of the arguments this dissertation puts forth is that, unlike their male counterparts, female characters in Shakespearean comedy display a mastery of gender performance that counteracts the melancholy that afflicts them. Yet, Butler's conception of female *melancholia* purposely seeks to move it away from the stage and into gendered cultural matrices where the social and the cognitive intersect.[86] As this

losses incurred by the child after birth and nursing, her work can also be understood as a precursor to Julia Kristeva's discussion of maternal melancholy in *Black Sun*. See *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Judith Mitchell, London: Penguin, 1986, especially 146-174. In her study of Klein, Esther Sánchez-Pardo describes her entire body of work as "a melancholic story of the vicissitudes of the internal object on its difficult way to the external world," *Cultures of the Death Drive: Melanie Klein and Modernist Melancholia*, Durham: Duke UP, 2003, 4.

[84] See Kristeva's *Black Sun*; Schiesari, *Gendering Melancholia;* Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 1999, 73-83; *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, New York: Routledge, 1993, 169-184; and *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997, particularly 1-30. Schiesari is the only one who engages with early modern texts at length, though her discussion of drama outside of *Hamlet* is negligible.

[85] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (December 1988): 519-531, 520.

[86] "The account of melancholy is an account of how psychic and social domains are produced in relation to one another," Butler writes, "as such, melancholy offers potential insight into how the boundaries of the social are instituted and maintained, not only at the expense of the psychic life, but through binding psychic life into forms of melancholic ambivalence," *Psychic Life of Power*, 167-168.

dissertation affirms, the idea that melancholia represents the limit of subjectival agency, "the limit to the subject's sense of *pouvoir*, its sense of what it can accomplish and, in that sense, its power,"[87] finds a mirror opposite, in a sense, within Shakespearean comedy, where a character's melancholy forms the basis of his or her dramatic agency.

Recent studies in affect theory that seek to resituate 'undesirable' emotions within a productive context, such as works by Heather Love and Sianne Ngai, also parallel the way in which comic melancholy in Shakespeare translates into "instances of ruined or failed sociality."[88] Nevertheless, Love's predominant focus on "an image repertoire of queer modernist melancholia,[89] along with Ngai's explicit rejection of melancholia at the onset of her study,[90] both attest to the severe limitations of such considerations for early modern melancholy. In essence, I am not questioning the value of psychoanalytic discussions of melancholia in analyzing dramatic texts. However, I find that these works do not engage with melancholy as it manifests itself in the Shakespearean comedies this dissertation interrogates. My reservations tie into Jennifer Radden's assertion that, in the Renaissance, the notion of black bile represented "a kind of metaphor for the dark mood of melancholy rather than a reference to any actual substance."[91] Along these lines, comic instances of melancholy can be perceived as metaphorical characterizations of melancholy rather than actual humoural or psychoanalytic iterations.

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[87] Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 23.
[88] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2007, 22; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2005.
[89] Love, 5.
[90] In her introduction, Ngai classifies melancholy as belonging, with sympathy and shame, to the category of "potentially ennobling or morally beatific states … the feelings I examine here," she stresses, "are explicitly amoral and noncathartic, offering no satisfactions of virtue, however oblique, nor any therapeutic or purifying release," 6.
[91] Radden, "Melancholy and Melancholia," 238.

There's no crying in comedy! Non-Shakespearean melancholy

Shakespeare's development of comic melancholy not only abjures theoretical models

of melancholy, it also proves fundamentally innovative in contrast to most of the period's

dramatic output. Shakespearean comedy is undoubtedly a product of its time, and though the

plays borrow, rework, or respond to contemporaneous dramatic efforts by the likes of Ben

Jonson and John Lyly, Shakespeare's development of comic melancholy remains exceptional.

The beginnings of English comedy, rooted in the modes and practices of the Christian

morality drama that precede it, betray a preoccupation with justifying the topsy-turvy revelry

they display. This early dramatic effort sets the stage for subsequent explorations of

melancholy. For example, Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (c. 1552) offers a pre-

emptive defense of the mirthful jesting that is to follow, claiming that it is

> Used in an honest fashion:
> For Mirth prolongeth life, and causeth health,
> Mirth recreates our spirits and voideth pensiveness,
> Mirth increaseth amity, not hindering our wealth,
> Mirth is to be used both of more and less,
> Being mixed with virtue in decent comeliness (Prologue, 7-12).[92]

The passage stresses the health benefits of the merriment that will be staged, echoing a similar

profession in the passage from *Taming* cited earlier. The medical allusions also serve to

validate the comedy that will unfold; being solely funny seemingly is not enough, the play

must also prolong life and engender well-being. While early comic plays such as Udall's or

William Stevenson's *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (c. 1559) offer no real engagement with

melancholy (even as a generic foil) they provide a blueprint for the structures of early modern

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[92] Nicholas Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister*, eds. W. H. Williams and P. A. Robin. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1928. As the editors explain in the introduction, "the apology for the 'mirth' of the piece and the labored attempt to show that it really has a moral, indicate that the drama had not yet emancipated itself from the traditions of the moralities," xv.

comedy within which melancholy eventually proliferates. Given the pervasiveness of humours in cultural and scientific spheres, it is not surprising that, from the early 1590s on, early modern drama finds itself ripe with melancholic allusions. Expectedly, the notion proves a fixture within tragedies and revenge plays alike, such as Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c.1585-1592) and Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (c.1592-1593), where it embodies the logical culmination of generic expectations. Within comic playtexts however, the reliance on melancholy reveals itself to be a surprisingly versatile source of dramatic inspiration.

In plays such as Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594), or George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale* (1595), the humour appears sparingly and usually denotes a synonym of sadness. Early on in Greene's play, Lacy comments on the fact that his Lord has now "changed to a melancholy lump" (i, 11)[93] as a way of describing his powerful infatuation for Margaret. Likewise, after being defeated by his counterpart, Friar Bacon is described as sitting "melancholy in his cell" (xiii, 2). Peele's play, which opens with the wandering of three brothers through the woods, begins with a casual reference to melancholy, as Antic asks one of his siblings whether "this sadness become thy madness?" (2).[94] In such works, characterial dispositions—melancholic or otherwise—do not matter as much. Characters react to events more than they express a certain humour.[95]

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[93] Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. J. A. Lavin, London: Benn, 1969.

[94] George Peele, *The Old Wives' Tale*, ed Patricia Binnie, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1980, 2. The line reflects the prevalent early modern belief that melancholy and madness were often linked. See Du Laurens: "the diseases which most sharply assail our minds and captivate and make them thrall unto the two inferior powers, are three; frenzy, madness, and melancholy," 81. This belief is also express in the Induction to *The Taming of Shrew* quoted earlier ("melancholy is the nurse of frenzy").

[95] Such plays do share affinities with Shakespearean comedy, mainly due to their peculiar mixing of generic constructs. Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, with its echoes of folklore and fairy tales, especially resonates with some of Shakespeare's later romantic experimentations. Several critics have looked to *The Old Wives Tale* as a source for *The Winter's Tale*. The names alone suggest interplay between both texts. See Philip Edwards, "Seeing is Believing': Action and Narration in *The Old Wives Tale* and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare and his*

It is in the court drama of John Lyly that we find the first sustained treatment of melancholy within a comic setting. Plays such as *Endymion* (1591) and *Gallathea* (1592) epitomize Lyly's romanticized dramatic style, which draws heavily on love-melancholy. Lylian melancholy comes almost exclusively in the form of romantic interest, particularly in its unrequited or unattainable state. The plays showcase grief-stricken characters, whose seemingly hopeless longing is resolved ultimately through regal or divine intervention. The humour is linked to the courtly affectations of protagonists, while the bulk of the comedy resides within minor, almost disconnected subplots. The speaker of the Prologue to *Endymion* asserts as much when he presents the play that is to follow as "neither comedy, nor tragedy, nor story, nor anything, / But that whosoever heareth may say this: 'Why, here is a tale of the Man in the Moon'" (10-11).[96] From the onset, the focus is cast on Endymion, the play's lovesick protagonist, infatuated with the sovereign Cynthia, whom, we are told, "by her influence both comforteth / All things and be her authority commendeth all creatures" (I, ii. 33-34). As an obvious echo to Queen Elizabeth, Cynthia embodies the impossible, unrequited love that paralyzes Endymion, a state which other characters urge him to abandon. Eumenides deplores Endymion's "melancholy blood [which] must be purged which draweth you to / A dotage no less miserable than monstrous" (I, i. 29-30).

Lyly pushes the critique of an overly melancholic disposition a step further, having the jealous Tellus enchant Endymion, trapping him within a sorrowful, supernatural slumber where "the prime of his youth and pride of his time shall be / Spent in melancholy passions, careless behaviour, / Untamed thoughts, and unbridled affections" (I, ii. 65-67). The spell not

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Contemporaries: Essays in Comparison, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986, 79-93. This comparison will be further discussed in chapter five.

[96] John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. David Bevington, New York: Manchester UP, 1996.

only accentuates Endymion's melancholy, it also neutralizes him dramatically, as the character sleeps for forty years while others attempt to break the curse.[97] By placing the emphasis on the mystical dimension of Endymion's ailment, Lyly, for the most part, refrains from engaging with the concept within a humoural framework. In the end, Cynthia intervenes and dispels his melancholy. In re-establishing order in the play, she reiterates the original caution against extreme romantic passions, declaring it to be "a strange affect of love, to work such an extreme / Hate. How say you, Endymion, all this was for love?" (V, iv. 81-82).[98]

The dramatic work of John Lyly reveals a clear propensity for melancholy.[99] However, this inclination is anchored soundly within the realm of love-melancholy and generally developed within the supernatural auspices of magic, divine intervention, and the romanticized reality of courtly existence. Moreover, the plays isolate comic concerns from melancholic ones; melancholy pervades the main plots of comedies such as *Endymion* and *Gallathea* (1592), while the actual "comedy" of each play stems from characters that populate their subplots (the misadventures of Sir Tophas in *Endymion*, and the three brothers seeking to learn a trade in *Gallathea*). Shakespeare undoubtedly draws from Lyly's works in fashioning his

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[97] This sense of a supernaturally instilled melancholy is mirrored in the character of Geron who also proves the victim of a melancholic spell by the witch Dipsas (V, iii. 32-35).

[98] *Gallathea* furthers this conflation of love and melancholy, relying once again on supernatural—or godly—elements in order to untangle the love-melancholy that afflicts its protagonists. Condemned to be sacrificed to a sea monster to appease Neptune, the shepherdess Gallathea dons the garment of a boy in order to escape her fate and subsequently falls in love with Phillida, another girl who adopted a similar subterfuge. The two girls are eventually spared and, their union is made possible through the intervention of the goddess Diana, who pledges to turn one of them into a boy the day before their wedding. The epilogue, spoken by Gallathea, and its assertion that it is "infallible, that love conquereth all things but / Itself, and ladies all hearts but their own," (12-13) reiterates the sweeping potency of romantic passions. John Lyly, "Gallathea," *Gallathea/Midas*, ed. George K. Hunter, Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000, 27-110.

[99] Kent Cartwright notes that this penchant might have stemmed from Lyly's personal frustrations within Elizabeth's court. He writes that Lyly came to embody "the archetype of the failed 'humanist as courtier.' In that melancholy conception, the humanist endeavours to put his high ideals and intellectual skills to work for the court, only to discover that it values him solely as an entertainer," which could explain how melancholic sorrow somehow finds itself at the forefront of several of his comic texts, "The Confusions of *Gallathea*: John Lyly as Popular Dramatist," *Comparative Drama* 32.2 (Summer 1998): 207-239, 207.

own brand of comedy, as Lyly's aforementioned melancholic mood resonates in romantic

Shakespearean comedies such as *Twelfth Night*.[100] Yet, the melancholic explorations found in

Lyly's court drama stand as a notable precursor to, rather than a prime example of, early

modern comic melancholy as this dissertation understand it.

The advent of humour comedies, most notably the works of Ben Jonson and George

Chapman near the turn of the century, provides a useful backdrop against which to evaluate

Shakespeare's comic treatments of melancholy. As a genre, humour plays are predicated on

the Galenic humoural model, focusing predominantly on exacerbated character traits in need

of purgation. According to Peter Womack, in a comedy of humour

> the humorous individual becomes a monster, because the flow of humour is governing
> the affections of the heart, which is an inversion of the natural hierarchy, and because
> the overrunning of the stable distinction between containing and contained produces
> uncontrolled appetites and discharges (the 'feeding' and 'venting' of humours) which
> compromise the integrity and self-sufficiency of the body.[101]

This process yields episodic, satirical portrayals of humourous characters that once again

favour plot over characterial development. The crux of the comedy resides in the curing of

various humourous characters by a roguish protagonist leading to a restoration of social order.

Humours populate the bulk of Ben Jonson's dramatic output, from early works such as *The

Case is Altered* (c.1598) to *The Magnetic Lady, or Humours Reconciled* (1632), believed to be

his last original dramatic production.[102] For Jonson, humour comedies revolve predominantly

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[100] Leah Scragg, for example, mentions a "general agreement that *Gallathea* was among the plays which appear to have made the greatest impact upon Shakespeare's imagination," *The Metamorphosis of Gallathea- A Study in Creative Adaptation*, Washington: UPA, 1982, 41. She lists *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *As You Like It*, and *The Winter's Tale* as example of such a connection. Scragg points out how *Gallathea* offers the most potent parallel, with its cross-dressing heroines, divine participation and sylvan setting, 97. Scragg also notes that both *Gallathea* and *Twelfth Night* dovetail along the lines of an ever-present sense of sadness, 113.
[101] Peter Womack, *Ben Jonson*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, 49-50.
[102] *The Magnetic Lady* appears to be Jonson's attempt at dramatic closure, at least as far as his interest in humour plays is concerned. Written towards the end of his life, the play is strangely nostalgic. Rather than focusing on a single, dominant trait that must inevitably be purged, Jonson's characters react to events

around the act of social correction. The depictions of humours serve a comedic function, certainly, but they remain subservient to a more a scathing satire directed as eccentric transgressions of social mores. Ben Jonson's *Every Man In his Humours* (1598),[103] and its loose follow-up *Every Man Out of his Humours* (1599), provide an ideal outline of the genre.[104] The *Every Man* plays perfect the dramatic humoural critique, staging a parade of various humours and having them methodically purged by a witty trickster figure. Though the process elicits laughter, it also attests to Jonson's clear distaste for the governing powers of humouralism. This aversion is reflected saliently in a monologue that the merchant Kitely delivers in the second act of *Every Man In his Humours* concerning the jealousy that afflicts him:

> It may well be call'd poor mortals' plague;
> For, like a pestilence, it doth infect
> The houses of the brain. First, it begins
> Solely to work upon the phantasy,
> Filling her seat with such pestiferous air,
> As soon corrupts the judgement; and from thence
> Sends like contagion to the memory:
> Still each to other giving the infection.

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transpiring at an Inn over the course of an afternoon. As David Kay mentions, "his attempt at artistic closure, however, was hardly a triumphant return to the humour comedy that won him celebrity in the *Every Man* plays. While his characters form a panorama of genteel society, they tend with few exceptions to be pale shadows of his earlier satiric types," *Ben Jonson- A Literary Life*, New York: St. Martin's, 1995, 177.

[103] Jonson substantially revised the play in 1601, changing character names and locations so as to give it distinctively English setting as opposed to the original Italian one.

[104] Charlotte Spivack credits George Chapman with having created the humour plays genre. "Although Jonson's *Every Man In* is often erroneously credited with initiating 'humourous' comedy," she writes, "Chapman's *Blind Beggar* (1595) launched the new mode on the London stage in 1595," *George Chapman,* New York: Twayne, 1967, 59. Though *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, in its modern form, amounts to an odd, truncated playtext that holds little resemblance to what is expected of a humour play, it remains, as Spivack points out, a testament to "some of the main directions in Chapman's comic dramaturgy but also to predict his future mastery of a genuine comic gift," 64. Chapman's subsequent comedy, *An Humourous Day's Mirth* (1597), is a far better example of a humour play, where the protagonist, Lemot, spends a day purging people of their humours through various comical stratagems. Chapman's commentary on melancholy within the play resides in the character of Dowsecer, whose melancholic fits are ridiculed by other characters. Even within the play's scope, however, melancholy stands at the bottom of the pecking order. Chapman's subsequent forays in the genre, *May-Day* (c.1599), *All Fools* (c.1600), and *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1606) , have very little to do with melancholy, other than the occasional expression of sadness by certain characters.

> Which as a subtle vapour spreads itself
> Confusedly through every sensive part,
> Till not a thought or motion in the mind
> Be free from the black poison of suspect (II, iii. 56-67).[105]

The parallel with the plague that runs throughout the passage underscores the contemptuous view of humours that Jonsonian drama vehicles. Like a contagious disease, the humour works its way through the houses of the brain, infecting both mental and physical faculties.[106] Kitely describes a totalizing affliction that restricts its victims in acting out nothing *but* their humour. The play also shifts away from humouralism by staging any absurd or excessive behavioural traits, from overwhelming curiosity, to clownish braggardery. Jonson's comedies of humours thus prove simultaneously Galenic in their allusions to bodily organs and corporeal infections, and intrinsically early modern in their extrapolation of such concepts so as to include a plethora of absurd behaviours. The purging of humours on stage serves to encourage if not inculcate similar practices within audiences.

Melancholy in *Every Man In his Humour* is embodied by the play's two gulls, Stephen and Mathew.[107] Unlike other humours exhibited in the play, theirs are counterfeit, bespeaking a larger desire to feign nobility and refinement. Their encounter in the third act outlines their ridiculous posturing:

> STEPHEN. My name is Master Stephen, sir, I am this gentleman's own
>   Cousin, sir, his father is mine uncle, sir, I am somewhat melancholy,
>   But you shall command me, sir, in whatsoever is incident to a
>   Gentleman.
> …
> MATHEW. But are you indeed, sir? So given to it?

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[105] Ben Jonson, "Every Man in His Humour," *The Complete Plays of Ben Jonson,* ed. G. A. Wilkes, Vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon, 1981, 177-274.

[106] The houses of the brain refer to the galenic model of mental faculties being divided into three categories: imagination, judgement, and memory, See Du Laurens, 72-81, for a detailed description of this structure.

[107] Jonson sets up a contrast between city and country throughout the play. Mathew (the town gull) and Stephen (the country gull) stand as melancholic representatives of this comparison.

STEPHEN. Aye, truly, sir, I am mightily given to melancholy.
MATHEW. Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir, you true melancholy
      Breeds your perfect fine wit, sir: I am melancholy myself diver
      Times, sir, and then do I no more but take pen and paper presently,
      and overflow you half a score, or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.
…
      Why, I pray you, sir, make use of my own study, it's at your
      Service.
STEPHEN. I thank you, sir, I shall be bold, I warrant you; have you a
      Stool there, to be melancholy upon?
MATHEW. That I have, sir, and some paper there of mine own doing,
      At idle hours, that you'll say there's some sparks of wit in'em, when
      You see them (III, i. 65-68; 74-79; 83-89).

Jonson mocks their reliance on melancholy as a sign of superiority and depth. As their

dialogue suggests, melancholy can be adopted in an instant, without clear motive or

justification; it even necessitates a stool. This behaviour is representative of the play's overall

characterization of humoural displays in which "all the humorous characters are guilty of

wanting to be, or pretending to be, something they are not, and this makes Envy their natural

foil."[108] This assessment is symptomatic of the play's larger shift away from galenic humours

and towards a comedy of social correctives. As Justice Clement admonishes the rest of the

characters at the end of the play, when all the humours have been exposed and purged: "while

that is fed, / Horns i' the mind are worse than o' the head" (V, v. 65-66).

    Every Man Out of His Humour pushes the critique further away from Galenism, as

Jonson makes it clear from the onset that a humour may

    By metaphor, apply itself
    Unto the general disposition:
    As when some one peculiar quality
    Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
    All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
    In their confluctions, all to run one way.
    But that a rook by wearing a pied-feather,
    The cable hat-band, or the three-piled ruff,

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[108] Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson: To The First Folio*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983, 38.

> A yard of shoe-tie, or the Switzers' knot
> On his French garters, should affect a humour!
> O, it is more than most ridiculous (GREX, 103-114).[109]

Their totalizing effect is reiterated here, but the humours in question have grown into absurd behaviour that can be triggered by the wearing of certain items of clothing. Jonson's critique appears predominantly geared towards the evasion of responsibility that comes with humourous affectations. He recognizes that a man may exhibit a "peculiar quality" which supersedes his behaviour, but refuses to accept that it can be remedied by any physical or medical mean. In *Every Man Out*, the dramatic frame takes precedence over the play's content, as a character from the mock chorus, Asper, decides to enter the play under the pseudonym of Macilente and perform a widespread purging of rampant humours. He vows to

> Scourge those apes
> And to the courteous eyes oppose a mirror,
> As large as is the stage where we act
> Where they shall see the time's deformity
> Anatomized in every nerve and sinew,
> With constant courage and contempt of fear (GREX, 117-122).

Macilente's speech identifies social purgation as the only viable solution, and this second humour comedy is built around such a concept to an overwhelming degree. The focus rests almost exclusively on Macilente's grandiose purgative efforts; the dramatic plot is thinned to its brink as an array of humourous figures are scolded out of their humours (sometimes cruelly).[110] Though several characters allude to it throughout the play, melancholy does not belong to Jonson's prime satirical targets. If anything, even amidst a plethora of absurd

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[109] Ben Jonson, "Every Man Out of His Humour", *The Complete Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes, Vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon, 1981, 275-411.

[110] As Russ McDonald points out, the framework dominates the play itself. "By the time Macilente takes the stage for the first scene proper," he writes, "some 370 lines and about fifteen minutes of playing time have passed, most of it devoted to Jonson's justification of his form and cultivation of an atmosphere of criticism," *Shakespeare & Jonson, Jonson & Shakespeare*, Lincoln, U of Nebraska P, 1988, 58. For McDonald, such an "effort at self-justification" evidently points to the fact that "the most important topic in Jonson's comical satires is comical satire," 60.

humours, it comes across as somewhat harmless and easily dismissible, as this exchange

between the knight Puntarvolo, the jester Carlo Buffone, and a Gentlewoman indicates:

> PUNTARVOLO. 'Tis a most sumptuous and stately edifice! Of what years is
> The knight fair damsel?
> GENTLEWOMAN. Faith, much about your years, sir.
> PUNTARVOLO. What complexion, or what stature bears he?
> GENTLEWOMAN. Of your stature, and very near upon your complexion.
> PUNTARVOLO. Mine is melancholy--
> CARLO BUFFONE. So is the dog's, just.
> PUNTARVOLO. And doth argue constancy, chiefly in love (Act II, ii. 34-41).

Simply stated, if a dog can be melancholy, then the humour itself is of little value to Jonson

within the large-scale social satire he elaborates in *Every Man Out.* Jonson's next two satires,

Cynthia's Revels (1600) and *Poetaster* (1601), abandon humours altogether to focus more

forcefully on social invective. Whatever little comic potential melancholy held for Jonson

when he began his writing career, it seems he rapidly tires of it. The humour pales in

comparison to other traits that seem to incur his wrath more prevalently, such as braggardery,

jealousy, or exaggerated courtly affectations. Jonson seems unwilling to compromise the

realism that characterizes his satire to allow melancholic matters to be properly examined.

Jonson's humours plays (as well as Chapman's, to a lesser extent), are largely

responsible for the immense popularity that humours benefited from on the early modern

stage. Other humours comedies of the period follow the pattern elaborated by Jonson and

Chapman, as humours, manners, or more simply, character traits, are the predominant focus of

their dramatic explorations. Works such as John Day's *Humour Out of Breath* (1608) and

James Shirley's *The Humourous Courtier* (1631) have little to do with bodily humours, let

alone melancholy.[111] In all, the propensity of comedies containing 'humour' in their titles

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[111] One can also think of the Anonymous *Every Woman in her Humour* (?1598-1608) as an indicator of the
popularity of Jonson's humour comedies.

highlights the apparent popularity that the concept enjoyed in the period's dramatic output. It

is in spite, or perhaps because of this surging popularity that it remains striking that

Shakespeare never wrote a humour play, let alone included the word in a title.[112] That is not to

say that Shakespeare did not capitalize on the popular dramatic device. As Paster notes, "like

other contemporary playwrights, Shakespeare found in language of the humours and the four

qualities of cold, hot, moist and dry a discourse for signalling the relationship within his

characters between embodied emotion and perceptible behaviour, between the mind's

inclination and the body's temperature."[113] On the whole, however, Shakespeare's comic

treatment of melancholy proves a stark departure from Jonson's.[114] His comedy achieves

greater complexity by weaving the humoural elements into the dramatic fabric. Humours are

not flaunted on stage in dire need of social correction. Rather, as this dissertation illustrates,

they serve a more intricate function within the plays' comic structures.

Tragicomic plays, which came to prominence early on in the seventeenth century,

represent another dramatic subset that relies heavily on melancholy. The advent of

tragicomedy, a hybrid mixture of tragic and comic tones, as its name suggests, marks a serious

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[112] Critics have suggested that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* represents Shakespeare's response to the humour play genre, though they generally hesitate to establish a direct correlation. Giorgio Melchiori writes that the play "is Shakespeare's ironical tribute paid to the new theatrical genre of the comedy of humours," *Shakespeare's Garter Plays: Edward III to Merry Wives of Windsor*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1994, 107. Likewise, although he suggests that "Shakespeare seems to have been responding to the newest dramatic genre of the 1590s," David Bevington adds that "Shakespeare characteristically does not satirize affectation so much as cherish it," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. David Bevington, updated 4th ed, New York: Longman, 252-287, 253. Though the word 'humour' does not appear in the play's title, it is uttered on nearly twenty-five occasions throughout, *The Shakespeare Concordance*, accessed January 20th, 2011, opensourceshakespeare.org.

[113] Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 85.

[114] Yet, Shakespeare was clearly aware of Jonson's work. As McDonald points out, "the two playwrights often wrote for the same actors [and] while Shakespeare was actively associated with it, the company produced six of Jonson's most significant plays (*Every Man in His Humours*, *Every Man Out of His Humours*, *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist,* and *Catiline*); Shakespeare participated in the staging of at least two of these," 4-5. See also James P. Bednarz, *Shakespeare & the Poets' War*, New York: Columbia UP, 2001, especially 55-82, for a discussion of the reciprocal influence of Jonsonian and Shakespeare comedy.

departure from the forms of comedy examined so far. The genre is most often associated with

the works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, whose massive body of dramatic

production overlaps with Shakespeare's in the final years of his career.[115] The plays of

Beaumont and Fletcher blur the line between the tragic and the comic genre and complicate

the way in which we can interpret their conventions and expectations. The prologue to *The*

Woman-Hater (1607) exemplifies the tonal ambiguity that characterizes their works. Its

speaker declares:

> I dare not call it a Comedie, or Tragedie; 'tis perfectly neyther:
> A Play it is, which was mean to make you laugh, how it will please
> You, is not written in my part: For though you should like it to
> Day, perhaps your selves know not how you should digest it to
> Morrow: Some things in it you may meete with, which are out of the
> Common Roade: a Duke there is, and the Scene lyes in *Italy*, as
> Those two thinges lightly wee never misse. But you shall not find
> In it the ordinarie and over-worne trade of jeasting at Lordes and
> Courtiers, and Citizens, without taxation of any particular or
> New vice by them found out, but at the persons of them:
> Such, he that made this, thinks it vile (12-22).[116]

Though playful, the prologue insists on differentiating the play (and its genre) from its

dramatic predecessors. By listing what the comedy does not present, it also offers a critique to

the type of humours Jonson's protagonists such as Macilente make a point of correcting. The

play is not concerned with exacerbated courtly affectations or braggardery. Rather, as the

prologue suggests, the tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher rely on a mitigated

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[115] Though a fair amount of critical debate as to the exact delineation of authorship in the Beaumont-Fletcher canon exists (as dual or single-authored plays, or collaborations with other playwrights such as Philip Massinger), for the purpose of this study, the plays discussed in this section will all be regarded as Beaumont-Fletcher collaborations. John Fletcher is largely identified as a collaborator in three late Shakespearean plays: *Henry VIII*, the lost play *Cardenio*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the latter of which will be discussed at length in my conclusion.

[116] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "The Woman Hater," ed. George Walton Williams, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon. Vol.* I, ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1982, 147-240.

understanding of humourality, which purports a return toward its classical understanding as a physical ailment, yet also champions an increased reliance on early modern medicine.

In *The Humourous Lieutenant* (1619), the condition proves somewhat alien to Galenic logic, in that the humour in question is the titular Lieutenant's military prowess, a trait he seemingly developed after contracting a venereal disease.[117] *The Woman-Hater*, built on a similar model, offers dovetailing humourous characterizations. The titular hater, Gondarino, comes to be purged of his irrational misogyny through the devising of the play's young heroine, Oriana, who vows early on "to torment him to madness, / To teach his passions against kind to move" (II, i. 397-398). Additionally, the comical subplot centres on the ludicrous misadventures of Lazarello, who spends most of the play chasing down an exquisite culinary delicacy, the consumption of which, he believes, would bestow him with a higher social rank. Such a treatment of humours resembles Jonson's and Chapman's more than it does Shakespeare's.[118] The two plays from the Beaumont and Fletcher canon that offer the most sustained engagement with melancholy, *The Nice Valour* (c.1615-1625?) and *A Wife For a Month* (1624), develop an explicitly medical focus, where physicians or authoritative figures diagnose and treat the ailment on stage. The former presents an intriguing protagonist, known as the Passionate Lord, whom a fellow gentleman describes early on as someone who:

> Runs through all the Passions of mankind,
> And shifts'em strangely too one while in love,
> And that so violent, that for want of business.
> Hee'l court the very Prentice of a Laundresse,

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[117] The humourous lieutenant eventually cedes center stage to the love triangle that develops at the play's forefront between King Antigonus, Celia, and Demetrius. His plot lines can be understood to supply comic relief for their more serious and potentially tragic love story.

[118] It is interesting to note, as Katherine Duncan-Jones does, the parallels that exist between *The Woman-Hater* and *Measure For Measure*, especially at it relates to their respective dukes that keep an eye on their people from afar, "Francis Beaumont's allusions to Shakespeare in *The Woman Hater*," *Notes and Queries*. 54.3. (2007): 320-1, 321.

> Though she have kib'd heeles: and in's melancholy agen,
> He will not brooke an Empress, though thrice fairer
> Than ever Maud wads (I, i. 50-56).[119]

The performative nature of humoural affectation comes across strongly in this description; the speech alerts the audience to the humours the Lord will subsequently enact on stage. Though melancholy is explicitly addressed, it is displayed as part of a stereotypical representation. The Passionate Lord, through his numerous appearances on stage, exhibits the various bodily humours in sequence. For his melancholic episode, he sings a song where he professes adamantly that

> Ther's naught in this life sweet,
> If men were wise to see't,
> But Melancholly,
> O sweet Melancholly (III, iii. 37-41).

The Lord's problem, in effect, is not related to an excess of certain humours but, rather, to an endless fluctuation between them. Humours succeed one another, and "the taile of his melancholy / Is always the head of his anger" (III, iv. 5-6). *The Nice Valor* thus eschews any concise exploration of a particular ailment in favour of a large scale condemnation of humoural afflictions through farcical performances.

In *A Wife For a Month*, the usurping King Frederick vows to keep his brother, Alphonso at bay in order to maintain his position of power. We learn early on how Alphonso is afflicted by a mournful sorrow following his father's death which makes him feel:

> Nothing but sad and silent melancholy,
> Laden with griefes, and thoughts, no man knows why neither;
> The good Brandino, Father to the Princes,
> Used all the art and industry that might be,
> To free Alphonso from this dull calamity,
> And seat him in his rule (I, ii. 27-32).[120]

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[119]Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "The Nice Valour", ed. George Walton Williams, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon. Vol. VII*, ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1982, 425-513.

Though Alphonso's melancholy plays a crucial role, preventing him from opposing the immoral schemes of his brother Frederick, the play relegates it to its subplot, being more concerned with Frederick's attempt to claim the lovely Evanthe away from her rightful lover, Valentino. The vile king, wishing his brother "were as sad as I could wish him, / Sad as the earth" (III, iii. 25-26), orders his henchman Sorano to poison him. Fortunately, the concoction he administers Alphonso counteracts the melancholy that afflicts him, eventually curing him of it. As Friar Marco explains in the final act, the poison's innate heat revealed itself to be

> An excellent Physick,
> It wrought upon the dull cold misty parts,
> That clog'd his soule (which was another poyson,
> A desperate too) and found such matter there,
> And such abundance also to resist it,
> And weare away the dangerous heat it brought with it,
> The pure blood and the spirits scap'd untainted (V, i. 15-21).

Thus, the play's overall treatment of melancholy is predominantly medical, chemical even, as Alphonso's health is ultimately restored. The plays of Beaumont and Fletcher frequently rely on such scientifically-based depictions when dealing with humoural concerns.

Though critical connections abound between the works of Shakespeare and that of Beaumont and Fletcher,[121] there exist very few parallels between their respective explorations of comic melancholy. *Philaster, or Love Lies A-Bleeding* (1609) offers several potent echoes to *Twelfth Night*—mainly in its love triangle between a cross dressed page and two noble personages—but melancholy in *Philaster* is not the widespread dramatic device that it reveals

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[120] Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "A Wife For a Month," ed. Robert Kean Turner, *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon. Vol. VI*, ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1982, 355-482.
[121] Critical analyses generally center on a debate as to who influenced whom. For an insightful examination of potent sites of thematic intersections in the three playwrights' drama, see Russ McDonald, "Fashion: Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Volume IV: The Poems, the Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, eds. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, 150-174.

itself to be in Illyria.[122] What Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies accomplish, vis-à-vis

melancholy and the humours more generally, is the fostering of an accrued dramatic emphasis

on medical practitioners. Though they seldom address melancholy in detail, their plays rely

increasingly on the scientific diagnosis, treatment, and eventual cure of humoural ailments, as

opposed to the social correctives heralded by humours plays. In this sense, Beaumont and

Fletcher's work can be though to have had considerable influence on Philip Massinger's *A*

Very Woman (c.1619-1622?) and John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* (1628), plays which,

according to William Kerwin, epitomize the inherent dramatic shift that transpires in

Carolinian drama, where playwrights "imagined physicians as stagers of cures and of social

experiments."[123] As Kerwin explains, "the learned doctor, steeped in ancient texts, gradually

transformed into the virtuoso, the medical theorist who explored the world of nature in order

to create knowledge."[124] For him, the two plays rely on the figure of the physician to provide a

dramatic test case which "voices the hopes of reformers that physic would become part of a

new social politics, in which treating disease would involve reforming social

arrangements."[125] On the heels of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedies, this shift furthers

the divide between comedy and humourality; the diagnostic and treatment eventually takes

precedence.

Massinger's *A Very Woman* presents a love story in which two male protagonists, Don

Martino and Don John Antonio, quarrel for the affection of Almira.[126] Following a duel,

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[122] Daniel Morley McKeithan mentions *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet,* and *Othello* as plays to which *Philaster* is indebted, *The Debt to Shakespeare in the Beaumont-Fletcher Plays*, New York: AMS, 1938, 42; 32 ;36.
[123] William Kerwin, *Beyond the Body: The Boundaries of Medicine and English Renaissance Drama*, Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2005, 152.
[124] Kerwin, 133.
[125] Kerwin 166.
[126] The connection with Massinger is solidified by the argument that *A Very Woman* is considered a collaborative effort with john Fletcher. As Philip Edwards and Colin Gibbons note in their introduction to the

Martino, believing he has fatally wounded Antonio, is stricken with melancholy. The doctor

who attends him informs his entourage that

> There is a deeper [hurt], and in his minde,
> Must be with care provided for. Melancholy
> And at the height too, near of kin to madness,
> Possesses him; his senses are distracted,
> Not one, but all; and if I can collect'em
> With all various ways, invention
> Or industry ever practis'd, I shall write it
> My master-piece (II, ii. 78-86).

The doctor is adamant that the ailment afflicting Martino constitutes a concrete threat that calls

for immediate action. The physician eventually cures him through an elaborate scheme where

he visits him under several disguises (IV, iii.). Antonio is then reintroduced as having survived

the duel and the play can proceed to its joyous resolution, with Martino vowing to "never /

Sink under such weak frailties" (V, iv. 63-67).

Conversely, Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy* represents one the most direct

engagements with melancholy in seventeenth-century tragicomedy. According to R. F. Hill,

the play "inherits a mind from [Robert] Burton, a body from Fletcher and Massinger, and a

soul from Shakespeare."[127] Much like Antonio's condition in *The Merchant of Venice*, Ford's

play opens characters questioning the mysterious sadness that has struck Prince Palador,

whom they refer to as the "melancholy man [who] sometimes speaks sense, / But seldom

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play, "it is clear enough, form evidence of prosody, style, linguistic forms, and the quality of the invention, that some sections of the play as we have it now are not by Massinger but by Fletcher," Philip Massinger, "A Very Woman," in *The Plays and Poems of Philip Massinger,* eds. Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson, Vol. IV, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 201-297, 201.

[127] R. F. Hill, Introduction, *The Lover's Melancholy,* ed. R. F. Hill, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985, 1-42, 10. Hill is referring to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, as well as Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* as works which *The Lover's Melancholy* echoes.

mirth; will smile, but seldom laugh" (I, i. 70-72).[128] The physician Corax is brought in to

successfully cure Palador. He declares his belief early on that

> Melancholy
> Is not as you conceive, indisposition
> Of body, but the mind's disease. So ecstasy,
> Fantastic dotage, madness, phrenzy, rapture
> Of mere imagination differ partly
> From melancholy, which is briefly this:
> A mere commotion of the mind, o'ercharged
> With fear and sorrow, first begot I'th' brain,
> The seat of reason, and from thence derived
> As suddenly into the heart, the seat
> Of our affection.
> ….
> It were more easy to conjecture every hour
> We have to live, than reckon up the kinds
> Or causes of this anguish of the mind (III, i. 108-118; 120-126).

Of particular interest is the admission that melancholy presents itself under various forms and

types, which problematizes its diagnosis and cure.[129] Corax quickly diagnoses a case of love-

melancholy and the prince is cured aptly through the use of theatrics. His doctor organizes a

performance of what he refers to as "the Masque of Melancholy" (III, iii. 11), where he

parades various incarnations of the disease, ending with the aforementioned lovesickness, to

which Palador reacts most strongly. In the end, the prince is reunited with his beloved,

professing that "the Lover's Melancholy hath found cure; / Sorrows are changed to bride-

songs. So they thrive / Whom faith; in spite of storms, hath kept alive" (V, ii. 252-254).

This implicit focus on the medical dimensions of melancholy, which germinated in the

tragicomedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, enjoyed tremendous popularity throughout the

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[128] John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy,* ed. R. F. Hill, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1985.

[129] As Kerwin writes, Corax' cure can be understood as "three-dimensional, requiring changes in body, mind, and social arrangements." The character appears as both a "physician-persuading" and a "playwright-directing," 173.

seventeenth century. It represents, in a sense, a dramatic *coup de grace* for representations of 'pure' humours on the early modern stage. As this brief survey indicates, Shakespearean comedy, though it occasionally echoes the various incarnations of early modern drama discussed here, remains marginal to the stylistic and thematic currents in vogue during the period. As this dissertation illuminates, Shakespeare shies away from the various comic genres explored here through his distinct treatment of melancholy within comedic settings.

Shakespearean Comic Melancholy

The following chapters attest to the pervasiveness of melancholy within Shakespeare's comic corpus, suggesting that, rather than a mere foil to the spirits of mirth and revelry, it proves elemental to the transformations that Shakespearean comedy undergoes throughout its existence. I initially consider the ways in which melancholy is developed in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, as an isolated condition, seemingly dismissible by what I refer to as the symmetrical structure of comic resolution. The plays provide stark evidence that, even in its earliest incarnations, Shakespearean comedy incorporates melancholy into its comic fabric while stressing the need for its purgation. Early Shakespearean comedy intimates that one *should not* be sad by the end of a play, and the arbitrary pairing off of characters during celebratory climax seeks, in part, to dispel melancholic undertones. In both plays, I suggest, the failure to completely eradicate melancholy translates into highly ambiguous comic conclusions that pave the way for subsequent comic works, where melancholy's presence on stage grows increasingly cumbersome.

Chapter three reads *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing* as prime dramatic examples of the phenomenon by which prominent comic characters not only fail to

offer a clear cause for their overwhelming melancholy, but refuse to mitigate it for the benefit of the play at hand. In doing so, characters such as Don John and Antonio both foster and exacerbate the need for their removal from the comic realm. The chapter argues that their melancholic dissonance, which complicates the process of dramatic resolution, is integral to Shakespeare's treatment of comic melancholy. The melancholy found in these plays creates emotional loose ends from which emanates a sense of *malaise* that will take full effect in later comedies.

In the next chapter, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are held as a landmark in Shakespeare's treatment of comic melancholy. Though we encounter melancholic characters such as Jaques and Orsino, the chapter suggests that these plays complete the break away from individual characterizations of melancholy that no longer seem suitable to the comic style Shakespeare progressively turns towards. The liminal settings of Arden and Illyria facilitate the ushering in of a spectral melancholy that comes to ingrain itself in the dramatic fabric. Reaching its comic apogee in such works, melancholy infuses the dramatic settings it occupies, morphing into an ethereal longing that is not dispelled from, but rather, embedded in the plays' resolution.

Conversely, the final chapter underscore the fact that, in his concluding dramatic phase, Shakespeare returns to the comic taxonomies of melancholy in order to foster more forceful, lingering emotional impacts. To that effect, an analysis of *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* demonstrates how the function of comic melancholy in late plays can be understood as a form of dramatic impressionism, as a relinquishing of details in favour of more powerful emotional responses. Ultimately, I suggest that Shakespearean romances, and their emphasis

on the inevitable passage of time and the sadness of lost opportunity, represent the culmination of this comic transformation.

Lastly, in a brief coda, I read *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as the zenith of the dramatic treatment of melancholy in Shakespeare, where the spectral wistfulness that characterized the late plays reaches a breaking point and severs ties with the comic genre. The play's collaborative nature provides a contrast between this sense of melancholy and different one, reinscribed in humourality and bespeaking an increased reliance on medical prognosis typical of Fletcherian comedy. I suggest that the play bears witness to a passing of the torch, as it were, between the Shakespearean dramatization of melancholy and the one propounded by Fletcher as described earlier, which was to become the norm within seventeenth-century tragicomic works.

Here, I must caution somewhat against my own methodology. There is an obvious danger in offering what amounts to a chronological reading of Shakespeare's comedies, the implication being that a qualitative progression dovetails with the aforementioned temporal one. While I perceive value in examining the comedies chronologically, I do not infer any such assessment of quality. I would not declare *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, to be "inferior" to *Twelfth Night*, nor do I wish to the convey the argument that the late plays represent the perfection of earlier comic texts. My dissertation holds comic melancholy to be an ongoing development throughout Shakespeare's writing career, as the concept progressively morphs into the elusive yet overarching presence it holds in the tragicomedies. In essence, melancholy burgeons in the early comedies, then blossoms in the mature romantic plays before petrifying in the late works. Conversely, I do not endorse a biographical reading of Shakespearean melancholy that would envision the playwright consciously reworking the

concept across his career until he finally achieves the desired melancholic effect in his final plays. The comedies discussed here were written concurrently with history plays and tragedies that also abound with melancholic references. Yet, there remains a marked progression in depictions of melancholy that warrants consideration within an analysis of Shakespearean comedy.

Additionally, in its focus on comedies and late plays, this dissertation overlooks the problem plays[130] and tragedies, creating a dramatic void that must be acknowledged. As stated, my interest lies specifically in the ways in which melancholy transforms the comic conventions of Shakespeare drama. Shakespeare's turn away from pure 'comedy' at the dawn of the seventeenth century does not necessarily imply the abandon of melancholy as a dramatic concept. In essence, my decision to gloss over the mature tragedies and so-called problem comedies (*All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*), pertains to scope as much as it does to context. While most tragedies and problem plays contain their share of melancholy, the relationship to dramatic structure operates differently. Melancholy is expected from tragedies; the genre compels forms of despair as characters are abandoned, tortured, or killed. If anything, characters who do not betray grief or sorrow (those who profess to not be what they are) are the ones to be weary of. Likewise, in the problem comedies, Shakespeare's focus is once again diverted to different concerns. An altogether separate set of images, much darker ones that centre on notions of corruption and

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[130] F. S. Boas is generally credited with coining the term "problem plays in reference to *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Troilus and Cressida* (in addition to *Hamlet*). Boas writes that "all these dramas introduce us into highly artificial societies, whose civilization is ripe unto rottenness … at the close our feeling is neither of simple joy or pain; we are excited, fascinated, perplexed, for the issues raised preclude a completely satisfactory outcome," *Shakespeare and his Predecessors*, New York: Greenwood, 1969, 345. Writing at the close of the nineteenth century, Boas borrowed the term "problem play" for a contemporary dramatic vogue that included the work of Ibsen. See 344-408 for a discussion of the Shakespearean problem plays listed above.

disease, erupt. This trope resonates in tragedies such as *Hamlet* and *Othello* more than it does the mature romantic works that preceded them. Collaterally, my exploration of comic melancholy thus links the problem plays to the tragic phase of Shakespeare's career.

Finally, I also want to pre-emptively address the bleak reading of Shakespearean comedy that my dissertation proposes. Inevitably, peering over yellowed play-texts within the confines of a windowless university library on grey winter afternoons, incessantly seeking out their melancholic undertones, can skew an appreciation of how funny Shakespearean comedies are. If anything, that last statement speaks to my point: melancholy can be understood as an integral, non-comic component of Shakespearean comedy, and while it does not necessarily yield laughter *in itself*, it heightens actual comical moments. The transformation of comedy that I identify here simultaneously rests on both ends of the affective spectrum that constitutes it. Robert Burton, declared early on in *The Anatomy* that, "even in the midst of laughter, there is sorrow."[131] This assertion is undeniably true, but a more appropriate epitaph for this dissertation would probably be a revision of the old adage "dying is easy; comedy is hard," into a caution that, while comedy is easy, writing about its inherent melancholy is to be done carefully and with a strong sense a humour(s).

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[131] Burton I, 144. Burton is quoting Solomon, Prov. xiv, 13: "*Extremum gaudii luctus occupat.*"

Chapter 2: Opening Act: Doublings, Couplings, and Early Melancholy

In an essay concerned with Shakespeare's early comedies, Ralph Cohen remarks that teaching these plays often involves a greater degree of difficulty than teaching any of Shakespeare's tragedies. According to him, the problem revolves around the expectation of entertainment. He writes that while students

> expect the tragedies not to be funny, so any humour a teacher shows them is a bonus [they] approach the comedies with the reverse expectations: their expectation that the comedies will not have depth makes a teacher's word to the contrary look to them like 'reading in,' and their expectation that the comedies will be funny puts teachers in the position of explaining the jokes—always a losing proposition for comedies.[132]

The burden of anticipation Cohen describes also relates to a latent critical bias against early Shakespearean comedy, which conceives of these plays as "Shakespeare's apprenticeship,"[133] a rough sketch of the more sophisticated dramatic style that later emerges. This chapter aims to partially rectify this misconception by arguing that both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost* demonstrate complex engagements with melancholy that profit the themes of love, identity and communal experience that infuse both plays. Read concurrently, they provide stark evidence that, even in its earliest incarnation, Shakespearean comedy relies on melancholy as an integral component of its structure. In *The Comedy of Errors*, melancholy lies at the core of an exploration of identity and lineage, where each male member of a fragmented familial unit affects it in some fashion. The humour, which dovetails with their search for lost kin, can be understood to both affirm and challenge their sense of identity. In *Love's Labor's Lost*, the influence of melancholy is predominantly tied to notions of love-melancholy, as an excess the men of Navarre indulge in throughout their courtship of potential

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[132] Ralph Allan Cohen, "Teaching Shakespeare's Early Comedies," In *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies,* ed. Michael J. Collins, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 228-245, 228.

[133] David Bevington, "*The Comedy of Errors*," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed., New York: Longman, 1997, 2-4, 2.

lovers. Unlike in *Errors*, these characters know who they are, and this self-knowledge, to an overwhelming degree, purports melancholy.

Despite its significant function within comic structures, the need to purge melancholy nevertheless manifests itself in each play's concluding moments. Shakespeare's early comedies stress the need for characters to do away with such behaviour so as to partake in celebratory rituals. The effort to eradicate melancholy comes across through an extensive coupling of its *dramatis personae*, which displays an inherent potential for heterosexual symmetry. I suggest that the endings of both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost* actually question the efficiency with which this process carries itself out. Regardless of the family reunion, the male characters of *Errors* remain vulnerable to melancholic tendencies, and their happiness beyond the play appears tenuous. Similarly, *Love's Labor's Lost* abrupt ending, ushered in by the announcement of the French king's death, shatters the possibility for a joyful outcome. This ambiguity is intimated rather than illustrated on stage, but the failure to dispel melancholy obscures otherwise joyous conclusions in both plays. Ultimately, it proves foretelling of subsequent comic works, in which the coalescence of melancholy and comedy grows increasingly problematic.

All in the Family: Melancholic Identities in *The Comedy of Errors*

Barbara Freedman undoubtedly said it best when she wrote that "virtually every good critical introduction to *The Comedy of Errors* apologizes for the play."[134] To say that the comedy has experienced a tumultuous critical afterlife would be understating the relentless attacks on its apparent dramatic immaturity when contrasted with what is traditionally

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[134] Barbara Freedman, "Egeon's Debt: Self-Division and Self-Redemption in *The Comedy of Errors*," *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 360-83, 360.

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expected of Shakespearean comedy. Yet, the play recently enjoyed a renewed and more sustained critical focus from scholars such as Freedman, Jonathan Gil Harris and David Schalkwyk, whose readings call attention to its more serious dimension.[135] As Robert Miola writes, *The Comedy of Errors* requires "double vision," since "the traditional reading of this play as simple or pure comedy directly opposes more recent evaluations … which perceive in *Errors* dark and disturbing elements."[136] Despite this surge in critical attention, the importance of melancholy within the play remains largely neglected. For most scholars, Antipholus of Syracuse' initial melancholic state dissipates once the mistaken identity crisis is triggered, its potential for comedy overmatched by the latter's inherently farcical nature. In other words, this chapter looks to counter the prevailing interpretation that "melancholy is soon forgotten when madness seems to enter."[137]

Seeking to complement readings that argue for its dramatic intricacy, I contend that *The Comedy of Error*s' depth can be located primarily in its development of melancholy. If the play is to be understood as a quest for self-identification and the recovery of a fragmented familial unit, melancholy reveals itself as its adhesive agent, guiding the befuddled characters towards a satisfying resolution. While the affect is embodied primarily by Antipholus of Syracuse—evidently linked to his pressing desire to wander through city of Ephesus as he attempts to locate missing family members—melancholy provides a tether that links together the multiple masculine identity crises that develop throughout. The play offsets masculine,

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[135] See David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008, 80-114; Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama, Mercantilism and Disease in Shakespeare's England*, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 29-51; Barbara Freedman has written extensively on the play, but her most insightful engagement with it remains "Reading Errantly: Misrecognition and the Uncanny in *The Comedy of Errors*," in *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis and Shakespearean Comedy*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991, 78-113.
[136] Robert S. Miola, "The Play and the Critics", In *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert S. Miola, New York: Garland, 1997, 3-51, 38.
[137] William C. Carroll, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy*, Princeton: Princeton, UP, 1985, 67.

melancholic characters with their female counterparts and, in doing so, complements the ongoing process of doubling that brings the comedy towards a climatic sequence of heterosexual coupling. The need to purge melancholy from the stage remains imperative but, in the final, recuperative moments, doubt lingers as to the efficiency of such a drive. Thus, the play underscores melancholy's dualistic relationship with comedy, contributing to its comic progression while obfuscating its resolution.

The Comedy of Errors offers extensive revisions of its principal source, Plautus' *The Brothers Maneachmus*: Shakespeare transforms the Plautine backstory into a subplot involving the twin's father, he separates the family during a terrible shipwreck (while one of the brothers in Plautus is kidnapped at a market), and locates the long-lost mother in the same city where her two sons eventually meet.[138] None is more striking, however, than the doubling of characters it undertakes. From the single set of twins in Plautus, Shakespeare develops dual pairs: merchant brothers (the Antipholi) and their servants (the Dromios) who were separated along with their masters following the wreck at sea. This duplication extends beyond the siblings as well, as evidenced by the presence of the Ephesian brother's wife (Adriana) and sister-in-law (Luciana), the latter of which pre-emptively ensures a romantic possibility for the Syracusan twin once the reunion takes place.[139] Conversely, both their father (Egeon) and mother (Emilia) are present, though their identities remain hidden from other characters until the last act. This extensive doubling underscores not only the potential for an exhaustive

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[138] "The Two Menaechmuses," In *Plautus*, trans. Paul Nixon, ed. T. E. Page, Vol. II, Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 1951, 363-487. In Plautus' version the entire backstory is recalled in a short prologue (1-107), the brothers are orphans and lose sight of each other at a market. The play's argument explains that "a Sicilian merchant, who had twin sons, died after one of them had been stolen. To the boy who was left at home his paternal grandfather gave the name of the stolen brother, calling him Menaechmus instead of Sosicles," 365.
[139] This is a stark contrast with the original play, which only contains a nameless and mostly passive wife character.

family reunion, but the inherent self-division of characters that prevail throughout the play as well, echoing Kiernan Ryan's understanding of identity in *Errors* as "neither natural nor immutable.[140] Ryan's interpretation points to the play's central exploration of transformation through self-division, which, I suggest, develops mainly within a melancholic framework.[141] From the outset, the play's farcical elements are contrasted with the wistfulness of melancholic expectations.

Shakespeare's play opens with the Egeon providing the comedy's expository as well as emotional frameworks. Held prisoner due to a decree that pits his native Syracusan land against the city of Ephesus, Egeon relates the tragedies that befell his family to Duke Solinus. He informs him that

> A heavier task could not have been imposed
> Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable.
> Yet, that the world may witness that my end
> Was wrought by nature, not by vile offense,
> I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave (I, i. 31-35).

The Comedy of Errors thus begins with the profession of unspeakable sorrow, as Egeon intimates that his life was marred by insurmountable tragedies that lead to his current unhappy predicament. Condemned to die at sunset "unless a thousand marks be levièd" (I, i. 21), Egeon recounts his life story with surprising poignancy given the comic structure he inhabits. As several critics point out, the narrative framework he instils is rooted in the traditions of the romance genre.[142] Freedman, who identifies Egeon as the figurehead of what she terms the

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[140] Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 16.

[141] "The realization that people's identities and relationships are neither natural nor immutable," Ryan writes, "also opens up the prospect of transforming them for the better," 16.

[142] See Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*, London: Continuum, 2009, 35-49; Charles Withworth, "Rectifying Shakespeare's Errors: Romance and Farce in Bardeditry," in *The Comedy of Errors: Critical* Essays, ed. Robert S. Miola, New York: Garland, 1997: 227-260; and Janet Adelman, "Male Bonding in Shakespeare's Comedies," in *Shakespeare's Rough Magic: Renaissance Essays in Honour of C. L. Barber*, eds. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985, 73-103.

play's "remarkable drive toward closure through a romance plot of the separation and reunion,"[143] suggests that the grieving merchant bookends the play, going as far as insinuating that the whole story can be envisioned as Egeon's dream.[144] Structurally, his disappearance after this first scene, along with his re-entrance in the last act, being led by the duke to the "melancholy vale, / The place of death and sorry execution" (V, i. 120-121) acquiesce to such a claim.[145] I would push the idea further by arguing that Egeon encases the comedy in melancholy. His impending death serves as a reminder of when the play will effectively culminate (the time of his execution). The numerous temporal references made throughout play help maintain such emotional tenor within the dramatic frame.[146] In doing so, melancholy reverberates *throughout* the play (not merely in its extremities) in spite of the increasingly farcical nature of the ensuing mistaken identity plot. Egeon's character thus remains free of comic expectations while holding a crucial function within the drive towards a joyous resolution, a pattern that his Syracusan offspring will later reiterate.

Though it becomes clear—as soon as Antipholus of Syracuse enters in the following scene and makes explicit mention of his possessing a thousand marks—that all will ultimately end favourably, the opening of *The Comedy of Errors* strikes an unexpectedly powerful melancholic note. Egeon's description of the splintering of family draws out the key elements through which this sense of melancholy pervades the play. His soliloquy underscores an

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[143] Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 262.

[144] Freedman writes that "Egeon's story is the missing link which turns an arbitrary plot into a meaningfully directed fantasy," "Egeon's Debt," 374.

[145] See also Harry Levin, "Two Comedies of Errors," In *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert S. Miola, New York: Garland, 1997, 113-134. "The framing figure of Egeon," he writes, "contributes an emotional tension, at the very outset, to what would otherwise have remained a two-dimensional drama," 125.

[146] As Bevington notes, the play, from this moment on, "moves towards [the execution] with periodic observations that it is now noon, now two o'clock, and so on," "*The Comedy of Errors*," 2.

oscillation between joyful and tragic instances that comes to represent an intrinsic dramatic

feature:

> In Syracusa was I born, and wed
> Unto a woman happy but for me,
> And by me, had not our hap been bad.
> With her I lived in joy; our wealth increased
> By prosperous voyage I often made
> To Epidamnum,[147] till my factor's death
> And the great care of goods at random left
> Drew me from kind embracement of my spouse (I, i. 36-43).

From the very beginning, Egeon's life story can be seen as fluctuating between the mirth of

marital enjoyment and the melancholy of separation and estrangement. The passage's

conflation of blissful matrimony with the death of Egeon's commercial agent highlights the

emotional duality of his lines, denoted in the polyptotonic alignment of happiness with poor

fortune ("hap"). The speech also underscores the tripartite model of masculine identity that

subsequently prevails in the play. Egeon sequentially defines himself through his birth, his

marriage and his profession, each marker being tied to his current longing. Egeon's happiness

stems largely from his marital union and the wealth enjoyed from fruitful business ventures.

Yet, the play negates these attributes from its onset. His Syracusan origins and mercantile

livelihood make him an enemy of the Ephesian state,[148] while the shipwreck he recounts has

severed his familial ties. This structure is repeated later in Egeon's two sons, who operate

within a similar structure, as they see their identities challenged due to a nullifying of their

birth and marital statuses.

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[147] The mention of "Epidamnum" in line forty-two echoes the setting of Plautus' version in Epidamnus.
[148] As Solinus proclaims near the beginning of the scene, "'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us, / It hath in solemn synods been decreed, / Both by the Syracusians and ourselves, / To admit no traffic to our adverse towns … if any Syracusian born / Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies," (I, i. 12-15; 17-18).

The symbiotic association of melancholy with a division of identity stands at the core of Lynn Enterline's reading of the play, which conflates the process of self-identification with notions of property. "The disappearance of either identity or value," she argues, "produces what is explicitly called 'melancholy'."[149] Enterline's interpretation establishes an additional link between the melancholy that typifies the play's masculine characters and the merchant craft,[150] a link which amends the model of masculine identity previously delineated. Contrary to his birth or marriage, it is not the negation of Egeon's profession which engenders melancholy but, rather, its very nature. The passage quoted earlier singles out mercantile concerns ("the great care of goods at random left") as occasioned by the sea voyage during which the family encounters the storm:

> A league from Epidamnum had we sailed
> Before the always-wind-obeying deep
> Gave any tragic instance of our harm.
> But longer did we not retain much hope;
> For what obscurèd light the heavens did grant
> Did but convey unto our fearful minds
> A doubtful warrant of immediate death (I, i. 62-68).

The passage conveys anxieties surrounding the potential threats of maritime travel, itself a linchpin of the commercial ventures. The terrible storm and its "warrant of immediate death" strikes as Egeon and his family are returning from a commercial visit to Epidamnum. The mercantile lifestyle, it seems, exacerbates melancholic tendencies through its capacity for

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[149] Lynn Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995, 191-192.

[150] For discussions of the play's treatment of mercantilism, see Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, 73-77; and Curtis Perry, "Commerce, Community, and Nostalgia in *The Comedy of Errors*," In *Money and the Age of Shakespeare*, ed. Linda Woodbridge, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 39-51. For more general discussions of merchants in early modern literature, see Jean-Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986; and Laura Caroline Stevenson, *Praise and Paradox: Merchants and Craftsmen in Elizabethan Popular Literature,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984, especially 9-74. None of these studies, however, establish the link with melancholy that this chapter considers.

erasure. The possibility of losing one's grounded sense of identity amplifies during seemingly

endless oceanic drifting.[151] Egeon's panegyric conveys the importance of the wreck in not

only breaking up his family, but impressing an emotional duality unto his two sons:[152]

> My wife, more careful for the latter-born,
> Had fastened him unto a small spare mast
> Such as seafaring men provide for storms;
> To him one of the other twins was bound,
> Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.
> …
> We were encountered by a mighty rock,
> Which being violently borne upon,
> Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst,
> So that in this unjust divorce of us
> Fortune had left to both of us alike
> What to delight in, what to sorrow for (I, i. 78- 82; 101-106).

Though some confusion exists in critical discourses as to which twin Egeon fastens himself

to,[153] the passage infers an unquestionably dualistic characterization of the brothers that

dovetails with the larger theme of self-division. As the ship wrecks on the rocks, the brothers

are "violently borne upon";[154] Egeon and his wife each save a child while losing the other,

ascribing to the twins an emotional dualism that brings together mirth and melancholy; each

Antipholus simultaneously embodies what to delight *and* sorrow for. This dichotomy is

problematized somewhat once the two brothers find themselves within the same city.

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[151] This particular connection will be examined in further details in the next chapter, when discussing Antonio's melancholy in *The Merchant of Venice*.

[152] Freedman perceives an allusion to the Aegean sea in Egeon's name, given the play's biblical undertones and similarities with the story of Paul the apostles. She posits a similar idea regarding Antipholus of Ephesus' wife, Adriana (as an allusion to the Adriatic Sea), "Egeon's Debt," 380-381.

[153] Patricia Parker provides a concise history of the critical debate surrounding this notion. For her, there is no confusion, as the notion of a separation from the twin 'most cared for' emphasizes themes of self-division and of identity quest. "The original positioning of the family members on the mast," she writes, "would mean that each parent is severed from the twin he or she had been most 'careful' for. And the sense of an original crossing imparts an even greater dramatic tension to the subsequent seeking of one divided half for the other after their 'unjust divorce' (1. 104) at sea," "Elder and Younger: The Opening Scene of *The Comedy of Errors*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 325-327, 325.

[154] Note the allusion birth (born, borne) found in this particular phrase.

This first scene projects the melancholic feelings of loss professed by Egeon onto his children. As he subsequently exits, "hopeless and helpless … to procrastinate his lifeless end" (I, i. 158-159), the stage is set—literally—for the arrival of his "youngest boy, [and] eldest care" (I, i. 124) in the next scene. The entrance of Antipholus of Syracuse draws an immediate melancholic parallel with Egeon. Upon arriving in Ephesus, "stiff and weary" from a lengthy sea voyage (I, ii. 15), Antipholus offers a description of his servant Dromio to a fellow merchant as "a trusty villain, sir, that very oft, / When I am dull with care and melancholy, / Lightens my humor with his merry jests" (I, ii. 19-21). Despite acknowledging it as a passing ailment, the comment, on the heels of Egeon's introductory lament, maintains melancholy at the play's forefront. Before we can even ascertain that Antipholus is, in fact, Egeon's son, the play reiterates the previous connections between melancholy and maritime travel. Moreover, the underlying implication suggests a humoural binary between the master Antipholus and his servant Dromio. As Paster explains, in early modern England, "humoural difference guaranteed that the structure of humoralism would reflect hierarchical social values and could be used powerfully to naturalize them. Affect, that is to say, was expected to mirror the social hierarchy because both were built into the analogical order of things."[155] In other words, if melancholy plagues Antipholus of Syracuse, his servant must counter it with an equivalent display of mirth.

Through this connection, Dromio can be conceived of as a source of comic energy that emancipates the melancholic Antipholus from bearing the brunt of comic expectations. Much

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[155] Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 209. This idea is of particular interest given the fact that, at the time, the opposite conduct was anticipated of wives who were expected to mimic their husband's affectations so as to not upset them, Robert Snowse, writes that "it beseems an honest wife to frame her selfe to her husbands affect, and not to be merry, when he is melancholic, not iocund when he is sad, much less fliere, when hee is angry*," A Looking-Glass for Married Folkes*, London, 1610, 54. Quoted in Laurie E. Maguire, *Shakespeare's Names*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007, 174.

like his father, melancholy can remain Antipholus' dominant trait throughout the play without posing any structural threat to the comedy he inhabits. The humoural connection between Antipholus and Dromio also echoes David Schalkwyk's characterization of the relationship, one, he insists, that "suggests a strange intimacy between master and servant that is absent from the different-sex relationship. In addition to his more menial duties," he writes, "Dromio often plays the fool to Antipholus, presuming upon an allowed familiarity that is common in other plays."[156] For Schalkwyk, the prevailing metaphor of *The Comedy of Errors* is that of bondage—whether romantic or social—and the affinity between Antipholus and Dromio epitomizes this construct. Schalkwyk's reading of identity in the play as "relational, expressed largely through material bonds of love and service rather than the representation of interiority"[157] benefits a humoural interpretation of this scene, if only because it recalls the play's ongoing affective duality of mirth and melancholy in both its reciprocal and relational qualities. Though this particular relationship exists socially, between master and servant rather than congenitally, the dyad nevertheless positions Antipholus of Syracuse as melancholic. At the close of this scene, he delivers his well-known soliloquy on identity, estrangement, and family. Left alone on stage, he remarks that

> He that commends me to my own content
> Commends me to the thing I cannot get.
> I to the world am like a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
> Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself;
> So I, to find a mother and a brother,
> In quest of them, unhappy, loose myself (I, ii. 33-40).

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[156] Schalkwyk lists *King Lear*, *Twelfth Night*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Taming of the Shrew* as examples of a similar relationship amongst Shakespearean characters, 86.
[157] Schalkwyk, 88.

Critics who argue for Antipholus' elusive sense of interiority usually rely on this utterance as prime evidence of an intricacy that exists beyond the farcical compounds of dramatic plot.[158] The passage, bookended by notions of being "content," then "unhappy," also echoes the dovetailing of mirth and melancholy established in the previous scene. Moreover, it correlates Antipholus' melancholy with the feelings of anonymity he experiences when setting foot in an unfamiliar city in search of long-lost family members. Keeping in with Egeon's expressions of emotional turmoil, Antipholus relies on water imagery in order to communicate his woes. Rather than its implied liquidity, it is the feeling of incommensurability that accompanies the image that begs further attention.[159] The impossibility of maintaining a distinct identity that he articulates, much like a drop of water lost in the sea' impenetrable vastness, speaks to a profound sense of alienation. Melancholy, is a limitless ocean, an overwhelming force where one can, literally, lose oneself.[160]

The simile also reinforces the link between melancholy, maritime travel, and the mercantile lifestyle introduced in Egeon's speech, with an added emphasis, as Collette Gordon argues, on the idea of unstable circulation. According to her, "ocean and market are both liquid media. In different modes, with different generic inflections, each allows unpredictability, danger and opportunity; most importantly for the narrative, each promotes rapid, random circulation that allows things (here a set of identical twins) to be confounded."[161] Gordon's figure of a volatile, endless circulation favours the proliferation of melancholy within the play since the confusion ushered in by Antipholus' arrival maintains his

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[158] See Carroll, especially 68-69; and Perry, 39-40, for relevant examples.
[159] As discussed in my introduction, the melancholy humour was thought to possess cold and dry qualities. Phlegm, being cold and wet, was associated with water, see Babb, 18.
[160] See Enterline, 200-203, for a similar interpretation.
[161] Collette Gordon, "Crediting errors: Credit, Liquidity, Performance and *The Comedy of Errors*," *Shakespeare* 6.2 (June 2010): 165-184, 166.

identity in flux. The passage foreshadows the doubling of his brother that he will produce upon entering Ephesus.[162] For René Girard, the reference to drops of water reveals the play's focus on mimetic desire. According to him,

> the comparison of the twins with drops of water enables Shakespeare to express the undifferentiating effect of the mimetic process on everybody involved. If desire is a drop of water seeking more water it cannot achieve its goal without losing its distinctiveness. It is significant that the result of desire be presented not as the union of one drop with another single drop but as the dissolving of both into the ocean. The ocean corresponds to the contagious plague of mimetic desire that spreads to the community.[163]

The dissolving drops of water Girard describes carry the slightly veiled threat for the Ephesian community that Antipholus, already unwanted due to his Syracusan pedigree, can easily infiltrate their community and 'infect' it with his melancholy.[164] Paradoxically, this process of "non-difference" ultimately proves therapeutic for Antipholus of Syracuse. Entering Ephesus triggers the process by which his melancholy will be purged; by losing himself, he begins to lose his melancholy as well.

The subsequent step in Girard's theory, the idea that differentiation is only possible through marriage,[165] draws attention to a nearly-identical simile in the next act by Adriana, Antipholus of Ephesus' wife. Upon encountering the Syracusan merchant, Adriana mistakenly addresses him as her husband. She declares to him that

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[162] Drops of water are often used to describe identical twins in literature. In Plautus' version, upon seeing the twins reunited on stage, Messenio the slave declares "I never did see two men more alike. / No drop of water, no drop of milk, is more like another" (V, i. 478-479). Robert Miola actually identifies this image as "one of Plautus' favourite similes," "The Influence of New Comedy on *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*," in *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies*, ed. Michael J. Collins, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 21-34, 24.

[163] René Girard, "Comedies of Error: Plautus-Shakespeare-Moliere," In *American Criticism in the Poststructuralist Age*, ed. Ira Konigsberg, Ann Arbour: U of Michigan, 1981, 66-86, 82.

[164] Freedman offers a similar reading of the scene, arguing that Antipholus of Syracuse "emerges from the sea only to threaten drown those ashore; he lends himself to a protean principle of meaning and identity and so takes the shape or place of whatever he encounters," *Staging the Gaze*, 268.

[165] Girard, 83.

> As easy mayst thou fall
> A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
> And take unmingled thence that drop again
> Without addition or diminishing,
> As take from me thyself, and not me too (II, ii. 124-128).

Though the attempt at self-identification that each speech communicates bespeaks a certain sense of interiority not unlike Antipholus of Syracuse,[166] Adriana's turmoil is not grounded in melancholy. She expresses a partial effacement of her identity through marriage (a feeling extrapolated by the fact that she is addressing the wrong man; she is not *his* wife). Yet her use of the simile is overwhelmingly positive, the dissolving of water drops is meant to infer loyalty, devotion, and commitment to her husband; the relationship she envisions is that of an equal partnership, without addition or diminution. This position offers a stark contrast to the existential angst that plagues the travelling merchant. Antipholus' attitude betrays an inherent passivity, an offshoot of his melancholic desire to lose himself in Ephesus. The vivacity Adriana shows while pleading her case and chiding her own husband, particularly in contrast to her more submissive sister, Luciana, distinguishes her from such apathy. She stands at the first of several female comic characters who offset masculine embracings of melancholy.[167] This liveliness is best observed in Adriana's relationship to Luciana, which embodies another dramatic doubling of characters. Not only does Luciana provide Antipholus of Syracuse with a proper romantic interest once the mistaken identity crisis is resolved, she also offers a counterweight to Adriana's rather contemptuous view of marriage.[168] In their first scene

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[166] Schalkwyk maintains that they epitomize the notion of relational identity in the play. "Such dependency," he writes, "is conveyed most poignantly in the longing that Antipholus and Adriana express, in almost identical terms, about their natural ties in love to another whose loss entails their own dissolution," 88.

[167] This contrast grows in prevalence and importance throughout Shakespeare's comic canon, and will be of particular focus in later chapters.

[168] Maguire, who perceives this particular doubling as central to the play, writes that "Ephesus is associated with a pair of models for female conduct (one independent, one submissive) whose polarity resonates throughout the play," 153.

together, the two women, awaiting the arrival of Antipholus of Ephesus for dinner, discuss the role of women in marriage. It is Luciana, the celibate sister, who advocates for obedience. To her assertion that "headstrong liberty is lashed with woe" (I, ii. 15), Adriana passionately retorts that

> They can be meek that have no other cause.
> A wretched soul, bruised with adversity,
> We bid be quiet when we hear it cry;
> But were we burdened with like weight of pain,
> As much or more we should ourselves complain.
> So thou, that hast no unkind mate to grieve thee,
> With urging helpless patience would relieve me;
> But if thou live to see like right bereft,
> This fool-begged patience in thee will be left (II, i. 33-41).

Adriana makes a case for experience over idealism, declaring to her sister that her unrealistic view of marriage stems from the fact that Luciana has not experienced such a relationship concretely. Rather than advocating unwavering obedience, Adriana argues for a marriage of complete devotion between spouses that betray an awareness of the difficulties associated with such a stance involve. Her answer reiterates her appeal for a merging of identities with Antipholus of Ephesus.

In a sense, both Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana vie to identify themselves through Antipholus of Ephesus (as brother and wife, or merchant and woman). This idea recalls the identity structure tied to birth, marriage, and profession that was introduced in the opening scene. In this sense, the fact that Antipholus of Ephesus has yet to appear on stage is not fortuitous. As the key to solving both Adriana and the Syracusan Antipholus' crises, delaying his entrance allows for a sufficient contrast of their respective longings so as to heighten the dramatic stakes. Once each of their yearnings for identity has been expressed, the other

Antipholus can join in the mistaken identity crisis, providing a foreseeable endgame.[169]

Though complimentary, the brother's involvement in the mistaken identity crisis is marked by an important generic distinction. While Antipholus of Ephesus' existence is distraught by the arrival of his twin, his share of the dramatic plot unfolds much more farcically than his brother's melancholic wanderings. Having grown up in Ephesus, unaware of his family's history, Antipholus of Ephesus does not experience the identity crisis in the same manner as his brother does. It is the Syracusan twin who constantly questions his identity and that of those he encounters, since both twins are believed to be Antipholus of Ephesus throughout.[170] When his Syracusan brother wonders at the events he has been experiencing, we get a glimpse of the life that the Ephesian merchant leads:

> There's not a man I meet but doth salute me
> As if I were their well-acquainted friend,
> And everyone doth call me by my name.
> Some tender money to me; some invite me;
> Some other give me thanks for kindness;
> Some offer me commodities to buy.
> Even now a tailor called me in his shop
> And showed me silks that he had bought for me,
> And therewithal took measure of my body (IV, iii. 1-9).

Unlike his sea-faring brother, Antipholus of Ephesus seemingly benefits from a socially-validated sense of identity. His musings sketch out the extensive social relations which his brother entertains in Ephesus. One of the fellow merchant characters in the play describes him as being:

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[169] Freedman draws a parallel between the brother's tribulations in the play and Freud's notion of the Uncanny, arguing that it is through this structure that the play fashions its depth. "Read in this manner," she concludes, "*The Comedy of Errors* no longer appears to be a random and senseless farce of mistaken identities, but a carefully orchestrated psychological drama in which dissociated parts of the self are meaningfully united," "Egeon's Debt," 365. For her discussion of the Uncanny, see 365-366.

[170] See Karen Newman, *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character: Dramatic Convention in Classical and Renaissance Comedy*, New York: Methuen, 1985, 81. Newman refers to Antipholus of Syracuse as the "traveling brother," as opposed to his Ephesian counterpart (the "citizen" brother), a distinction which emphasizes Antipholus of Syracuse's lack of a grounded sense of identity, 78.

> Of very reverend reputation, sir,
> Of credit infinite, highly beloved,
> Second to none that lives here in the city.
> His word might bear my wealth any time (V, i. 5-8).

Antipholus of Ephesus seemingly rejects the identity model to which his father and brother subscribe as he profits from social markers that confirm who he is: a favourable reputation and commendable credit in Ephesus. Keeping in mind the play's conflation of joy and sorrow, the Ephesian brother's behaviour throughout does not suggest a melancholic countenance. Likewise, his relationship to his servant Dromio does not appear to hinge on the same humoural structure as that of the Syracusan pair. Until he is locked up and undergoes a mock exorcism at the hands of the bumbling physician Pinch, Antipholus of Ephesus' reaction to the mistaken identity crisis proves altogether moderated. When he is effectively locked out of his own house and shunned by his wife, he merely declares: "You have prevailed. I will depart in quiet, / And, in despite of mirth, mean to be merry" (III, i. 107-108). His ability to 'act merry' despite the vexing situations he encounter mirror Antipholus of Syracuse's maintaining of a melancholic nature while in Ephesus. Nevertheless, his brother's arrival disrupts this seemingly grounded sense of identity, as characters mistake Antipholus of Syracuse for his Ephesian sibling, negating the markers previously listed. While the emotional dualism persists, both brothers are affected by the melancholic identity crisis that develops.

It is before the city's Priory that this identity crisis culminates.[171] Trying to escape imprisonment, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse seek asylum within the convent's walls, as

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[171] Bruce Smith, echoing Arnold Van Gennep's theory concerning rites of passage, emphasizes the tripartite nature of the play's setting, noting that "the Phoenix, the Porpentine, [and] the Abbey … may have been realized on the stage … as three stage houses of the sort familiar from medieval drama or as three openings in the hall screen, each with a label to identify it," "A Night of Errors and the Dawn of Empire: Male Enterprise in *The Comedy of Errors,*" in *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies*, ed. Michael J. Collins, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 102-125, 111.

Adriana, Luciana, Duke Solinus and Egeon, as well as the "real" Antipholus and Dromio,
eventually amass at its doors, setting the stage for the long-awaited reunion. The appearance of
the Abbess supplies the final piece of the puzzle. Emilia represents the last missing member of
Egeon's family, the twins' lost mother, living in the Priori all these years without any
knowledge of her sons' or husband's whereabouts. Much like Adriana, she offers an emotional
contrast to her melancholic, male counterparts.[172] By becoming Abbess, she effectively
sidesteps the identity problems that afflicted the rest of her family. Her position grants her
both the authority and status necessary to put an end to the confusion. She initially questions
Adriana regarding her husband's condition, as she believes him to currently be in her care.
Asked about her husband's mental state, Adriana replies that

> *This week* he hath been heavy, sour, sad,
> And much, much different from the man he was;
> But till this afternoon his passion
> Ne'er brake into extremity of rage (V, i. 45-48, emphasis mine).

The second part of her speech clearly describes the aftermath of being mistreated by Pinch.
Yet, the play's strict compliance to temporal unity allows for an interpretation of Adriana's
revelation as evidence of Antipholus of Ephesus' inherent melancholy. Following the time
frame supplied by Egeon's impending execution, Antipholus of Syracuse has been in Ephesus
less than a day. Yet, his brother appears to have exhibited melancholic symptoms up to a week
prior, a fact that furthers the idea that melancholy presents itself in the play as a family
disorder. Adriana's mention of his flaccid demeanour recalls Antipholus of Syracuse's

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[172] As noted by Carol Thomas Neely, the Abbess, "once she entered the Priory … seems never to have been
melancholy, nor to have sought her family," *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early
Modern Culture*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004, 144.

acknowledgement of being intermittently "dull with care and melancholy" (I, ii. 20).[173] The

Abbess subsequently questions Adriana on what could have caused this behaviour:

> Hath he not lost much wealth by wrack of sea?
> Buried some dear friend? Hath not else his eye
> Strayed his affection in unlawful love—
> A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
> Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing?
> Which of these sorrows is he subject to? (V, i. 49-54).[174]

Her questions offer several possible sources for the mysterious melancholy, all of which

clearly relate to a specific source of worry. When Adriana rejects all of them, the query rapidly

morphs into an accusation, as Emilia concludes that

> Thereof came in that the man was mad.
> The venom clamors of a jealous woman
> Poison more deadly than man's dog tooth.
> …
> Thou sayst his sports were hindered by thy brawls.
> Sweet recreation barred, what doth ensue
> But moody and dull melancholy,
> Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair,
> And at her heels a huge infectious troop
> Of pale distemperatures and foes to life? (V, i. 68-70; 77-82).

Without hesitation, the Abbess ascribes blame to Adriana, hinting at daily exacerbations of her

husband's humour.[175] Her diagnosis, suggesting that Antipholus grew melancholic due to a

lack of recreations, is an inherently Galenic idea that wrestles the ailment away from its all-

encompassing identity-shattering nature, if only momentarily. Such an analysis proves

somewhat reductive. Though Emilia accurately senses discord between husband and wife, she

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[173] Mariangela Tempera argues that the melancholy of both brothers can be perceived as a "strategy that serves to extend their physical similarities [and] also to their mental character," "'Now I play a merchant's part': The Space of the Merchant in Shakespeare's Early Comedies," in *Italian Studies in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, eds. Michele Marrapodi and Giorgio Melchiori, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1999, 152-164, 155.

[174] Interestingly, the Abbess' initial guess of either financial or romantic problems echo that of Salerio and Solanio when they attempt to pinpoint a cause for Antonio's sadness at the onset of *The Merchant of Venice*, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

[175] The Abbess' comment echoes the notion examined earlier that wives were expected to mimic their husbands' affectation. See Maguire, 174.

is not aware of the familial history at work or of its effect on the merchant's demeanour. Given the dramatic importance allotted to Adriana's emotional turmoil earlier on, she cannot be thought of as a mere irritant for her husband. In any case, the play's restrictive timeframe refuses to yield a satisfying answer to that effect. Perhaps the answers lies in-between both extremes, with the idea that all male members of the family seem to exhibit melancholic longing to varying degrees. What this possibility suggests is that, while brothers may be tonal opposites of one another as far as the play is concerned, they both seem to suffer from temporary bouts of melancholy.[176] This notion compromises the expected purging of melancholy that the comic resolution would bring about by extending the scope of the humour beyond the farcical identity crisis.[177] What remains undeniable is that the current crisis can only be resolved by having every member of the family on stage concurrently; only when the brothers are standing together can they both be certain of who they are.

At this juncture, the duke and Egeon reappear, completing the melancholic frame established in the first scene by reiterating the conditions of Egeon's execution: "Yet once again proclaim it publicly," Solinus declares, "If any friend will pay the sum for him, / He shall not die; so much we tender him" (V, i, 130-132). Antipholus of Ephesus arrive shortly thereafter to bring the crisis to its paroxysm. In their parallel pleas to the duke (V, i. 136-160; 204-254),[178] Adriana and him summarize the extent of the confusion that Antipholus of Syracuse has engendered. Their tales also delineate the extent of the marital troubles they have

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[176] It is worth nothing the dual usage of "dull" to describe each brother's melancholy (I, i. 20 and V, i. 79, respectively).

[177] As Alexander Leggatt notes of the Abbess's speech, it "it is clear enough that not all of Antipholus' problems stem from the fact that his brother is in town, and we may wonder if these problems can all be cured by the discovery of his brother," "Shakespeare's Comedy of Love: *The Comedy of Errors*" (1974), in *The Comedy of Errors: Critical* Essays, ed. Robert S. Miola, New York: Garland, 1997, 135-154, 142.

[178] This symmetry is reinforced by their nearly identical use of the word "justice." Upon the duke's entrance, Adriana clamours for "Justice, most sacred Duke, against the Abbess!" (V, i. 133). When he subsequently enters, Antipholus of Ephesus requests "Justice, most gracious Duke, O, grant me justice!" (V, i.190).

experienced because if it. The conflation outlines the participation of Antipholus of Syracuse in each of their misadventures, invalidating the conflict they have described. Together, their discourses bring the play to the brink of resolution, although, without Antipholus of Syracuse's physical presence, the confusion persists. Likewise, Egeon recognizes his son but cannot bring Antipholus of Ephesus to identify him, a failure which the grieving father attributes to the detrimental effects of Time, whose "deformèd hand / Have written strange defeatures in my face" (V, i. 299-300). As the various components of the identity crisis amalgamate, the duke appears incapable of untangling such utter chaos, judging the characters before him to be "all mated or stark mad" (V, i. 282)

The task ultimately falls to Emilia, furthering the contrast with the melancholic Egeon; while he stands at the mercy of the Solinus' authority, Emilia supersedes it in the final act by quelling the identity crisis. After heading back into the Priori, where, one assumes, she finally uncovers the truth and makes of Antipholus of Syracuse "a formal man again" (V, i. 105), the Abbess reveals him to the wonder of all present on stage. The befuddled duke declares: "One of these men is genius to the other; / And so of these, which is the natural man, / And which the spirit? Who deciphers them?" (V, i. 333-335). By untangling the Antipholi's identities, Emilia saves Egeon from his execution, reunites the family and effectively dissipates the melancholic cloud hanging over Ephesus. Reuniting with Egeon, Emilia renders "his morning story right" (V, i. 357) and, with her newly reacquired maternal status, grants her sons a rebirth, one with distinct and socially validated identities. As she surmises herself:

> The duke, my husband, and my children both,
> And you the calendars of their nativity,
> Go to a gossips' feast, and go with me;

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After so long grief, such nativity! (V, i. 404-407).[179]

For Enterline, it is Emilia's maternal status that allows her to resolve the matter.[180] In this sense, the play takes on a highly feminized dimension of recovery. "The sense of error as wandering in the play," she concludes, "requires that there be a particular location to find the self. The conclusion makes this special place a specifically female one: it is the site both of female chastity (an abbey) and of reproduction (a place of childbirth)."[181] With each male family member being afflicted by melancholic longings, Emilia proves an ideal candidate to assuage all their woes by not only producing both twins on stage at the same time, but by reacquiring her roles as mother and wife.[182]

Emilia ultimately invites everyone in the Priori, promising to "make full satisfaction" of the day's errors (V, i. 400) and, although the play enjoys a satisfying resolution, the ending remains a somewhat problematic one that underhandedly reveals dramatic loose ends. It would appear that, in addition to being, "not primarily concerned with marriage at all but with male identities, male bonding, and male friendship,"[183] the play seems to be more preoccupied with male melancholy and the dramatic riffs it manages to ultimately produce. Despite the apparent blossoming interest between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana, as well as the imminent

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[179] Joseph Candido contrasts the play's final feast with the failed meals organized by both Adriana and the Courtesan earlier in the play, suggesting the dominance of Emilia over other female characters in this regard. "At the Abbess' feats," he writes, "in sharp contrast to the dinners planned by Adriana and the Courtesan, participants exist in a stable and recognizable relationship to each other," "Dining Out in Ephesus: Food in *The Comedy of Errors*" (1990), in *The Comedy of Errors: Critical* Essays, Ed. Robert S. Miola, New York: Garland, 1997, 199-226, 220. Note also the similarities, in her conflation of grief and nativity, with Egeon's constant mixing of joy and melancholy.

[180] Drawing on Lacan, Enterline insists that the mother embodies the "necessary witness to a relay that installs the narcissistic subject in an alienating, mirrored relation to itself," 206-207.

[181] Enterline, 218-219.

[182] Though she identifies the play as primarily concerned with male identities, Ann Thompson singles out *The Comedy of Errors* as "significant among the early or middle comedies due to the prominence of the mother," "'Errors' and 'Labors': Feminism and Early Shakespeare Comedy," *Shakespeare's Sweet Thunder: Essays on the Early Comedies*, ed. Michael J. Collins, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 90-101, 92-93.

[183] Thompson, 94.

reunion of Egeon and Emilia, the play does not end in marriage. At the end of *The Brother Maneachmus*, the twins profess a wish to return their home country (V, VIII. 1676). There is no such mention here and, more importantly, the return to normalcy is not complete. Though melancholy appears to have dissipated, there remains the possibility that the affliction could manifest itself again—for either or both brothers. Identity appears highly volatile at the close of the play. It is also worth noting that the play's final words belong to the Dromios, whose reunion proves much warmer (V, i. 415-427). The Antipholi are suspiciously silent in their encounter, which proves lukewarm at best, and the status of melancholy at the end of the play remains highly ambiguous. On a dramatic level, ascribing correct identities to each brother effectively terminates the comedy. Girard writes of the ending that "the recognition scene is also a resolution. When it occurs, the fun is over."[184] The same cannot be said of melancholic tendencies. If melancholy proves inherent to characters' identities beyond the day's crisis, logic decrees that it would somehow persist beyond the reunion scene.

Overall, the use of melancholy, much like *The Comedy of Errors* itself, stands as a deceptively early achievement of complexity and comic ingenuity. In its treatment of melancholy, the play underscores its ties to the mercantile profession as well as its capacity to destabilize a character's sense of identity. It also establishes a gendered contrast in which female characters prove more adept at altering the sorrow that plagues them than the men do vis-à-vis their melancholic affectations. Lastly, it underscores a key feature of comic melancholy that resonates throughout the Shakespearean comic corpus, the idea that the concept obfuscates this early comic text by problematizing its ending and coating its resolution in ambiguity. The play introduces several dramatic conceptualizations of

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[184] Girard, 66.

melancholy that are reworked in subsequent comedies. *Love's Labor's Lost* proves a far cry

from such a tale of identity trauma and maritime wandering, but it comes to rest on a similarly

extensive development of melancholic concerns.

Shattered Symmetry and the Bittersweet Melancholy of *Love's Labour Lost*

> Well, I do nothing in the world but lie, and lie in
> My throat. By heaven, I do love, and it hath taught me to
> Rhyme and to be melancholy, and here [*showing a paper*] is
> Part of my rhyme, and here [*touching his breast*] my melancholy (IV, iii. 9-12).[185]

I quote from the Norton edition of *Love's Labor's Lost* because the inserted stage

directions in Berowne's affirmation offer a concise assessment of the thematic crux that

infuses the play. It is essentially concerned with love, melancholy, and love-melancholy, in

both its internalized humoural representation and its external written form. Additionally, as I

argue in this chapter, the function of melancholy in the play echoes that of *The Comedy of

Errors* in enabling dramatic progression before ultimately thwarting its resolution. The comic

structure in which it operates, hinging on a series of symmetrical heterosexual couplings, is

even more palpable than it was in Ephesus.[186] The play presents an octet of quasi-

interchangeable lovers, engaged in what C. L. Barber describes as "wooing games" over the

course of the entire play.[187] As an intricate part of their ongoing courtship, the affecting of

love-melancholy is a widespread occurrence that inflects the discourse of most characters and

supplies numerous opportunities for comedy. The comic melancholy that proves the focus of

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[185] William Shakespeare, "Love's Labour's Lost," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen J. Greenblatt, New York: Norton, 1997, 733-804, 768.

[186] Harry Levin writes that "symmetry is imposed by the dramatis personae. Shakespeare's fondness for reduplicating his romantic couples surpasses itself," "Sitting in the Sky (*Love's Labour's Lost*)," in *Shakespeare's Rough Magic: Renaissance Essays in Honour of C. L. Barber*, eds. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1985, 113-130, 115.

[187] Barber, 148.

this dissertation seeps in predominantly through two dramatic outlets. It is embodied by the character of Don Armado, whose feigned, exaggerated melancholic affectation offers an underhanded critique of the characters who mock it. Beyond this idea, melancholy resonates most strongly in the abrupt tonal shift of the final act, precipitated by the death of the French king. Though the overall treatment of melancholy appears lighter at first glance, the news of his death eradicates any possibility for a cheerful ending. Even more so than in *The Comedy of Errors*, this emotionally ambiguous conclusion foreshadows what is to come in Shakespearean comedy, as melancholy becomes increasingly problematic from a generic standpoint.

Few scholars have addressed the play's development of melancholy directly, focusing instead on the comedy's linguistic grandiloquence, on its multifarious of allusion to historical figures,[188] or on the epitomizing of notions of love and courtship that the courtly setting of Navarre affords. Carla Mazzio offers the most extensive study of the concept in relation to the early modern print culture. For her, melancholy channels the inadequacies of masculine professions of love in the face of a growing printing industry.[189] As she explains,

> the melancholy of love articulates a melancholy of speech in a world dominated by technologies of writing and print. That is, love melancholy, the most prominent disease in the play, is at once a dramatic realization of well-known Petrarchan conceits … and

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[188] Gillian Woods contends that, in writing *Love's Labor's Lost*, Shakespeare was keenly attuned to early modern historical events and figures. Chief amongst these was the conversion of the real Navarre (the King of France) from Protestantism to Catholicism and the anxieties it created for the English. "Catholicism and Conversion in *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *How to Do Things with Shakespeare*: *New Approaches, New Essays*, ed. Laurie E. Maguire, Oxford: Blackwell, 2008: 101-13, 104-105.

[189] Though he focuses on poetry rather than drama, Michael Bristol identifies a similar relationship in arguing that the presence of melancholy in Shakespeare's sonnets, coupled with the growing system of circulation and readership for early modern poetry, are symptomatic of the "existence of a melancholy public … one that paradoxically grounds the public sphere in the strictly idiosyncratic experience of erotic desire and religious longing," "Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and the Publication of Melancholy," in *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge*, eds. Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, New York: Routledge, 2010, 193-211.

a historically specific ailment, articulating the oral and psychic self-estrangement of speakers living in a culture in transition to print.[190]

I concur with much of Mazzio's assessment of love-melancholy as it pertains to the young lovers' courtship, particularly her subsequent suggestion that melancholy can be imagined "primarily [as] a symptom of reading or, in the case of early modern drama, of reading aloud."[191] Her conflation of the affliction of lovesickness with its putative artistic iterations, the notion that "the melancholy of love can be seen … as a nostalgia for speech,"[192] grants the former identifiable cultural roots that situate it firmly within the highly artificial structures of courtship and poetical love that the play depicts. Since melancholy manifests itself mainly through romantic longing (and, more precisely, through its rejected or unrequited incarnation), it reiterates the potential for completion that the intended union of characters in *The Comedy of Errors* suggested. On the surface, being confined within the highly conventional setting of love-melancholy, the concept fails to permeate the comedy's fabric to the same extent. Love-melancholy seems poised to be easily remedied once the play reaches its expected conclusion of marital union and merriment. Yet, as I suggest, melancholy operates on a larger scale to offset both romantic and comic conventions. It extends beyond the emoting of love-melancholy and provides the play's central representation of behavioural excesses that it vehemently critiques.

The opening scene details an oath undertaken by Ferdinand, King of Navarre, and three young lords (Berowne, Longueville and Dumaine). Intent on turning his court into an

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[190] Carla Mazzio, "The Melancholy of Print: *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor, New York: Routledge, 2000, 186-227, 188.
[191] Mazzio, 189.
[192] Mazzio, 191.

academe for the pursuit of knowledge, Navarre calls for a rejection of romantic endeavours.

Early on, he proclaims to his lords:

> Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
> Live registered upon our brazen tombs,
> And then grace us in the disgrace of death,
> When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,
> Th'endeavour of this present breath may buy
> That honor which shall bate his scythe' keen edge
> And make us heirs of all eternity.
> Therefore, brave conquerors—for so you are,
> That war against your own affections
> And the huge army of the world's desires—
> Our late edict shall strongly stand in force (I, i. 1-11).

His extolling of the spiritual pilgrimage they are set to undertake emphasizes the excess that

typifies masculine characterizations in the play. Rather than temperance, he encourages the

"brave conquerors" before him to wage war against their affectations. Couched in images of

honourable death and eternal glory in the face of "cormorant devouring time," the speech

appears better suited for a history play than a comedy of courtly love. Only Berowne appears

sceptical of the pledge for an outright fasting. "Every man with his affects is born," he

professes in this first exchange, "Not by might mastered, but by special grace" (I, i. 150-151).

He thus cautions against such immoderate behaviour, advocating for equilibrium and

rationality in the face of longing.[193] "At Christmas I no more desire a rose," he declares to his

companions, "Than wish a snow in May's newfangled shows, / But like of each thing that in

season grows" (I, i. 105-107). For him, irrational and excessive desire—of any kind—proves

harmful rather than beneficiary. As he subsequently professes to his cohort: "light seeking

light, doth light of light beguile" (I, i. 77). Not only is the line excessive *rhetorically* with

repeated iterations of the word "light", but the idea that extreme agency ultimately proves self-

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[193] As will be made clear in this dissertation, this point of view gradually becomes a prevalent attitude in Shakespearean comedy that counters disproportionate displays of melancholy.

destructive constitutes a prevalent dictum within *Love's Labor's Lost*.[194] The play stages

excesses of various sorts that inevitably turn self-defeating. Characters utter barrages of words

at each other without saying much of anything.[195] The colossal oath-taking of the first scene is

rapidly discarded by every member of Navarre's Academe. Correspondingly, love-melancholy

is expressed *ad nauseam* by a plethora of characters without much dramatic *gravitas*. Each of

these examples showcases the way in which these indulgences draw ridicule. Concurrently,

the play infers that this penchant is predominantly typical of its male characters. Expectedly,

despite his reservations, Berowne pledges along with the other lords at the close of the scene.

When the French princess and her three attending ladies (Catherine, Rosaline and

Maria) enter in the following act, the play's intended symmetrical structure reveals itself.

While such parallelism somewhat mitigates the play's depth, by drawing attention to the

lover's stock quality,[196] it amplifies the development of masculine excess. Trapped within the

extreme particularities of their oath, the men's reaction to the appearance of suitable female

companions in Navarre instantaneously plunges them in the throes of love-melancholy. Their

affectation also reinforces the rigidity with which they comport themselves. The men's

perception translates into a sense of implacability when it comes to one's constitution and

capabilities. As Berowne later puts it:

> As true as we are flesh and blood can be.
> The sea will ebb and flow, heaven show his face;
> Young blood doth not obey an old decree.

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[194] Note also the explanation provided by the Riverside edition of Shakespeare's works, which expresses a similar idea: "the eye, seeking enlightenment, deprives itself of the power to see," "Love's Labour's Lost," *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Ed. G. Blakemore Evans, Boston: Houghton, 1974, 174-216, 180.

[195] At nearly twenty-three hundred, the play possesses the highest word count of any comedy and the second highest in all of Shakespearean drama behind *Hamlet*. See Ryan, 69-70.

[196] Samuel Coleridge famously wrote of the lovers in *Love's Labor's Lost's* that they "were only the embryos of characters," beholding the play as a draft of later comedic works such as *Much Ado about Nothing* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, "*Love's Labour's Lost*, from The Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton," in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays,* ed. Felicia Hardison-Londré, New York: Routeledge: 1997, 55-57, 56.

> We cannot cross the cause why we were born;
> Therefore of all hands must we be forsworn (IV, iii. 211-215).

What Berowne intimates here is that the will of man cannot curb nature, be it human or earthly. The sea will ebb and flow and young men will renege on their oaths.[197] Coupled with the idea of detrimental excess, this surrendering to romantic infatuation triggers the rampant melancholy that subsequently pervades the play.

The women hold the upper hand throughout the back-and-forth wooing games that the lovers engage in, easily thwarting the various ruses the male suitors elaborate. In doing so, they prove somewhat impervious to the love-melancholy their counterparts wallow in. More to the point, they prove wearisome of the affect, a reaction conceivably predicated on its scientifically deleterious effects on their gender. As denoted by early modern medical writings, female melancholy was a dangerous affectation. The difference between male and female melancholy amounted to a distinction between the genial and debilitating strands of the ailment,[198] where "the male-melancholic on the stage was almost always … a figure of fun. Only women were invested with genuine pathos in that role."[199] Understandably, the women hesitate to give in to their suitors' advances. A discussion between Catherine and Rosaline relating to the involvement of the King of Navarre with the former's sister delineates their perception of female melancholy:

> ROSALINE. You'll ne'er be friends with him. 'A killed your sister.
> CATHERINE. He made her melancholy, sad, and heavy,
> And so she died. Had she been light, like you,
> Of such a merry, nimble, stirring spirit,
> She might ha'been a grandam ere she died.
> And so may you, for a light heart lives long (V, ii. 13-18).

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[197] Berowne's lines also draw from the early modern belief that the blood flowed through the body in a manner reminiscent of the tides. See Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 77-78.

[198] See Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 77-134, for a discussion of the perils associated with female melancholy.

[199] Lyons, 25.

While the allusion to death most likely infers sexual intercourse, the mention of female

melancholy complicates the play's overall treatment of the concept by referring to a more

"serious" melancholy that develops *outside* of the play's immediate realm but bears

implication *within* it. Indeed, if the king did cause Catherine's sister to be melancholic, it

suggests a similar fate for the princess and her attending ladies should they yield to the

courting they receive. This is an option which not only clashes with the women's determined

attitude throughout *Love's Labor's Lost* but reiterates their reticence towards the repeated

advances of Navarre and his lords.

 The play's most explicit depiction of melancholy comes from outside of the foursomes

of young lovers. In addition to providing the necessary details concerning the academe and its

potential adherents, the initial scene introduces the play's melancholic figure *par excellence*,

Don Adriano de Armado. Following the elaboration of their oath, Navarre informs the other

men that his court

> Is haunted
> With a refinèd traveller of Spain,
> A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
> That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;
> One who the music of his own vain tongue
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
> A man of compliments, whom right and wrong
> Have chosen as umpire of their mutiny.
> The child of fancy, that Armado hight,
> For interim to our studies shall relate
> In high-borne words, the worth of many a knight
> From tawny Spain, lost in the world's debate.
> How you delight, my lords, I know not, I,
> But I protest to love to hear him lie,
> And I will use him for my minstrelsy (161-175).[200]

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[200] One notes a parallel with the introduction of the melancholy Jaques by Duke Senior in *As You Like It* before
he appears on stage: "I love to cope him in these sullen fits, / For then he's full of matter," (II, i. 68-69). Before
either character actually appears on stage, they are positioned as an object of ridicule and source of

From the onset, Armado is presented as the perennial comic foil. The king's description expounds the various "attributes" the Spanish traveller brings into the Academe, all of which allude to a flagrant posturing on Armado's part that proves a potent source of entertainment for Navarre and his men. Though the lords suffer their lot of ridicule at the hands of the women they attempt to court, they remain in a more favourable dramatic position than the Spaniard, who comes to incur the mockery of virtually every other character. The "child of fancy," Armado epitomizes exacerbation. Holofernes describes him later on through a series of excessive traits, deeming him to be too "picked, too spruce, too affected, too odd, as it were, / Too peregrinate, as I may call it (V, i. 13-14). His affecting of melancholy exemplifies the play's critique of excessive behavioural displays. In a virtual pageant of melancholic affectations, Armado's shines the brightest and he proves a primary focal point of much of the other character's scorn.

His sense of melancholy develops peripherally from the central dramatic action. He belongs primarily to the comedy's secondary plot, along with other misfits such as the clown Costard, his wench Jaquenetta, Holofernes, Sir Nathaniel, and Constable Dull.[201] Though the authenticity of the love-melancholy that strikes the men of Navarre can arouse suspicions, Armado's melancholy is overtly counterfeit. He does not appear on stage during this first scene, but manifests his presence through a written inquiry to Navarre, which the king reads aloud to the lords:

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entertainment (or mirth) for other characters. The depiction of Jaques to this effect will be discussed in further details in chapter four.

[201] Such an association, according to Harry Levin, accentuates his reliance on melancholy since to contrast such characters with the lovers, he writes, is to "contrast the Comedy of Humours with the Comedy of Manners, to conceive them as more typically in the Jonsonian than in the Shakespearean mode, "Sitting in the Sky," 116. I would argue that he differs from Jonsonian characters in the sense that the need or desire to cure him of his melancholy in never broached in the play.

> So it is, besieged with sable-colored
> Melancholy, I did commend the black-oppressing humour
> To the most wholesome physic of thy health-giving
> Air, and, as I am a gentleman, betook myself to
> Walk (I, i. 227-231).

The lines betray a classical understanding of melancholy, as a prototypical sign of superior intellect and the affect of "the malady of great minds."[202] He relies on its lexical field—its Aristotelian association with genius, its connotations to the colour black—in order to frame his address to the king, hoping to join in his Academe.[203] Conversely, his understanding of melancholy remains somewhat archaic. Armado's blind reliance on humoural terminology betrays a failure to grasp what the refined, early modern understanding of the concept and what it infers in the specific context of Navarre's court. When Armado makes his entrance in the next scene, he discusses the nature of melancholy with his Page Mote:

> ARMADO. Boy, what sign is it when a man of great spirit grows
>   Melancholy?
> MOTE. A great sign, sir, that he will look sad.
> ARMADO. Why, sadness is one and the selfsame thing,
>   Dear imp.
> MOTE. No, no, O lord, sir, no.
> ARMADO. How canst thou part sadness and melancholy,
>   My tender juvenal?
> MOTE. By a familiar demonstration of the working, my
>   tough seňor.
> ARMADO. Why 'tough seňor'? Why 'tough seňor'?
> MOTE. Why 'tender juvenal'? Why 'tender juvenal'? (I, ii. 1-12).

Armado's equating of sadness and melancholy further reveals his emotional ineptitude. Trevor remarks that his inquiry to his page "alerts sophisticates in Shakespeare's audience to the Spaniard's unfamiliarity with recent developments in theories of the passions."[204] Though this

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[202] Babb, 74.

[203] For an overview of these traits, see my Introduction, 3-13.

[204] Trevor, 15. Answering Armado's query, Trevor explains that melancholy can be thought of as "a recurring emotional condition, while sadness is—by comparison—a temporary emotional state," 17.

shortcoming can be attributed partially to his Mediterranean origins, the play positions his

affectation below that of the other lords.[205] The pattern repeats itself later on, when Mote's

antics cause his master to burst out laughing. Armado's description of his body's reaction to

laughter highlights this notion:

> A most acute juvenal—voluble and free of grace!
> By thy favour, sweet welkin, I must sigh in thy face.
> Most rude melancholy, valour gives thee place.
> …
> By virtue, though enforcest laughter; thy silly
> Thought, my spleen; The heaving of my lungs provokes
> Me to ridiculous smiling. O, pardon me, my stars! (III, i. 65-67; 74-76).

The passage showcases Armado's reliance of the physicality of his condition (in references to

the spleen and lungs) as well as the fickleness of his affectation; melancholy materializes and

dissipates at a moment's notice. The exchanges with Mote underscore the counterfeit nature of

Armado's melancholy. The page entraps him in his verbal jesting until his initial conception of

melancholy is rapidly forgotten. Through the scene, coaxed by Mote, the Spaniard's "spirit

grows heavy in love" (I, ii. 118) as he fashions his own sense of love-melancholy, directed at

the wench Jaquenetta. In a sense, their interaction provides a slight echo to the one transpiring

between Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio, where a humoural binary is maintained

between servant and master. Melancholy comes across as distinct from sadness due to the

unyielding structure that unites the two characters. While Antipholus of Syracuse's

professions suggested a budding sense of interiority, Armado, initially, is depicted in comical

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[205] As Carol Thomas Neely explains, "because the epistemological of heat drives humoural theory, climatological theory, and the discourse of lovesickness, the effects of their combination provide the grounds for projecting the most pernicious extremes of physiology, hence anatomy, hence practice away from English bodies and onto Mediterranean ones. Under pressure of this theory, in conjunction with political, cultural, and religious differences, the Mediterranean becomes constructed as a hotbed of lovesickness," "Hot Blood: Estranging Mediterranean Bodies in Early Modern Medical and Dramatic Texts," in *Disease, Diagnosis and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, eds. Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 55-68, 56.

terms. Mote constantly undercuts his antics throughout the play, as both master and servant

essentially wallow in comic expectations.

However, Armado's status as a foreigner positions his melancholy in a slightly more

intricate fashion than merely as an unyielding character type. Armado's racial

characterization, in a way, is reflective of the growing hostility between English and Spanish

monarchies at the time. For early modern England, Spain was considered "the archetypical

enemy, not only in military terms but in terms simultaneously religious and sexual, as well."[206]

I read the character in a manner concurrent to Lynne Magnusson, who describes Armado as an

"assemblage of composite parts," serving as both foreigner and as linguistic critic for other

characters. [207] Ethnicity aside, Armado affects what he perceives to be the proper melancholic

behaviour that would allow him to stand on equal grounds with the gentlemen of Navarre's

court and join the academe and in doing so, brings attention to their own characterial

deficiencies. Armado's assessment of his infatuation with Jaquenetta suggest as much:

> I do affect the very ground, which is base,
> Where her shoe, which is baser, guided by her foot,
> Which is basest, doth tread. I shall be forsworn, which
> Is a great argument of falsehood, if I love. And how
> Can that be true love which is falsely attempted? (I, ii. 161-165).

Inferred in this musing on love and courtship is that the absurdity of his disposition parodies

that of others male characters; in mocking his melancholy they undercut their own. In a sense,

Armado's reliance on melancholic *clichés* is no different than the gentlemen's bumbling

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[206] Kevin Curran, *Marriage, Performance, and Politics at the Jacobean Court*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2009, 18. Lynne Magnusson identifies a connection between the character and Antonio Perez (1534-1611), the secretary of state for Philipp II, who fled Spain and persecution, published an account of his life, and was eventually arrested for murder, "To gaze so much at the fine stranger': Armado and the Politics of English *in Love's Labor's Lost*," *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, eds. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008, 53-68, 56-57. See also Felicia Hardison Londré, "Elizabethan Views on the 'Other': French, Spanish, and Russian in *Love's Labour's Lost*," *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison-Londré, New York: Routeledge, 1997, 325-344.
[207] Magnusson, 53-54.

attempts at courtship. Both approaches are excessive and fundamentally ill-suited to the intended goal.

The last act uncovers the more serious underpinnings of Armado's melancholy, mirroring the play's general tonal shift as the wooing games come to an abrupt end. The final scene unfolds with three consecutive sequences in which a performance by certain characters draws derision. In a first instance, (V, ii. 157-265), the men come to court the women disguised as Muscovites and their female counterparts scorn them mercilessly. Navarre and his lords subsequently return (V, ii. 311-454) and are mocked once again for the absurdity of the oaths they have pledged to their beloved. Finally, the lovers gather to watch a Pageant of the Nine Worthies (V, ii. 485-698) put on by Armado and his fellow tributary characters. Here, male and female lovers join in the ridiculing of each 'actor' that takes the stage. The play's critique of excess reaches it frenzy within such a structure. In each case the play's light-hearted tone darkens ever so slightly until the pageant comes to a halt when Costard informs Armado of Jaquenetta's pregnancy (V, i. 669-674), leading to a confrontation between the two characters.

It is in these final moments that Armado reveals an unforeseen depth of character, rooted in melancholy, which grants him a complexity that is lacking in the other comic characters that populate the play. According to Thomas Greene,

> Shakespeare invests Armado's grandiloquence with a touch of melancholy. We are allowed to catch a bat's squeak of pathos behind the tawny splendor, and a lonely desire for Jaquenetta behind the clumsy condescension to her. The pathos is really affecting when he must decline Costard's challenge and confess his shirtlessness, infamonized among potentates. Nothing so touching overshadows the presentation of the gentlemen. Armado's courtship is more desperate, more clouded, and more believable.[208]

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[208] Thomas M. Greene, "*Love's Labour's Lost*: The Grace of Society," *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, Ed. Felicia Hardison-Londré, New York: Routeledge: 1997, 225-242, 233. See also Anne Barton's seminal essay on

Greene's reading implies a shift in Armado's melancholic affectation from its obvious counterfeit nature to a more genuine feeling. Once his façade crumbles in the last act, the dejection he expresses intimates deeper feelings of sorrow. The poignancy with which Armado must decline the duel with Costard (V, ii. 690-711) due to his impoverished state mitigates his otherwise overly comical nature.[209] In revealing his destitution, Armado momentarily shies away from an elaborate showcasing of melancholy to display a more genuine sorrow grounded in financial difficulties. Armado's pleas go unrequited and his reneging on the duel draws further scorn from other characters. By situating this moment within the theatrical frame of the Pageant, the play stresses the amusement that the character engenders in spite of this newly developed sense of pathos. The mocking of Don Armado comes across as just another wooing game.

In its final moments, through its powerful intimations of heterosexual symmetry, the comedy appears headed towards a sweeping pairing off of characters. The entrance of Marcade in the last scene, and the news he bears of the French king's death, not only delays this process but shatters it irreparably. The French messenger walks in following the pageant, as the wooing games reach their paroxysm:

> PRINCESS. Welcome, Marcade,
>   But that thou interruptest our merriment.
> MARCADE. I am sorry, madam, for the news I bring
>   Is heavy in my tongue. The King your father—
> PRINCESS. Dead, for my life!

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the play, in which she writes of Armado that "the grave figure of the Spanish traveller is one of the most interesting and in a sense enigmatic to appear in Love's Labour's Lost … Romantic and proud, intensely imaginative, he has retreated into illusion much further than has Berowne, creating a world of his own within the world of the park, a world peopled with the heroes of the past," "Love's Labour's Lost," Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays, ed. Felicia Hardison-Londré, New York: Routeledge: 1997, 125-144, 129-130.

[209] As Costard removes his shirt before duelling, Armado declares that he cannot reciprocate the gesture, since "the naked truth of it is, I have no shirt. I go / Woolward for penance" (V, ii. 706-707).

MARCADE.   Even so. My tale is told (V, ii. 713-717).

As explicitly stated by the princess, Marcade's brief involvement in the play brings an abrupt

end to the light-heartedness and effectively negates the possibility of a romantic resolution.

Moreover, as noted by various critics, the princess' rapid assertion of her father's demise,

coupled with Berowne's description of him as "decrepit, sick, and bedrid" earlier on (I, i. 137),

repositions the play along more serious lines than the naïve, unadulterated merriment which

previously infused it.[210] In this brief instant, the various depictions melancholy found in the

play converge onto one another to embody the harsh, tangible grief of mortality, an emotional

shift which reverberates beyond the conclusion. The news leads to a final act of oath-taking on

the lovers' part, which reveals itself to be a profoundly melancholic one. In haste to return to

their homeland, the princess and her attendants instruct the male suitors as to the sacrifice

required of them in order to eventually win their hands. The princess informs Navarre that:

> Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed
> To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
> Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
> There stay until the twelve celestial signs
> Have brought about the annual reckoning.
> If this austere insociable life
> Change not your offer made in heat of blood;
> If frosts and fasts, hard lodging, and thin weeds
> Nip not the gaudy blossoms of your love,
> But that it bear this trial, and last love;
> Then at the expiration of the year
> Come challenge me, challenge me by these deserts (V, ii. 790-801).

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[210] On the subject, Levin writes that for Katherine to have "anticipated the bad news would seem to imply a not unclouded prior state of mind," a notion which hints at the seriousness that perhaps lies beyond the play's mirthful, innocent premise. "If Shakespeare glances at the antic disposition in tragedy," he continues, "his comedy does not altogether escape from ills that flesh is heir to," "Sitting in the Sky," 127.

The princess seems untrusting of the king's chances to successfully complete the oath.[211] Her

request that Navarre undergo a one-year hermitage before resuming the courtship also betrays

more general anxieties about the excessive behaviours that male characters have displayed

while wooing them "in heat of blood." The speech also outlines the generic problem that the

French monarch's death has unearthed, asking whether the blissfulness of heterosexual

couplings, the logical end point in a play of wooing games, can survive a prolonged exposure

to the "frosts and fasts, hard lodging and thin weeds" that are part of such "austere insociable

life." Even with the conditional promise of a marital union, comic expectations cannot

reconcile the heavy sense of gloom that hangs over the play's final act.[212]

Rosalind ascribes a similarly arduous task to Berowne, beckoning him to "enforce the

painèd impotent to smile" (V, ii. 844). Her request is met with an impassionate denial: "to

move wild laughter in the throat of death? / It cannot be. It is impossible. / Mirth cannot move

a soul in agony" (V, ii. 845-847). The reply bespeaks the tonal quagmire that this final scene

represents. It interrogates the play's own conflation of romantic courtships with death,

questioning the sustainability of the laughter that animated most of the play in the wake of a

tangible source of emotional trauma. The answer the play suggests centres on temperance. In

the wake of the French king's passing, wild laughter might not be possible, but an emotional

status quo, a levelling of mirth and melancholy can provide a suitable alternative. This idea

crystalizes in the dialogue between Spring and Winter that closes out the play. This last

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[211] Her situation echoes that of both *Twelfth Night*'s Olivia, in planning to isolate herself in mourning, as well as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, who finds herself trapped by the will of her deceased father. Olivia's melancholy will be discussed in chapter four; Portia's, in chapter three.
[212] Discussing the play's problematic ending, Breitenberg argues that its "lack of comic closure leaves the women as the arbiters of their own romantic involvements; they remain in what was often considered in the Renaissance in the dangerous position of the marriageable maiden unattended, a fact underscored by the death of the princess' father," 147.

performance does not incur mockery, suggesting perhaps that the excessive and irrationality may have finally subsided.

The play thus ends with the theatricalized debate between Spring and Winter, embodied by Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes, which offers the final contrast between life and death, love and sorrow, mirth and melancholy (V, ii. 884-917).[213] The Spring's ballad, heralded by the cuckoo bird, recalls the exuberance of youth, its sights and sounds "unpleasing to a married ear" (V. ii. 901). Conversely, the night owl's panegyric champions the conviviality called forth by a cold winter's night, where "roasted crabs hiss in the bowl" (V, ii, 914). The duet underscores the play's overall plea for temperance found in "the balance implied by songs of both spring and winter; the balance within each song of images both pleasing and harsh; the harmony implied by the music that may accompany the words or the music of the words themselves."[214] I would suggest that, additionally, the songs caution for emotional temperance as well, where melancholy and mirth share the stage equally.[215]

This last idea remains a precarious reading of what is largely held to be Shakespeare's initial romantic comedy. In his *Preface to Shakespeare*, Harley Granville-Baker famously rejected the notion that the ending of the play was to be perceived as melancholy,[216] since merrier elements, according to him supplanted the darker undertones of its ending.[217] While the play possesses its share of laughs and delightful elements, the abrupt turn the comedy

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[213] See Catherine M. McLay, "The Dialogues of Spring and Winter: A Key to the Unity of *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Love's Labour's Lost: Critical Essays*, ed. Felicia Hardison-Londré, New York: Routeledge: 1997, 213- 224.

[214] Miriam Gilbert, "The Disappearance and Return of *Love's Labour's Lost*," in *Shakespeare's Sweet thunder Essays on the Early Comedies*, ed. Michael J. Collins, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 155-175, 161. Similarly, Barton writes that the "winter's stanza of the closing song [and the act on the whole] suggests … a new darkness, a strange intensity [that] forces the harmony of the play into unforeseen resolutions," 135.

[215] Though merely inferred in the play's final moments, this idea will become a central tenet of Shakespeare's larger development of comic melancholy.

[216] Harley Granville-Baker, *Preface to Shakespeare*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1946, 14.

[217] As Gilbert writes, "perhaps his emphasis on the play as dance, masque, ballet, music makes him—for this moment at least—slightly deaf to the other sounds of the play's ending," 164.

undertakes in Act Five cannot be overlooked.[218] Undeniably, the play frustrates its own set up,

echoing Berowne's dejected exclamation that "our wooing doth not end like an old play; /

Jack hath not Jill. These ladies' courtesy / Might well have made our sport a comedy" (V, ii.

864-866).

In the end, *Love's Labor's Lost*'s development of melancholy, unique in some regards,

proves congruent to *The Comedy of Errors* in its dualistic dramatic function. The concept

represents a salient feature throughout the play that accentuates its comedic sequences, but the

lingering atmosphere in its closing moments is one of sorrow that problematizes the comedy.

The play's lack of marital union, even the faint promise of one, concomitantly sheds doubt on

the effectiveness of its comic closure. Conversely, even while it ushers in images of death and

sorrow, the play, as Barton suggests, seeks to maintain a sense of the comic or romantic thread

it developed, and manages to do for most of its duration. "Not until Act Five," she writes

"does the death image become real and disturbing, and even here, until the final entrance of

Marcade, it is allowed to appear only in the imagery, or else in the recollection by some

character of a time and a place beyond the scope of the play itself."[219] It is precisely this

haunting ambiguity concerning the play's closing tone that opens the door to more detailed

explorations of melancholy in subsequent Shakespearean comedies.

The Comedy of Errors and *Love's Labor's Lost*, despite tumultuous critical afterlives

and vastly different dramatic plots, offer great insight as to Shakespeare's initial foray into the

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[218] Gilbert writes that "the darker ending puts *Love's Labour's Lost* more firmly in the camp of the anti-romantic comedies. In this context, she links the play with *The Winter's Tale*. "But while *The Winter's Tale* actually includes the time that will allow Leontes to repent at length for the great wrong he has committed and allows Shakespeare to change the theatrical weather from murderous winter to restorative spring," she writes, "*Love's Labour's Lost* takes a harsher course," 167.

[219] Anne Barton, "*As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*: Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" in *Essays, mainly Shakespearean*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994, 91-112, 136.

development of comic melancholy. In both plays, melancholy facilitates dramatic progression but ultimately imperils comic resolution. This paradoxical function sets Shakespeare apart from contemporary playwrights who depict melancholy within comic settings. Moreover, the notion that women are somewhat better suited at handling (or avoiding) melancholy is implied in characters such as Adriana, Emilia and Rosaline, a distinction that also grows in prevalence in later comic works. While an attempt to ascribe complexity to early Shakespearean comedy, thinking back to Ralph Cohen's remark, might appears as "reading in," the alternative leaves the plays in a similar state of neglect. Early comedies explore more serious dramatic elements that do not, as this chapter demonstrates, impede laughter. If anything, they act as comedic catalysts, heightening the amusement found in other aspects of the drama. Ultimately, however, the marked ambiguities of both comedies' endings, where these structures considerably erode, allow the humour to linger on beyond the comic resolution. In subsequent Shakespearean comedies, the presence of melancholy looms considerably larger and becomes far more problematic.

Chapter 3: Party Crashers: Melancholic Dissonance and the Refusal to Change

I'd never join a club that would allow a person like me to become a member.
                                                                            Groucho Marx

I open with a joke: following a snow storm, a man decides to borrow a shovel from his neighbour. As he walks towards his house, he begins to imagine what the neighbour's response to his request might be. His visualization rapidly deteriorates from a benevolent "yes," to his neighbour requesting a financial compensation, until finally, as he is ringing the doorbell, he imagines the man asking to sleep with his wife in exchange for the shovel. When the unsuspecting neighbour opens the door, he finds an irate counterpart who angrily advises him on where to shove the aforementioned tool.

Though explaining the "funny" of a story, as Simon Critchley cautions, usually amounts to a losing proposition,[220] it is worth pausing over the fact that, in this case, the comedy stems from the confusion of the man opening his door to an illogically-incensed individual. From an audience's perspective, though the story is told from the angry man's perspective, we sympathize with the befuddled neighbour. Crude punch line aside, the story illustrates the dynamics of what I perceive to be the next phase of melancholic characterization in Shakespearean comedy. I suggest that this premise mirrors a dramatic pattern inherent to Shakespearean comedy, where melancholic characters strike a surprisingly dissonant note and prove ultimately averse to comic moods and conventions. This chapter thus argues that the symmetrical structure of romantic pairings that sought to dissipate melancholy from earlier comedies is no longer capable of ushering inclusive comic conclusions. Characters that show no intention of altering their melancholic dispositions must be cast aside, since they come to

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[220] As he writes, "a joke explained is a joke misunderstood … when it comes to what amused us, we are all authorities, experts in the field," *On Humour*, New York: Routledge, 2002, 1-2.

undermine the fabric of their comic microcosms. This is certainly the case when, at the onset of *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio announces: "In sooth, I know not why I am so sad. / It wearies me, you say it wearies you" (I, i. 1-2). Even for a play as tonally ambiguous as *Merchant*, this proclamation remains a striking manner in which to begin a comedy, a fact only reinforced by the plethora of criticism that the merchant's enigmatic sadness has sparked throughout the years. As I will argue later on, attempts to pinpoint a cause for Antonio's sadness can prove circuitous—if not detrimental—to particular readings of the play. Rather than theorize at length on the source of the merchant's sadness, it is important to mark the measured dissonance that these lines usher into the play. I perceive the ailing merchant as fulfilling an important comic function that extends beyond its vehicular capabilities. I will later discuss how Antonio's insistence on playing the sad part in a comedy ultimately proves threatening to the play's development—even more than Shylock's frenzied clamouring for his bond. First, I argue that such a characterization is embodied by Don John in *Much Ado about Nothing*. Though perhaps of lesser dramatic prominence than the Venetian merchant, Messina's resident melancholic behaves in a similarly discordant fashion. Ultimately, Don John's villainous attempt to ruin Claudio and Hero's union is supplanted by the encumbrance that his obstinate clinging onto melancholy represents.

Through an analysis of both characters, this chapter thus details Shakespearean comedy's turn towards melancholic characters whose sorrowful composures irreparably clash with the plays they populate. While such a characterisation distantly recalls the comedy of humours genre, where the humours satirized on stage represent social behaviours more than physiological afflictions, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing* diverge considerably from the Jonsonian comic structure. The melancholic characters in these two

plays can be construed as rooted in comic typology,[221] yet their dramatic treatment exceeds a

parading of overflowing humours and, more importantly, resist any form of purgation;

Shakespeare complexifies their professions of melancholy by focusing on a refusal to alter

their behaviours. No longer seen as a momentary lassitude that can potentially be dismissed

once adequate heterosexual pairings are created, I suggest that that the exclusion of certain

characters from comic conclusions is prompted by their unwillingness to abandon their

melancholic demeanours. I further maintain that there exists in both works a deferment of the

aforementioned dismissal so as to not offset the comic festivities, underscoring once again the

increasingly problematic nature of comic melancholy.

Critics often read the treatment of Don John and Antonio as concordant with an

understanding of Shakespearean comedy that hinges on the stigmatization of some of its

characters, as described in the introductory chapter. Such a model draws substantially from

Henri Bergson's comic theory, which perceives dramatic laughter as the ideal corrective

measure against overly artificial character traits, what Bergson defines as "something

mechanical encrusted on the living."[222] In countering the "inelasticity of character, of mind,

and even of body" which threatens social cohesion, Bergson's essay underscores the value of

comedy, as an unemotional concept. "Laughter," he concludes, "acts as a corrective social

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[221] As Stephen Orgel writes, comic typification does not necessary imply a lack of individuality but it ascribes a dramatic ultimatum to characters that hinges on conformation to a norm. For Orgel, comic characters who lay claim on individuality "are individual by virtue of being eccentric: their eccentricity posits a norm; and if they cannot ultimately be accommodated to that norm, they will ultimately be expelled by it ... we hear no more of Malvolio or Don John," Orgel cites as an example, "and all that is left of Shylock in the final act of his play is an admonitory precept about the man who hath no music in himself," "Shakespeare and the Kinds of Drama," *The Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage,* New York: Routledge, 2002, 143-158, 157.

[222] Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in *Comedy*, ed. and trans. Wylie Sypher, Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1956, 61-190, 84. See also David Richman, *Laughter, Pain and Wonder: Shakespeare's Comedies and the Audience in the Theatre*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990, 23-40, for a discussion of derisive laughter in Shakespeare that draws heavily from Bergson's theory.

gesture."[223] Bergson thus ascribes the blame for such stigmatization on the mocked character, as the antithetical foil to the comic structures in which it operates. The perception of laughter as curative for mechanical character enjoys a stronger echo in humour comedies of Jonson and Chapman than it does within Shakespeare's comic output.[224] The dynamics of Shakespearean comedy exceeds this model by emancipating melancholic characters from comic expectations. As much as they prove intricate to their respective plays, Antonio and Don John do not elicit laughter in any significant fashion. Accordingly, the exclusionary practices found at the end of *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Merchant of Venice* is not an effort of victimization, as is often argued, [225] but a premeditated and necessary dramatic outcome prompted by the characters' incessant refusal to cast off melancholic dispositions.[226] In actuality, their expulsions are delayed so as to allow the comic resolution to take place; the unease surrounding their ousting taint the plays with ambiguity. Taken this way, the dissonance they create, akin to Lopez's notion of "comic failure" in Shakespeare,[227] hints towards the increasing difficulty of Shakespearean comedy in curbing melancholic characterizations. Departing from such characterizations as Antipholus of Syracuse and the quartet of lovers from *Love's Labor's Lost*, the melancholic depictions found in plays such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing* epitomise Shakespeare's unique development of melancholy.

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[223] Bergson, 73-74.

[224] Bergson's essay revolves predominantly on the 'comedy of manners' template, of which Jonson's humour plays are largely held as an original influence. Consequently, Shakespeare is virtually absent from the essay.

[225] The list is too substantial for me to properly cite here, but for considerations of the phenomenon relevant to the two comedies discussed in this chapter see Richman 21-51; James C. Bulman, *The Merchant of Venice*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991; and René Girard, *A Theater of Envy: William Shakespeare*, New York: Oxford UP, 80-91 for *Much Ado* and 243-255 for *Merchant*.

[226] In this sense, their melancholy recalls Lopez's reading of noxious comic characters as bringing attention to those who manage to emerge 'victorious" at the end of the plays, 210-211.

[227] Lopez, 208-209.

Maskless in Messina: Defiant Melancholy in *Much Ado about Nothing*

My reading of Don John differs from dominant critical currents that generally dismiss his involvement as minimal and ultimately devoid of any real consequence for *Much Ado about Nothing*. More often than not, his characterization extends to that of *de facto* foil to the themes of love and courtship developed during the play, rendering him akin to a "cardboard villain" that sets the plot in motion without really actively taking stake in it afterwards.[228] My interpretation of the character extends beyond his catalytic capabilities by maintaining that he marks an important shift in Shakespeare's development of comic melancholy. By focusing on affective inflexibility rather than villainy, I underscore the way in which his refusal to alter his behaviour ultimately leads to his exclusion from the play. It is Don John's melancholy that poses the greatest threat to Messinian society, not his blundering attempt at wrecking Claudio and Hero's nuptials. My interpretation thus echoes those of critics who question the efficiency of Don John as a comic villain in supposing him to be nothing more than "the fall guy who takes the rap," for a greater, elusive villainy that operates in the play.[229] Comic taxonomy prevents Don John from reaching the depths of agency, complexity, and villainy that other Shakespearean creations so adeptly attain [230] but his presence in the play suggests a greater significance nonetheless. By setting aside the villainous moniker, focusing instead on his substantial display of comic melancholy, I lend further credence to a generally much-maligned

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[228] Richard Courtney, *Shakespeare's World of Love: the Middle Comedies*, Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1994, 36-37.
[229] Ryan, 170. Lyons similarly argues that Don John "tried to turn *Much Ado* about Nothing into a tragedy" without much success, 35.
[230] The character has been linked to that of *Othello*'s Iago in terms of the manipulation and deceit he enacts throughout the play. See Richard Levin, 171-172; Henry D. Janowtiz, "Exodus 3. 14 as the Source and Target of Shakespeare's Variations on 'I am that I am," *English Language Notes* 38.4 (2001): 33-36; and Mihoko Suzuki's "Gender, Class, and the Ideology of Comic Form in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*," In *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dympna Callaghan, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, 121-144, 120-121 for parallels between Iago and Don John, as well as *Othello* and *Much Ado* in general.

character who has failed to amass a great deal of critical attention over the years, in spite of recent interest in the play's darker undertones.[231]

The character strikes a dissonant note in a comedy that proves deeply invested in placing mirth above all other matters. The play begins in the aftermath of war, with news of Don Pedro's return from a successful military campaign. In the opening scene, Leonato inquires from a messenger as to the extent and nature of the casualties incurred, to which his interlocutor replies: "but few of any sort and none of name" (I, i. 7). Leonato's subsequent exclamation that "a victory is twice itself when the achiever / Brings home full numbers" (I, i. 8-9) indicate both the success of Don Pedro's endeavours as well as the prevalent desire in Messina to shift the focus towards more joyful matters. One of the first actions the comedy undertakes is thus an emphatic clamouring for the frivolous domain of masques, merriment, and romantic courting in the wake of violence. Within such a frame, a character clinging to an overwhelming sadness certainly strikes a discordant—even threatening—note.

In his first prolonged appearance on stage, Don John wastes no time unfolding his melancholic propensity. To his acolyte Conrade's query as to why he should be so "out of measure sad" (I, iii. 2), Don John answers that "there is no measure in the occasion that / Breeds; therefore the sadness is without limit" (I, iii. 3-4). In a manoeuvre reminiscent of *Merchant*'s opening lines, Don John's first dramatic gesture is to profess an unquantifiable and unsolicited sadness. Beyond the ailment itself, his answer highlights the uncompromising attitude with which he displays it. He declares to Conrade:

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[231] Marion Wynne-Davies notes that *the play* "has undergone a sea-change in critical terms [from an] incarnation of light-hearted mirth' into a dark and problematic comedy," "Introduction," *in New Casebooks: Much Ado about Nothing and Taming of the Shrew*, New York: Palgrave, 2001, 1-12, 1. Wynne-Davies quotes from a description of a 1882 performance that appeared in the Arden Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, ed. A. R. Humphreys, London, 1981, pp.37-38, N1, p.10.

I wonder that thou, being, as thou sayst
Thou art, born under Saturn,[232] goest about to apply a
Moral medicine to a mortifying mischief. 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 humour (I, iii. 10-17).

On the surface, this depiction satisfies early modern dramatic expectations concerned with

melancholic characters. Lawrence Babb writes that stage melancholics were divided into

several character types, one of them being the villain or malcontent. "The Elizabethans

learned," he explains, "both in scientific literature and from the malcontent's reputation for

seditious activity, to associate melancholy with criminal violence and intrigue."[233] The

renaissance stage was thus rampant with caricatures of melancholic individuals, dressed in

black, who performed the various stereotypes associated with the humour for comic effect.[234]

In principle, Don John fulfills this role by encasing his demeanour in an impenetrable

melancholic façade. Yet, the justification he provides for his behaviour suggests that his

melancholy extends beyond typification. His reply to Conrade does not exclude a proclivity

for mirth, but stresses a deliberate choice on his part to maintain a melancholic demeanour.[235]

Don John equates his melancholy to a fundamental human need, such as sleep or nourishment,

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[232] Don John implies that Conrade is a fellow melancholic by referring to him as being "born under Saturn," which was held to be melancholy's corresponding planet within early modern astrological considerations of humourality. Early moderns believed that planets held sway over the body's humours, and that individuals born under certain planets would develop specific temperament. Saturn was thought to incur melancholy, Hoeniger, 109. See also Klibansky et al.: "nearly all the writers of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance considered it an incontestable fact that melancholy, whether morbid or natural, stood in some special relationship to Saturn and that the latter was really to blame for the melancholic's unfortunate character and destiny," 127.
[233] Babb, 86.
[234] See Lyons, 23-34 and Babb, 74-100, for examples of typical melancholic characterization on the early modern stage.
[235] This distinction is crucial in differentiating Shakespearean humourous characters from their Jonsonian counterparts. While Jonson's characters are powerless against their humours, characters like Don John, it would seem, choose to remain encased within their humoural afflictions.

a desire that requires instantaneous and unmitigated satiation. As an intrinsic part of his constitution, his melancholy proves impervious to any "moral medicine." Don John ends the exchange by asking Conrade to let him "be that I am, and seek not to alter me" (I, iii. 34), where the term 'alter' carries an explicitly humoural connotation.[236] This initial posturing gnashes with the play's mirthful efforts. Even before any talks of revenge on Claudio transpire, Don John's melancholy puts him at odds.

When Conrade advises him "not [to] make the full show of / This till you may do it without controlment," in order to remain in his brother's good graces, declaring it impossible "you should take true root but by the fair weather that / You make yourself" (I, iii. 18-19; 22-23), Don John merely replies that he would:

> Rather be a canker in a hedge than a
> Rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be
> Disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love
> From any (I, iii. 25-28).

The avowal that it suits him better to be despised than coerced into modifying his behaviour to please others furthers his alienation from the spirit of festivity predicated on change and self-discovery. In his persistent clinging onto a melancholic disposition, Don John also differs from other comic villains such as Shylock, whose fury and repeated threats against Antonio clearly validate the label.[237] The linchpin in Don John's hindering of comic progression remains his melancholy as Shakespeare, never one for extraneous dialogue, makes a point of

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[236] Timothy Hampton, "Strange Alteration: Physiology and Psychology from Galen to Rabelais," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotions*, eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 272-294. Going back to Galen, Hampton observes that the concept of *alloiousthai*, the idea that matter could transform itself into a different matter, gave the Renaissance meaning of "alter" a humoural connotation referring to "a kind of metonymic slippage, not merely to the process of changing digested matter through heat, but to the moment of change in bodily temperature—the moment at which physiological (and, hence, psychological) processes suffer a temporary imbalance," 277.

[237] The case could be made that there are very few 'pure' villains in Shakespearean comedy. Even then, Don John differs from characters such as Shylock, Oliver and Frederick in *As You Like It*, or Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* who threaten the comic *status quo* without betraying melancholic tendencies.

introducing the concept in the very first act. Even his fellow melancholic Conrade pleads with

him to lessen the abrasiveness of his demeanour so as not to upset Messinian order. Don John

ignores the request and then turns toward villainous endeavours, plotting against the union

Claudio and Hero and enlisting the aid of Conrade and Borachio in the process:

> Any bar, any cross, any impediment will be
> Medicinable to me. I am sick in displeasure to him,
> And whatsoever comes athwart his affection ranges
> Evenly with mine (II, ii. 4-7).

While no moral medicine could alleviate his melancholy, the displeasure he feels towards

Claudio necessitates an immediate remedy. The relief Don John seeks in plotting against

Claudio can be understood as a means to return to his initial state of sorrow rather than a way

in which to alleviate it.

While the following scene introduces Beatrice, Hero, and the play's romantic concerns

more generally, Don John's peculiar character remains in focus. Beatrice, whose ability to

assess other characters is extolled throughout the comedy, expresses her distaste for him to

Hero almost immediately. "How tartly that gentleman looks!" she tells her, "I never can / See

him but I am heartburned an hour after (II, i. 3-4)." The inference to Beatrice's digestive

repulsion introduces the extensive conflation of characters with the act of food consumption

that runs throughout the play.[238] As Caroline Biewer argues, Elizabethans understood dietetics

as a relationship between, on the one hand, the type and amount of food and drink one

consumed and, on the other, the balance of humours and passions within the body. According

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[238] See Stephanie Chamberlaine, "Rotten Oranges and Other Spoiled Commodities: The Economics of Shame in *Much Ado about Nothing," Journal of the Wooden O Symposium* 9 (2010): 1-10; Richard Henze, "Deception in *Much Ado about Nothing," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 11: 2 (Spring, 1971): 187-201; Joan Fitzpatrick, "'I Must Eat my Dinner': Shakespeare's Foods from Apples to Walrus," in *Renaissance Food from Rabelais: Culinary Readings and Culinary Histories,* ed. Joan Fitzpatrick, Surrey (UK): Ashgate, 2010, 127-144. For a broader discussion of how food functions in Shakespearean drama see also Joan Fitzpatrick, *Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Dietaries and the* Plays, Surrey (UK): Ashgate, 2007.

to her, the language of dietetics "is a very rich indicator of how Shakespeare wants us to read his characters."[239] Following Biewer's logic, the reaction expressed by Beatrice offers audiences a consideration of Don John in which he is thought to elicit a sour, unpleasant flavour. Hero concurs with her description, deeming Don John to be "of a very melancholy disposition," (II, i. 5). From the onset, his melancholy is deemed undesirable by other characters. Beatrice goes on to makes an interesting association between him and Benedick. She declares that

> He were an excellent man that were made
> Just in the midway between him and Benedick. The
> One is too like an image and says nothing, and the
> other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling (II, i. 6-9).

Beatrice's conflation of Benedick with Don John indirectly suggests a middle ground between those two men that hinges on temperance and a modulation of their habits of consumption. Her comment draws attention to both men's tendency towards excess, furthering the pattern explored in the previous chapter where female characters deride their masculine counterparts for their unruly behaviours. Beatrice infers that while Don John's is too melancholic, Benedick is seemingly too merry (or not serious enough). In *Much Ado*, there is such a notion as too much of a good thing, and Beatrice takes great pleasure in berating Benedick's gluttonous excesses throughout the play.[240] She remarks later on how he will

> But break a comparison or two
> On me, which peradventure not marked or not laughed
> At strikes him into melancholy; and then there's a partridge
> Saved, for the fool will eat no supper that

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[239] Caroline Biewer, "Dietetics as a Key to Language and Character in Shakespeare's Comedy," *English Studies* 90.1 (2009): 17-33, 32.

[240] Biewer, 25. Biewer's overarching focus is on the ways in which dietetics affect the ability to love in Shakespeare's romantic comedies (*As You Like It*, *Much Ado,* and *Twelfth Night*). "What a character eats or is said to like as food, and whether he or she follows the rules of dietetics, becomes an evaluation of the character and finally a statement on his or her capacity to love," 18.

Night (II, i 140-144).

Contrary to the common belief that melancholics were creatures of excess,[241] and unlike his

gregarious counterpart Benedick, Don John comes across as excessively reserved, professing

to "eat when I have stomach," (I, iii.14) rather than unreasonably. Though he professes a

desire later on to acquire "food to [his] displeasure" (I, iii. 62)[242] by ruining the impending

nuptials of Claudio and Hero, the notion once again proves complimentary—if not

subservient—to his melancholic fancies. The dichotomy Beatrice establishes between the two

characters casts Don John's demeanour in another rigid mould where his obstinacy harms him

considerably. It further isolates him from the rest of Messina's male population who manage

to modify their own unruly traits as the play progresses;[243] within the social dynamics of the

play, it is the merry Benedick that enjoys the upper hand. For Biewer, this distinction harks

back to comic terminology. In the comedies, she writes,

> the words *disposition* and *complexion* are clearly distinguished from *humour*. In
> contrast to *humour* the term disposition is exclusively used with the meaning of
> 'permanent state of passion.' Don John or Duke Frederick's passion are called
> 'disposition' whereas a lover's melancholy, which is not permanent, will never be
> named *disposition*. When *complexion* is used it refers to the outward appearance of a
> character as a sign of the predominance of a certain humour or passion.[244]

The elasticity of these terms in the early modern times—especially in the period's drama—

renders any classification problematic if not slightly counterproductive. Still, Biewer's

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[241] Burton offers this useful metaphor as to the effects of excessive nourishment: "as a lamp is choked with a multitude of oil, or a little fire with overmuch wood quite extinguished, so is the natural heat with immoderate eating strangled in the body," I, 226. One can also think of Orsino's opening lines in *Twelfth Night* "If music be the food of love, play on; / Give me excess of it" (I, i. 1-2).

[242] It is interesting to note, once again, the link with fundamentality in Don John's description. Much like his melancholic disposition, Don John's desire to ruin Claudio and Hero's union as a source of villainous nourishment is concordant with the play's overall conflation of food and behaviour.

[243] In addition to her assessment of Benedick quoted earlier, Beatrice also describes Claudio's sombre countenance in II, i as "neither sad, nor sick, nor merry, / Nor well; but civil count, civil as an orange, and something / Of that jealous complexion" (279-281).

[244] Caroline Biewer, "The Semantics of Passion in Shakespeare's Comedies: An Interdisciplinary Study," *English Studies* 88 (2007): 506-21, 518-519.

demarcation proves useful when thinking of Don John's function in *Much Ado*, since it once again highlights the inescapability of his melancholy. The masque put on in the second act (II, i. 80-147) offers a concise visualization of Don John's estrangement. During the elaborate rite of courtship, female characters have no difficulty uncovering who their dance partners are, as the male suitors appear quite inept at concealing themselves, each undone by a distinctive character trait. On this level, the scene contrasts the perfunctory, clumsy nature of masculine demeanour with the more tempered, flexible attitudes of feminine behaviour. Not surprisingly, Don John refuses to participate, keeping in tune with his initial profession of being unable (or unwilling) to 'hide what I am.' The masque is predicated on disguise, adaptability, and flexibility of character, elements which he seemingly lacks. By refusing to partake, Don John capitalizes on the momentary confusion it engenders to set his plan against Claudio into motion, sowing the seeds of jealousy within his all-too eager mind; villainy once again trails melancholy.

The masque also underscores the importance of disguise in *Much Ado*, which ties in with the larger role fulfilled by fashion within the play.[245] Ryan elaborates a succinct observation of fashion as "the systemic process by which the appearance and demeanour of individuals are unconsciously 'deformed'—twisted out of their native shape—for the current cultural mould."[246] According to him, clothing represents a type of "shorthand for the myriad ways in which human beings are formed and deformed, physically, mentally and emotionally,

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[245] For additional arguments concerning the importance of fashion in the play, see Peter J. Smith, *Social Shakespeare: Aspects of Renaissance Dramaturgy and Contemporary Society*, New York: St. Martin's, 1995, 24-30; John Vignaux-Smyth, *The Habit of Lying: Sacrificial Studies in Literature, Philosophy and Fashion Theory*, Durham (NC): Duke UP, 2002, 155-181; Anny Crunelle-Vanright, "The Sixth of July: Benedick's Letter and the Queen's Law," *The Upstart Crow* 25 (2005): 58-64; and Michael D. Friedman, "'For man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion': Fashion and *Much Ado about Nothing*," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13.3 (1993): 267-282.
[246] Ryan, 167.

by the culture in which they find themselves at a particular moment in history."[247] This

delineation proves crucial to his understanding of the play's exploration of identity (as the

fashioning of one's self) as well as of Don John's reluctant participation within it. Ryan reads

the interrogation of Borachio and Conrade by the constable Dogberry and its wonderful

description of "the thief deformed" (III, iii)[248] as evidence that "the real criminal mastermind

in *Much Ado* is fashion—alias Deformed—rather than the fall guy who takes the rap for him,

the morally deformed bastard Don John."[249] According to him, Don John's villainy is merely

"symptomatic of the dispensation that has fashioned him, just as it has fashioned the

characters whose antithesis he seems to be."[250] In other words, if fashion is responsible for

dictating everyone's demeanour in the play, rigid or otherwise, each character can be read as a

victim of such a process. Ryan's interpretation is convincing, but it severely diminishes Don

John's impact on the play by likening him to a proxy of the more intangible villainy that

operates in Messina. While the importance of fashion is undeniable, the claim that Don John is

a victim of his disposition ignores the repeated instances in which he indicates a clear

unwillingness to change.

His melancholy reveals itself, ultimately, to be his lone constant characteristic. Though

he begins with professions of forthrightness, Don John's actions suggest otherwise. It is one

thing for a character to assert "I cannot hide what I am," but another altogether to lie, deceive,

and eventually flee once his actions are uncovered. Moreover, as the play goes on, the

character gradually removes himself from any dramatic involvement. As noted by critics, he

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[247] Ryan, 169.
[248] In his study of lying, scapegoating, and fashion, Vignaux-Smyth refers to this particular scene as "perhaps the most spectacular mimetic sacrificial allegory in all of literature," and goes on to argue for its influence on most of the fashion theories elaborated since the renaissance, 156.
[249] Ryan, 170.
[250] Ibid.

eventually relinquishes the role of villain in favour of a more inert position.[251] As the plot to

ruin Hero and Claudio's union unfolds, it is Borachio who seemingly becomes the play's chief

scoundrel, orchestrating the deception on the balcony with Hero's servant, Margaret. He states

as much when, undone, he proclaims:

> My villainy they have upon record,
> Which I had rather seal with my death than repeat over
> To my shame. The lady is dead upon mine and my
> Master's false accusation; and, briefly, I desire nothing
> But the reward of a villain (V, i. 234-238).

It is Borachio (and Conrade), not Don John, that claim the rewards of villainy in the play.

Similarly, Don Pedro can be understood to replace Don John as a villain later on his since, in

the outrage that follows allegations of infidelity against Hero, it is Don Pedro that leads the

charge for her persecution.[252] The melancholic Don John, who refused to alter his composure

and join in the festivities early on, ultimately forgoes the only role the play seems willing to

grant him. Whereas even Borachio and Conrade eventually alter their demeanours and repent

their actions, this incessant refusal to partake renders him a thorn in the comedy's side; there is

a need to capture him so as to move towards nuptial celebrations,[253] yet his dramatic presence

remains far too problematic to include him in the end. When he does appear on stage in the

final scene, defeated and captive, his silence speaks volumes as to the likelihood of his re-

admittance into the play's community. Simply put, this last scene grants no indication that

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[251] His actual villainy is often doubted by critics. Harry Berger Jr. contends that his success requires that "everyone … collaborate or help him on with his bumbling villainies," "Against the Sink-a-Pace: Sexual and Family Politics in *Much Ado about Nothing*," in *New Casebooks: Much Ado about Nothing and Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Marion Wynne-Davies, New York: Palgrave, 2001, 13-30, 26.

[252] Both characters can be thought to occupy a marginal space within the play's social structure, since Don Pedro is somewhat cast aside by the end as well. Though he begins the play, according to Richard Levin, "eager to adapt himself to conventional life," and set on courting and marriage, his failure in this regard highlights his isolation from other characters by the end of the play, 90. His silence in the face of Benedict's comments to that effect (V, iv. 120-122) certainly suggests as much.

[253] As Levin puts it, "Messina [has] chosen Don John as scapegoat in order to remove an impediment to marriage," 109.

Don John has cast off his melancholy, nor does it intimate any willingness on his part to join the fold and partake in the impending celebrations. His status at the end of the play remains uncompromisingly unclear. Even the news of his capture is circumvented by Benedict's instructions, which end the play: "Think not on him till tomorrow. I'll devise / Thee brave punishments for him. Strike up, pipers! (V, iv. 125-126).

The precise nature of the punishments in question remains indeterminate. Characters prove more eager to celebrate marriages, and the pipers' music easily drowns out the noise emanating from such concerns. This representation can suggest that Don John does, in fact, embody the comic foil whose actions overshadow more serious discriminations committed by Claudio, Leontes, and Don Pedro once they learn of Hero's alleged trespasses. However, this unceremonious ending should not be taken as reflective of Don John's dramatic insignificance. The delaying of his punishment attests to a more complex, albeit ambiguous status at the end of the play. Though Benedick advises not to think on him, he remains on stage as a visible presence of the ambiguity brought on by such defiance. The unyielding melancholy Don John vehemently exhibits throughout proves far too problematic to be addressed, let alone resolved in these final moments.[254]

Don John's melancholy represents a departure from previous comic works in which romantic pairings enjoyed a modicum of success in curbing melancholic demeanours; although a melancholic feeling lingered on in *Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, characters still sought to remedy it in some fashion. Here, a stubborn refusal to change leads to Don John's

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[254] John Cox explains how "the messenger's announcement of Don John's capture and Benedick's references to punishments were deleted in most Victorian and Edwardian productions … The omission of these lines made the ending appear more harmonious than the full text … Some late twentieth-century productions," he adds, "have foregrounded the passage as a dissonant element in the play's conclusion," *Much Ado About Nothing,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, 234.

expulsion from Messina. In a play where characters wear masks, mask their feelings, and participate in elaborate masquerades of courtship and gossip, the motto "I cannot hide what I am" deserves a certain amount of commendation for the individuality it promulgates. Unfortunately for Don John, this stance, as far as Shakespearean comedy is concerned, can only lead to exclusion. His persistent clinging onto his melancholic tendencies negates any possibility of redemption. Don John enjoys minimal stage presence compared to other characters in *Much Ado*, but his involvement echoes a more extensive and more problematic melancholic performance in *The Merchant of Venice,* where Antonio, the titular character, affects a similar, yet exacerbated quality.[255] In Venice, villainous enterprises are substituted for an enigmatic sadness that bathes the merchant in a perplexing critical light.

Lost at Sea: Passive Melancholy in *The Merchant of Venice*

> 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. 1-7).

I return to the opening of *The Merchant of Venice* because it provides a seminal example of the problems stemming from insistent manifestations of melancholy in the play. Virtually every argument has been expounded in an attempt to ascribe cogent meaning to Antonio's mystifying sadness. A regrettable side effect of this large-scale investigation is that his melancholy has morphed gradually into an argumentative stepping stone, an obligatory roadblock that needs to be addressed putatively but which does not loom prominently in most

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[255] According to Levin, Antonio also showcases a postulating for male friendship and passive resignation away from marriage that resembles Don Pedro's, 27-28; 115-116.

analyses of the play. As Drew Daniel indicates, from a scholarly perspective, Antonio's melancholy can be thought of "as a discursive switch point that allows it to 'carry' any or all of the multiple, overdetermining explanations his behaviour solicits: merchant capitalist anxiety, Christian heroism, unrequited homoerotic desire [and] moral masochism."[256]

This chapter seeks to reverse this trend by focusing primarily on the ways in which Antonio's melancholy functions *within* the play. My aim is to extend the analysis beyond an identification of root causes in order to argue that the tonal dissonance created by Antonio's melancholy in *The Merchant of Venice* is an integral component of Shakespeare's idiosyncratic development of the concept. In other words, the source of Antonio's melancholy, despite plentiful and sometimes illuminating critical commentary, does not underscore its salient dramatic feature. Rather, it can be understood as furthering the departure undertaken in *Much Ado about Nothing*'s treatment of comic melancholy. The development of melancholy in *Merchant*, however, comes across as much more intricate, since it affects a protagonist through whom the play's multiple plots and characters intersect. While Don John was easily dismissed as a disinterested rogue figure, the melancholy in *Merchant* unfolds at the forefront of the play's dramatic development, shaping Antonio's involvement in both the wooing of Portia by Bassanio and the bond he agrees to with Shylock.

The inclusion of a prominent melancholic character represents an innovation that Shakespeare graphs onto his source material when writing *The Merchant of Venice*.[257] Among

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[256] "'Let me have judgment, and the Jew his will': Melancholy Epistemology and Masochistic Fantasy in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 61.2 (Summer 2010): 206-234, 216. Though Daniel's psychoanalytic interpretation of the play is not one I wholeheartedly subscribe to, his article represents one of the most successful critical attempts in recent years to discuss Antonio's melancholy primarily from within the play.
[257] Murray J. Levith establishes a connection between Antonio and the titular protagonist in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* on the basis of their initial melancholic demeanours. "At the beginning of their plays," he writes, "both the magician and the merchant are unhappy. Dr Faustus, though, thinks he understands

these, Giovanni Fiorentino's 1598 novella *Il Pecorone*, the most obvious of Shakespeare's sources, offers a plot that closely mirrors that of *Merchant*. In it, a young man, Giannetto, undertakes a lengthy sea voyage, financed by his merchant godfather Ansaldo, in order to woo a rich widow. A number of failed attempts leave an indebted Ansaldo at the mercy of a Jewish usurer who clamours for a pound a flesh as restitution. The merchant is eventually spared, the moneylender punished, and Giannetto ultimately wins the lady's hand.[258] The melancholy that epitomizes Antonio's character finds no equivalent in the Italian story. Antonio's disposition not only holds a crucial role in the Shakespearean version, but it elicits a similar dramatic response to the one Don John provokes, since Antonio's refusal to alter his demeanour ultimately costs him. Though he is in no way the play's antagonistic figure—Shylock claims that title with brio—the merchant represents a considerably dissonant note that halts the progression of the otherwise melodious love plot, ostensibly forcing his exclusion at the end of the comedy.

Though a case can be made—and certainly has been—that the entirety of Shakespeare's comic cannon somewhat deviates from the generally accepted convention and themes,[259] the question of whether *The Merchant of Venice* can actually be considered a comedy is one that has punctuated scholarly discourses rather incessantly over the last four

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the cause of his disquiet," "Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and Marlowe's Other Plays," in *The Merchant of Venice: New Critical Essays*, eds. John W. Mahon and Ellen Macleod Mahon, London: Routledge, 2002, 95-106, 97. Other than their initial sadness, however, both characters are in fact quite different. I would argue that, though erroneous, Faustus' drive to obtain what he desires sets him apart from Antonio, whose dominant trait remains his passive melancholic countenance.

[258] Giovanni Fiorentino, "Il Pecorone" (1598), in *The Merchant of Venice: Authoritative Text, Source and Context Criticism, Rewriting and Interpretations*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, New York: Norton, 2006, 84-99. Interestingly, the widow and Jewish usurer remain anonymous in Fiorentino's tale.

[259] The overall argument to that effect can be traced back to Frye's examination of the comic and romantic genres in *A Natural Perspective*, where he argues that "a comedy is not a play which ends happily: it is a play in which a certain structure is present and works through to its own logical end … "The logical end is festive," he states, "but anyone's attitude to the festivity may be that of Orlando or Jaques," 46.

centuries. The play became a comedy by sheer deduction. It was classified as such in the 1623 folio, being neither a re-enactment of English history nor a tale of death and destruction usually akin to Shakespearean tragedy.[260] Yet, criticism has struggled to ascribe to the play a definitive genre beyond this initial classification. Revising F. S. Boas' classification, Harold Bloom slates it as the first of the problem plays, insisting that "no one in *The Merchant of Venice* is what he nor she seems to be."[261] Linda Woodbridge defined the play as a "revenge comedy,"[262] an inventive term that partially captures its skewed tonal ambiguity. If certain aspects of the play call for a comedic atmosphere—such as Bassanio's wooing of Portia, which culminates in nuptials within the ethereal Belmontian atmosphere reminiscent of Arden, Illyria, and other Shakespearean comic worlds—more serious elements offset this precariously romantic construction.

These features occupy too vast a space, both dramatically and critically, to be dismissed as mere amplifiers of dramatic stakes. They find themselves at the nexus of James Bulman's contention that *The Merchant of Venice* "is a play whose potential to be various things at once—allegory and folk tale, romantic comedy and problem play—may have been realisable only on the Elizabethan stage."[263] For Bulman, this layering of emotional content and, more importantly, its reception in the theatre—what he describes as the capacity of early modern audiences for "multi-consciousness"[264]—is an important factor in the play's overall

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[260] Graham Holderness, "Comedy and *The Merchant of Venice*," *New Casebooks: The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Martin Cole, New York: St Martin's, 1998, 23-35. Holderness also suggests, that "perhaps in the sixteenth century the concept of comedy was broader and more elastic than it is today, containing all that we think of as comic, but also incorporating much that we would regard as rather more serious," 24.

[261] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, New York: Riverhead, 1998, 177.

[262] Linda Woodbridge, "Payback Time: On the Economic Rhetoric of Revenge in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare and the Cultures of Performance*, eds. Paul Yachnin and Patricia Badir, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008, 29-40, 29.

[263] Bulman 6.

[264] Bulman, 7.

complexity. This notion proves specifically accurate when taking into account the difficulties

encountered by modern interpretations of the play in seeking a unified dramatic tone. "The

archaic pressures of the text," he writes, "have usually resisted such harmony: it has been

difficult, if not impossible, for directors, to balance the dramatic, ideological and aesthetic

alternatives Shakespeare offers."[265] Among these complications, Bulman identifies the

vilifying of Shylock as a particularly troublesome task,[266] particularly in a post-Holocaust

setting, where trauma has proven virtually indelible. Several critics have pointed out the near

impossibility of producing an unadulterated version of the character without some sort of

redeeming feature.[267] While I do not wish to diminish the historical dimension associated with

this notion, my focus deviates from such an interpretation by examining how the surprising

fervour with which Antonio embraces his sadness problematizes the comedy at its core.

Shylock remains *Merchant*'s primary dramatic threat, but the 'normalcy' of the romantic plot

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[265] Bulman, 27. Bulman's exploration of the play's performance history centers on how the looming and oft problematic presence of Shylock usually tilts the dramatic mood towards tragedy. He discusses a number of productions (including Henry Irving's 1878 classic production and Laurence Olivier's 1970 version) to highlight this particular idea. Not surprisingly, this dominant focus on Shylock is to Antonio's detriment. The merchant seldom appears in Bulman's theatre history even if part of his argument concerns a shift in focus in twentieth-century interpretations from the usurer to the merchant. Even then, the performances of Antonio he mentions relate to very overt interpretations (hopelessly narcissistic, capitalistic, homoerotic, etc.) that seemingly do away with the complexity of his humour. Greenblatt conversely alludes to this particular idea when he draws attention to "Shakespeare's effort to make us identify powerfully with the dilemmas that his characters face. A sardonic detachment," he writes, "such as one feels in response to a play like Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, is not called forth by *The Merchant of Venice* or *Twelfth Night*, plays in which the audience's pleasure clearly depends upon a sympathetic engagement with the characters' situation and hence the acceptance of a measure of anxiety," 134.

[266] Holderness, 24.

[267] For an additional overview of this particular topic, see Michael Shapiro, "*The Merchant of Venice* after the Holocaust, or Shakespearean Romantic Comedy Meets Auschwitz," *Cithara* 46.1 (2006): 3-23; Arthur Horowitz, "Shylock after Auschwitz: *The Merchant of Venice* on the Post-Holocaust Stage—Subversion, Confrontation, and Provocation," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 8.3 (2007): 7-20; and Ralph Berry, "*The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare in Performance, a Collection of Essays*, ed. Frank Occhiogrosso, Newark: U of Delaware P, 2003, 47-57.

concurrently brushes up against an overly melancholic character as it journeys towards a festive conclusion.[268]

The first act weaves an insistent depiction of melancholy through its comedic fabric. What renders it problematic from the onset, I argue, is Antonio's incapability to offer any reason as to this overwhelming sense of sadness. The prevalent notion that stems from his opening lines is the utter passivity with which he considers his predicament. As he questions whether he "caught it, found it, or came by it," (I, i. 3) each verb substantially decreases his level of involvement with his melancholy. By the end, it is almost as if it is melancholy that found the merchant and latched onto him. Likewise, rather than call for its eradication, Antonio professes a desire to learn from his ailment in order to acquire self-knowledge. From the onset, Antonio seeks to cultivate interest towards his melancholy, a position which enhances the wearisome reaction of his friends, who appear dead set on countering his sorrowful state. Antonio's use of "in sooth," (the first words uttered in the play) implies the synthesis of a longer conversation, one that might even have occurred repeatedly along these lines.

Antonio rapidly denies claims that his sorrow stems from mercantile or even romantic complications. To Salerio's assertion that his "mind is tossing on the ocean / There where [his] argosies with portly sail" (I, i. 8-9), he merely replies: "my merchandise makes me not sad" (I, i. 45). Interestingly, though Antonio refutes his merchandise as a possible cause for his melancholy, he does not associate it with mirth in return. His merchandise might not make

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[268] In a recent essay, Bulman argues that, in the play's post-holocaust history, "Antonio has come to rival, if not displace, Shylock as the site of the play's most contested political meaning." He considers the character's homoerotic characterization in contemporary productions as emblematic of this shift, "Shylock, Antonio, and the Politics of Performance," *Shakespeare in Performance: a Collection of Essays,* ed. Frank Occhiogrosso, Newark: U of Delaware P, 2003, 27-46.

him sad, but it certainly does not seem to provide him with any joy. Accordingly, Solanio's suggestion that Antonio is "in love" (I, i. 46) is cast aside in an even more dismissive fashion—"Fie, fie!" (I, i. 46). By striking down his friends' statements, Antonio renders his melancholy hermetic to any analytical probing. As friends seek a source for his troubles, he rejects both love and financial difficulties as putative bases for his melancholy. Implied by his professions of sadness is the idea that fortune and the pursuit of a suitable mate would not affect his disposition. In doing so, Antonio negates two attributes commonly associated with comic premises that would offer tangible and easily remediable dramatic obstacles (attributes subsequently appropriated by Bassanio in in his journey to Belmont). His repudiation marks a stark departure from the melancholic merchant characters of *The Comedy of Errors*, whose identities appear vested in marital and financial bliss. It is also worth noting that, though he vehemently denies claims which aim to pinpoint the source of his melancholy, Antonio fails to venture a plausible hypothesis of his own. His silence to that effect highlights the deterrence that melancholy exerts on him. What persists beyond his refutations, the only piece of information that Antonio willingly supplies, is this aloof surrendering to an overwhelming sense of melancholy.

Such a characterization troubles his friends considerably. Other characters seem eager to do away with his sadness and move on to the comedy as hand. Solanio eventually abandons the guessing game and declares:

> Then let us say you are sad
> Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy
> For you to laugh and leap, and say you are merry
> Because you are not sad (I, i. 47-50).

Solanio's ensuing conclusion that "nature hath framed strange fellows in her time: … of such vinegar aspect / That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile" (I, i. 51; 54-55) suggests a

polarized dichotomy of mirth and sadness, where an individual feels emotions sequentially

rather than concurrently. This perception is reminiscent of Don John's professions of

unalterable feelings as primordial needs. More importantly, there exists in both men an

unequivocal rejection of responsibility towards their melancholy, a notion further

problematized in *Merchant* by Antonio's status as titular character. Other characters not only

wish for him to get better, they actually *need* him to abandon his melancholic demeanour since

they cannot dismiss him the way characters in *Much Ado* could with Don John. Antonio

begins the play as an insider whose position is eventually jeopardized by such an inert

melancholy. Salerio and Solanio spend considerable time imagining how Antonio feels in this

first scene, a process which reveals their perception of him as hopelessly melancholic. Salerio

shares his suspicions that his friend's mind is

> Tossing on the ocean,
> There where your argosies with portly sail,
> Like signors and rich burghers, on the flood,
> Or as it were the pageants of the sea (I, i. 8-11).

The image not only links Antonio with his merchandise, a crucial metaphor to understand the

function of melancholy in the play,[269] but Salerio's anthropomorphising of Antonio's ships as

rich signors that "fly by [other ships] with their woven wings" (I, i. 14), actually conflates

merchant with merchandise. This process coalesces with the interpretation of the scene that

Simon Critchley and Tom McCarthy provide in arguing for a clear link between Antonio's

sadness and the state of his affairs. "Antonio's mood," they write, "the state of his soul, is

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[269] The various definitions of 'stuff' in use during the early modern period offer interesting avenues as to his conflation of the melancholic Antonio with his merchandise. Aside from the medical connotation, where the word refers to "the substance or 'material' (whether corporeal or incorporeal) of which a thing is formed or consists, or out of which a thing may be fashioned," a meaning that certainly echoes the humourality implied in Antonio's lines, 'stuff' could also refer to material commodity or personal possession, reinforcing the notion that Antonio claims his melancholy as his own despite professing a lack of knowledge concerning it, "stuff," *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* accessed Thursday, July 7th, 2011, oed.com.

indexed-linked to his merchandise; his mind lies in his bottoms."[270] Besides hinting at the

opulence of Antonio's wealth, the vision Salerio creates suggests that his melancholy is one

over which he exerts no control. Believing Antonio to be worried about the status of his

argosies, Salerio momentarily puts himself in Antonio's situation, and imagines how he would

react to his merchandise being so far away from him. He states that:

> My wind cooling my broth
> Would blow me to an ague when I thought
> What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
> I should not see the sandy hourglass run
> But I should think of shallows and of flats,
> And see my wealthy *Andrew* docked in sand,
> Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs
> To kiss her burial. Should I go to church
> And see the holy edifice of stone
> And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks
> Which, touching my gentle vessel's side,
> Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
> Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks,
> And, in a word, but even now worth this,
> And now worth nothing? (I, i. 22-36).

The extensive metaphor depicts a scenario in which Antonio is at the mercy of the elements.

As his ships sail all over the world, he remains idly in Venice, connected solely through the

harshness of the natural landscape: the winds that make Antonio shiver also threaten his

ventures at sea; the sand of the hourglass evoke the threat of shipwreck on distant shores,

where the reefs, the liminal point of convergence between land and ocean, ruthlessly slit his

ships' sides, causing them to bleed out silks and spices.[271] For Critchley and McCarthy, the

image can be thought of as "evoking both ends of the economic scale: that is, by envisaging a

dual movement of surfeit or surplus—abundance, overflowing, splendor—and of loss, of

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[270] Simon Critchley and Tom McCarthy, "Universal Shylockery: Money and Morality *in The Merchant of Venice*," *Diacritics* 34.1 (2004): 3–17, 5.
[271] This last image carries an eerie anticipation of the danger Antonio faces later on when he becomes trapped in Shylock's bond.

surfeit which is lost."[272] This paragon of excess and loss, they argue, both generates and

sustains the merchant's melancholy. I cautiously endorse their assessment as far as

recognizing that the imagery described by Salerio offers a key to understanding Antonio's

melancholy. I would amend the reading by recasting its scope on the powerlessness that

emerges from the metaphor. It is the fear of drifting away aimlessly at sea that Salerio's

speech primarily highlights. To use Critchley and McCarthy's terminology, the main source of

anxiety in the idea that Antonio's mood "lies in his bottoms" is that it lies at sea, away from

him, and out of his control. As his livelihood floats adrift, scattered on the ocean, Antonio

remains passively on land, caught in the throes of melancholy.

The ocean's mysticism was well entrenched into the early moderns psyche.

Consequently, a conception of the sea amounted to

> a space lying beyond the reach of human knowledge and control [which] Shakespeare
> both employed and challenged … by depicting the sea as a wild realm lying between
> the natural and the supernatural … what differentiates the sea from other landscapes is
> its construction in terms of conceptual unavailability: astride the border of the natural
> and supernatural, the sea is, for Shakespeare, both 'rich and strange'.[273]

The analysis supplied above most strongly echoes *Merchant* is in his contention that

Shakespeare's oceanic metaphors hinge on liminality, that his "vividly imagined depictions of

marine landscapes—beaches, the sea-floor, islands—[can be thought of] as spaces in which

humans both do and do not belong."[274] The statement encapsulates the precarious status that

Antonio occupies within the play, melancholically drifting on through the bustling Venetian

microcosm. Numerous critics have discussed the manifold connotations of water in

Shakespearean drama. Most notably, William Poole's reading of the connection mirrors

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[272] Critchley and McCarthy, 5.

[273] Daniel Brayton, "Shakespeare and the Global Ocean," *Ecocritical Shakespeare,* eds. Lynne D. Bruckner and Daniel Brayton, Burlington: Ashgate 2011, 173-90, 178.

[274] Brayton, 178.

Antonio's predicament by associating water imagery with "character, personality, its threatened loss and its restitution."[275] This first scene goes to great lengths to establish an oceanic parallel with Antonio's melancholic. As was the case with *The Comedy of Error*'s conflation of water and melancholy, it is the link with the mercantile lifestyle that appears most intriguing.[276]

In his seminal study of madness, Michel Foucault notes that "the Classical era was content to blame the English melancholy on the influence of a maritime climate: the cold, wet, fickle weather and the fine droplets of water that entered the vessels and the fires of the human body made a body loose its firmness, predisposing it to madness."[277] Accordingly, the *History of Madness* proves useful to a consideration of the connection between melancholy, liquidity, and mercantilism. When discussing the iconography of the "ship of fools" and its permutation of social and literary spheres, Foucault underscores the dual symbolic impact of water as both

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[275] William Poole, "All at Sea: Water, Syntax, and Character Dissolution in Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Survey 54*: *Shakespeare and Religions*, ed. Peter Holland, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001: 201-212, 201. My interpretation differs from Poole's, who subsequently claims that Shakespeare's "speakers tend unwittingly to manifest a control over their verse that belies their supposed sentiments of passivity," 205. See also Mentz; and Brayton, 173-90, for further discussions of the significance of water in Shakespearean drama that pertain to this chapter.

[276] Lyons notes a possible connection between Saturn (the planet generally associated with melancholy) and "sea journeys and travels," though she does not elaborate on its intricacies or functioning, 4. The association was already present in Arabic astrology as far back as 800 A.D. In a discussion of Saturn (Leiden, University Library, Cod. or. 47, fo. 255), Abû Ma'šar stated that The God Saturn "presides over … sea travel and long sojourn abroad [as well as] being withdrawn into one's self; … loneliness and unsociability." A few generations later, Alcabitius (Oxford, Bold. Library, Marsh MS 663, fol.16) reiterates this position when he writes that Saturn presides over "respectable professions which have to do with water like the commanding of ships and their management … But when he is evil he presides over … far travels, long absences [and] preferences for solitude," Klibansky et. al., 130-131. For studies of the intersection of mercantilism and literature in the early modern period, see Agnew; Stevenson; and John McVeagh, *Tradefull Merchants: The Portrayal of the Capitalist in Literature*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, 1-30. None of them, however, focus on Shakespearean merchants to a large extent.

[277] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, London Routledge, 12. Foucault is drawing on George Cheyne's *The English Malady, or a Treatise on Nervous Diseases of all Kinds,* London, 1733.

"carrying away [and] purifying."[278] Before acquiring a direct connotation to madness, the

figure of the sea wanderer, Foucault explains, was perceived as a bad omen:

> the uncertain furrow of the wake, the exclusive trust placed in the stars, the secret
> knowledge that passed from mariner to mariner, the distance from women and the
> ceaselessly shifting plain of the surface of the sea made men lose faith in god, and cast
> off the shackles of their attachment to their homeland, thereby opening the door to the
> Devil and the ocean of his ruses.[279]

Beyond its religious dimension, the real threat inferred by the passage, it would seem,

is the putative loss of identity, a fear that reveals itself to be at the crux of a supposed

symbiosis between mercantile profession and melancholy. The crisis Foucault alludes to in

this passage closely mirrors that of the melancholic merchant, whose lifestyle offers little in

the way of a grounded sense of belonging. Still, Antonio partly resists this classification since

he is not at sea with his merchandise. He essentially suffers from the expected affliction of

oceanic travels without actively participating in such activities. Therein lies the primary

difference, as I see it, between him and the Syracusan Antipholus, who does travel and proves

willing to 'loose himself' (I, ii. 40) in order to find himself rather than remain passive. Though

Antonio is uncertain of who he is to a degree, he remains convinced that he *must* be

melancholic. "I hold the world but as the world," he informs Gratiano later on in the scene, "a

stage where everyman must play a part, / And mine a sad one" (I, i. 77-79). The feeble sense

of resignation Antonio's remarks communicates, what Kitzes describes as "exasperated defeat

in the face of a relentless mystery,"[280] highlights the merchant's problematic relationship with

his melancholy. Despite questioning its significance earlier on, Antonio is at ease with his

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[278] Foucault, 11.

[279] Foucault, 12. In this passage, Foucault refers to Pierre De Lancre, *De l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges*, Paris, 1612.

[280] Kitzes, 28.

sorrowful disposition and sees no reason to challenge it, unlike everyone else.[281] Gratiano

chastises him to that effect, deploring that he has "too much respect upon the world," and

advising to "fish not with this melancholy bait / For this fool gudgeon, this opinion"(I, i. 74;

101-102). Gratiano expresses clear distaste for what he perceives to be posturing on his

friend's part. In response to the merchant's assertion of performing the sad role, he replies:

> Let me play the fool.
> With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
> And let my liver rather heat with wine
> Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
> Why should a man whose blood is warm within
> Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
> Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice
> By being peevish? (I, i. 79-86).

 For Gratiano, melancholy is not only unnatural but detrimental to the individual. To be

melancholic is to ignore human instincts, which dictate mirth and vitality.[282] Gratiano rejects

the idea that such a countenance implies wisdom, depth of character, and *gravitas*, and in

doing so, embodies the more general comic critique of Antonio's affectation that develops

throughout the play. His main objection, however, stems from the implied posturing

associated with melancholy:

> There are a sort of men whose visages
> Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
> And do a willful stillness entertain
> With purpose to be dressed in an opinion
> Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
> And who should say, 'I am Sir Oracle,
> And when I ope my lips let no dog bark!'
> O, my Antonio, I do know of these
> That therefore only are reputed wise
> For saying nothing, when, I am very sure,
> If they should speak, would almost damn those ears

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[281] McVeagh posits that "'Antonio is negative, perhaps, because he is half the portrait of a merchant, the present-giving half, but without a real job to do. Thus he feels he belongs nowhere," 17.

[282] Note also the Galenic terminology of Gratiano's discourse, referring to the heating and cooling of his blood.

Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools (I, i. 88-99).

Daniel suggests that implicit in this passage is the idea that Gratiano's understanding of

Antonio's melancholy stems from the Aristotelian philosophy of intellectual superiority.

"Only such an account," he writes, "can explain the forceful pressure of Gratiano's account of

melancholy as a bid for status a claim that a purely galenic understanding of melancholy as

merely a chemical imbalance would render unintelligible."[283] Daniel's assertion accurately

denotes how, contrary to Gratiano's flawed notion that Antonio seeks reverence and silent

admiration, the merchant, in fact, "strives to generate conversational interest in his secret,

repeatedly drawing those around him into its analysis."[284] However, I disagree with Daniel's

championing of Aristotelian melancholy in this scene, reading Antonio's evasiveness on the

subject, coupled with all the postulating that goes on throughout, as situating his melancholy

somewhat in periphery to the Galen-Aristotle humoural binary. Gratiano's denunciation of the

melancholic disposition conceals a critique of Antonio; Gratiano essentially warns his friend

that this particular countenance can lead to ostracizing. This idea further emphasizes

Antonio's passivity in the matter. He is intent on keeping the conversation focused on what

ails him *as a way* of refraining from actively participating in the social dynamics that

unfold.[285] In a sense, Daniel's argument validates Gratiano's objection, as it suggests

awareness on Antonio's part of the fact that discussing his melancholy maintains the focus on

him.

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[283] Daniel, 209-210 (note 8).
[284] Daniel, 212.
[285] "Rhetorical play upon the lack of correspondence between interior nature and exterior show," Daniel writes, "is the melancholic gambit par excellence," 212. What lies at the core of Daniel's essay is a desire to reconcile Antonio's urgent desire to know the cause of his sadness with the desperation with which he longs to be perceived as a martyr in the trial scene. The answer lies, he posits, within the relationship—and dramatic progression of Antonio's character—between the melancholy of the first act and the masochism of the final one, 208.

The genuineness of Antonio's melancholy warrants closer inspection at this junction, since most critical consideration of the character hinges on whether to believe his professions of melancholy or not. While certain writers prove highly sceptical of the "hypocritical ethos [he] personifies,"[286] others seemingly take the merchant at his word, perceiving him to be plagued by a sadness of massive dramatic proportions. Some critics even shift the focus towards the playwright, arguing that "Shakespeare does not offer Antonio an alternative to playing this particular part."[287] My interpretation represents a consolidation of sorts between the aforementioned divergent theoretical positions. It is undeniable that Antonio consciously exploits his ailment. As will be discussed later on, it constitutes a bargaining chip near the end of the play in the face of rapidly forming heterosexual unions. I would not, however, declare Antonio's efforts to maintain his melancholy at the play's forefront to be purely calculating, however, mainly because of the passivity that characterizes them. Much like Don John, Antonio firmly believes that he must be melancholy above anything else. What remains primordial beyond judging his intention is the degree to which melancholy disturbs the comedy at hand. As the first scene comes to a close, the origins of Antonio's enigmatic sadness remain a mystery for his friends. "I would have stayed till I had made you merry," Salerio declares as he departs, "If worthier friends had not prevented me" (I, i 60-61), emphasizing once more the widespread desire to rid Antonio of the unnatural state of unhappiness that plagues him. The scene instils the vague sense that Antonio will not grow merrier as the play develops, no matter what the cause of his melancholy may be. Seemingly, a cheerful countenance is reserved for the play's trio of romantic figures (Gratiano, Lorenzo

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[286] Ryan, 117.
[287] Theodore B. Leinwand, *Theatre, Finance, and Society in Early Modern England*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, 115.

and, more importantly, Bassanio), who subsequently depart from Venice to be with their respective love interests.[288]

In the following scene, the action shifts to Belmont, where Portia informs her waiting-gentlewoman Nerissa that her "little body is aweary / Of this great world" (I, ii. 1-2). The parallel with Antonio's weariness cannot be overlooked. The subtle shift alone between "weary" and "aweary" alerts us to the symmetry at hand. Yet, Portia's situation—being trapped in Belmont until she is 'won' by a suitor that will correctly solve a riddle devised by her late father—renders her sadness much more tangible than the merchant's. Likewise, in contrast to Antonio's figurative lethargy, her stasis proves literal; she is physically restricted in Belmont. Essentially, both professions of melancholy are greeted by conflicting reactions[289] as Nerissa sees no need to play guessing games with Portia. While Antonio is advised to drop the act and move onto the mirthful portion of the spectrum, Nerissa preaches temperance and balance to her mistress:

> You would be [weary], sweet madam, if you miseries
> Were in the same abundance as your good fortunes
> Are; and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit
> With too much as they are that starve with nothing. It is
> No mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the
> Mean. Superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but
> Competency lives longer (I, ii. 3-9).

What Nerissa implies here is that any excessive display of emotion is not beneficial, no matter the affect. Portia quickly abides by this plea for moderation, furthering the contrast between

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[288] Miriam Gilbert recalls a 1971 production by Terry Hand, whose program distinguished between Venetian characters, separating the 'Merchants' (Antonio, Solanio and Salerio) from the 'Venturers' (Lorenzo, Bassanio and Gratiano). The dichotomy also functions on the grounds of active and passive behaviour, *The Merchant of Venice*, London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2002, 12.

[289] While I disagree with Ejner Jensen's assertion that both scene offer parallel treatments of melancholy that end "on a note of purpose and bright movement," he accurately remarks that the latter "exhibits the energy and animation love can infuse into youthful spirits," contrasting Antonio's lacklustre demeanour, *Shakespeare and the Ends of Comedy*, Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991, 31.

Antonio's passive, pessimistic attitude and her willingness to change. Indeed, despite her

seemingly hopeless predicament, Portia proves much more animated and resourceful than

Antonio does (especially once Bassanio arrives in Belmont), displaying a capacity for self-

regulation that the merchant seemingly lacks.

Self-control looms large as far as dramatic representations of identity within *The

Merchant of Venice* are concerned. The aforementioned contrast between the first two scenes,

noticeably established along gender lines, presents Portia in a more favourable light that the

titular merchant. It is reminiscent of the gender hierarchy established in other comedies

examined so far. Rather than languishing in self-examination, Portia proceeds to lambast a list

of suitors read to her by Nerissa, taking issue in each case with a dominant personality trait she

deems abhorrent. One of those critiques revolves around Count Palatine, a suitor whom, Portia

declares:

> Doth nothing but frown, as who would say,
> 'An you will have me, choose.' He hears merry
> Tales and smiles not. I fear he will prove the weeping
> Philosopher when he grows old, being so full of
> Unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be
> Married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth (I, ii. 45-50).

Portia rejects Palatine for the very disposition Antonio emotes in the previous scene: an

overwhelming display of sadness she deems 'unmannerly.' The two scenes set up a gender-

based binary between the characters which rests in their opposing perception of melancholy,

one that pits action against passivity, self-control against abandonment, and flexibility against

stubbornness. If *Merchant* is to be perceived, as David Bevington argues, as an opportunity for

the characters to learn to "seek happiness by daring to risk everything,"[290] the heiress of

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[290] Bevington, "The Merchant of Venice," *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, updated 4th ed. New York:
Longman, 1997, 1778-1782, 1778.

Belmont gains an edge over the lethargic Venetian merchant, one she deftly exploits when a conflict centred on Bassanio's affection pits her against the merchant.

Antonio and Bassanio are linked from the onset. Dramatically, Bassanio needs the merchant's financial assistance to undertake his wooing of Portia. He thus appeals to the friend he "owes the most, in money and in love" (I, i. 131) and Antonio rapidly agrees to help him with his ventures. Their relationship establishes yet another contrast between passive and dynamic countenances. While Antonio lends his credit to his disposal, Bassanio acts on his desire for Portia and sets sail for Belmont. As Leinwald puts it, the merchant "is cast in the unappealing role of the sad toiler; while Bassanio enjoys the glamour and the risk that go with fleece-chasing."[291] However, as pointed out by several critics, the overwhelming ambiguity that surrounds Antonio can suggest that his willingness to help betrays ulterior motives. Cynthia Lewis posits such an argument, writing that the name 'Antonio' infers religious undertones of sainthood within the early modern period, undertones which, she explains, "account[s] in many cases for their attempts at selfless charitable conduct [and] puts them at odds with their worldlier societies and their own worldlier desires."[292] She perceives the association between characters named Antonio and martyrdom as stemming from "Saint Anthony's own spiritual tribulations and temptations of the flesh as well as his eventual inclusion in the earlier Renaissance tradition of wise folly."[293] "The very name Antonio", she writes, "suggests to audience of High English Renaissance drama, a willingness to compromise one's own well-being for a person or a principle seen as more important- or

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[291] Leinwand, 118.

[292] Cynthia Lewis, *Particular Saints: Shakespeare's Four Antonios, their Contexts, and their Plays*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1997, 14.

[293] Lewis, 15.

higher- than the self."[294] In her analysis, Lewis does set aside *The Merchant of Venice*'s

Antonio, who she perceives as "more troubling because his conduct borders on false

martyrdom."[295] According to her, Antonio's inclination to stake his "purse" and his "person"

(I, i.138) for Bassanio becomes not so much a selfless act, but a calculated tactical manoeuvre

to further gain his friend's affection.[296] This notion, in turn, complements homoerotic readings

discussed by several critics, such as Steve Patterson, who argues that what is "central to the

[play], is a dramatization of the failure of male friendship in a radically shifting mercantile

economy—an economy that seems better regulated by a social-structure based on marital

alliance and heterosexual reproduction."[297] For proponents of this argument, the potential loss

of Bassanio acts as trigger to Antonio's melancholy. His inherent passivity prevents him from

expressing his feelings positively and, consequently, sustains his sorrowful demeanour.

According to them, Antonio's acceptance of the bond's terms, and his subsequent wish for

death once his ships are lost, translate into manipulative gestures to retain Bassanio's love.

    Certainly, there is enough evidence in the play to suggest that Antonio enjoys a very

close relationship with Bassanio. However, I resist the notion that the bond between them is

explicitly homoerotic.[298] What seems clear, once again, is the passivity with which Antonio's

melancholy leads him to react to Bassanio's request; "All my fortunes are at sea" (I, i. 177), he

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[294] Lewis, 21.

[295] Lewis, 21.

[296] Lewis notes how, in Christian mythology, Saint Anthony was often in the company of Saint Sebastian (Bassanio in Italian), and that such an association contributes to the perception of a wayward sexuality between both characters in *The Merchant of Venice*, 27-28.

[297] Steve Patterson, "The Homoerotic Bankruptcy of Amity in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50.1 (Spring 1999): 9-32, 10. See also Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics,* Chicago: Chicago UP, 1991, 31-78; and Joseph Pequigney, ""The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*," *English Literary Renaissance* 22.2 (1992): 201-221.

[298] As Orgel points out in his study of the performance of gender, "men in the period who preferred not to marry—like two of Shakespeare's Antonios—were eccentric, certainly, but they did not therefore constitute a special class, nor are they associated with the discourse of sodomy," *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996, 59.

initially informs his friend, echoing Salerio's metaphor of floating silks and spices. Even though he professes that he will do the same, he urges his friend to "go forth [and] / Try what my credit can in Venice do; / That shall be racked even to the utmost" (I, i. 179-181); Antonio is willing to help yet reluctant to act. Bassanio must go and verify for himself what his friend's name will procure him. The allusion to torture in Antonio's speech, being stretched out on the rack to the extreme so as to secure the necessary funds, reinforces what Lewis terms the sacrificial nature of his gesture, but what I would define as a melancholic response to Bassanio's plea. Conversely, the subsequent bond proposed by Shylock offers Antonio the ideal vehicle for such a disposition, presenting him with an outlet within which to carry out the sad role as he intended. Much like having his credit stretched out on the rack, Antonio is content with being dangled by Bassanio in front of Shylock, so as to entice the usurer to procure the loan. The scene where Bassanio entreats Shylock to do so reiterates the merchant's passive stance by presenting him as bait:

> SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats, well.
> BASSANIO. Ay, sir, for three months.
> SHYLOCK. For three months, well.
> BASSANIO. For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall
>   be bound.
> SHYLOCK. Antonio shall become bound, well.
> BASSANIO. May you stead me? Will you pleasure me?
>   Shall I know your answer?
> SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats for three months,
>   and Antonio bound (I, iii. 1-10).

In a masterful inversion, the scene opens with Shylock repeating a sentence previously uttered by Bassanio (three thousand ducats), implying that Shylock directs the conversation while, in reality, he merely reiterates Bassanio's assertions. Thus, Antonio is not only utilitarian but intermediary to his friend's desires, bound and dangled as bait in order to secure the necessary funds to reach Belmont. The negotiation offers Antonio as prey for Shylock to seize upon,

strangely echoing Gratiano's earlier advice not to fish with "this melancholy bait" (I, I. 101).[299] The intermediary role held by Antonio throughout the exchange is striking: the deal is struck between Shylock and Bassanio, who entices the usurer with the idea of Antonio being indebted to him in order to secure the loan. The merchant's inertia once again benefits Bassanio's quest to woo Portia.

While I do not subscribe to the idea that the merchant's melancholy stems from unrequited desire for Bassanio, the strong bonds of friendship that exist between both men are undeniably problematic as far as Portia is concerned. There is no clear evidence in the text that Antonio poses a serious sexual or emotional threat to the heiress of Belmont, but the implication, as I see it, is that she needs to inculcate to her husband the importance of marriage over friendship.[300] From afar, Antonio impedes the nuptials in Belmont. Prior to their union, a letter reaches the two lovers, "the paper as the body of my friend," Bassanio informs his beloved, "And every word in it a gaping wound / Issuing lifeblood" (III, ii. 264-266). Evermore passive, Antonio becomes the paper onto which his predicament is inscribed. The merchant, it seems, is determined to play the sad part to the end, even from a distance. Pragmatically, the comedy cannot allow its titular character to surrender his life for the benefit of other characters. Bassanio, feeling the pangs of culpability, must venture back to Venice to assist his friend. Thus the threat to Portia appears vested in the championing of indebtedness

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[299] Daniel perceives the fishing metaphor to be a prevalent element of Antonio's character. The image of fishing with melancholy bait, introduced by Gratiano, offers up several possible avenues within which to analyze Antonio (fishing for a cause to his sadness, fishing for the attention of others, etc.) Daniel associates this idea with what he terms the "commencement of a subtly violent poetic, in which the epistemological quest for a fixed content for melancholy is articulated through fantasies of opening the body," 213.

[300] In this particular idea, I am greatly indebted to a talk by Katharine E. Maus, originally given at the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference in 2010, entitled "The Properties of Friendship in *The Merchant of Venice*" (as well as an engaging conversation on the way to the airport the next day) that examined how Venice's capitalistic social sphere perceived male friendship as its premier form of social relation, and how Bassanio had to abandon this ideal in favour of a romantic union to Portia.

and the elicitation of Bassanio's guilt more than or homosexual (or homosocial) attachment.

Portia must remind her soon-to-be husband to "first go with me to church, and call me a wife"

(III, ii. 303) before he can set out to rescue Antonio. As she sets out to intervene in the trial

scene and effectively reclaim Bassanio's affection, she embodies the collective dramatic

pressure that mounts against the merchant's melancholic fancies.

Shylock occupies a paradoxical position vis-à-vis the play's melancholic concerns. As

the perennial outsider, he defines himself through a vehement opposition to the milieu he

inhabits: the Christian, capitalistic Venetian metropolis. While his gruff demeanour clashes

with Antonio's docile melancholy, Shylock is not averse to the humoural system that prevails

in Venice—at least not in its classical, Galenic sense. If anything, Shylock actively

participates in it.[301] Conversely, his antagonism towards Antonio cannot stem purely from the

merchant's display of Galenic humourality (which Shylock might have himself exhibited).[302]

As they negotiate the loan of three thousand ducats, Bassanio answers Shylock's demand to

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[301] Effectively, both the Western and Jewish medical sciences were established on the basis on the writings of classical Greek philosophers (particularly that of Galen and Hippocrates). It is thus plausible to think of Shylock as operating within a similar humoural model as his Venetian counterparts. See David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1995, 229-255; Harry Friendenwald, *Jewish Luminaries in Medical History*, New York: Ktav, 1967, 1-15; and *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period*, eds. Maria Diemling and Giuseppe Veltri for explicit discussions of Galenism in relation to Jewish medicine. In Diemling and Veltri's collection, see Eleazar Gutwirth, "Jewish Bodies and Renaissance Melancholy: Culture and the City in Italy and the Ottoman Empire," 57-92.

[302] Fitzpatrick, in an essay on early modern dietaries, highlights the prevailing notion in the period that the diet of Jews engendered melancholic tendencies. She cites Henry Butts who, in *Dyets Dry Dinner*, claims that "the Jewes are great Goose-eaters: therefore their complexion is passing melancholious." Her central claim concerning *Merchant* is that Shakespeare "was alert to the power of diet, rather than religious conversion, to effect physical change," "Early Modern Dietaries and the Jews*: The Merchant of Venice* and *The Jew of Malta*," *Shakespeare's World / World of Shakespeares*, eds. Richard Fotheringham, Christa Jansohn, and R. S. White, Newark: U of Delaware P, 2008: 98-107, 100; 103. Whether Shakespeare was familiar with Jewish medicine to the extent where he could draw such parallels might be too liberal of a link to establish, as it remains difficult to determine precisely what knowledge he possessed of Jewish people in early modern England. See James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews*, New York: Columbia UP, 1996, for a brilliant account of Jewish people living in and around England during Shakespeare's life that draws plausible and insightful connections between both parties.

meet Antonio with an invitation to dinner, to which the usurer retorts: "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, / Walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat / With you, drink with you, nor pray with you" (I, iii.33-35). Beyond a mere animosity towards Christian practices, Shylock's answer reveals a refusal to join in an act of festivity more than an aversion to Christian practices. This rejection can be thought of as carrying a direct slant against the lack of self-control that Venetians exhibit. "Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter / My sober house," he tells Jessica later on, "By Jacobs' staff I swear / I have no mind of feasting forth tonight" (II, v. 36-38). In this sense, Shylock's 'Hath not a Jew Eyes' speech (III, i 55- 69) can be conceived as carrying a plea for equality that somewhat mitigates his defensive stance in the face of an overwhelming opposition.[303] As some critics suggest, Shylock's discourse on anatomical similarities between Christian and Jews, in some way, seeks to level differences between them;[304] if both parties, as he contends, share the same blood, logic would dictate that they share similar humours as well. His hatred for the merchant stems from more practical reasons and extends far beyond the "ancient grudge" (I, iii. 44) he claims to bear. As he confesses in an aside,

> I hate him, for he is a Christian,
> But more for that in low simplicity

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[303] Reading *Merchant* as above all "a play of questions, both those asked within the play and those it insistently raises for actors, directors, designers and audiences," Gilbert argues that "one of the many factors which makes this an effective speech is its ability to trap the listener into responding 'yes,'" "*The Merchant of Venice*," 2-3. This structured series of questions through which Shylock hopes to defeat his opponents is an interesting reversal of I, iii, where Bassanio utters up the bond's conditions using a similar rhetoric, making Shylock repeat them after him.

[304] See Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 84-86. Paster suggests that a proper understanding of the play, "resides in the recognition that all parties in this play's dispute, whatever else their disagreements, recognize the natural basis of the humours and status of the passions they support and release as environmental determinants," *Humoring the Body*, 207. Michael Bristol perceives the speech in a similar fashion, arguing that it alludes to "the shared physiological condition of organic function and vulnerability," "Confusing Shakespeare's Characters with real People: Reflections on Reading in Four Questions," *Shakespeare and Character: Theory, History, Performance and Theatrical Persons*, eds. Paul Yachnin and Jessica Slights, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 21-40, 24.

He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice (I, iii. 39-42).

Coupled with the abuse Antonio is said to have inflicted on him repeatedly on the Rialto, the financial motive indicated here seems sufficient to validate Shylock's animosity. It does not appear to be rooted in the merchant's melancholy (though, as previously mentioned, it remains unclear how long Antonio has felt this way). What is important here is the fact that Shylock condemns Antonio's behaviour in general more than he does a specific humoural quality.

Pushing the idea further, the play develops an explicit parallel between Antonio and Shylock centring on analogous characterial peculiarities. Much has been written concerning the similarities that unite both characters. Lewis perceives them as "bound naturally by their strangeness and estrangement."[305] Richard Levin similarly describes them as "parallel studies in loneliness."[306] Yet most of the critics that underscore the link between them overlook the way in which their connection to humourality offers perhaps the most potent link, especially as far as their final status in the play is concerned. This idea partially reframes Shylock's critique of Antonio on a behavioural level more so than an anatomical one. By standing his ground against Antonio, Shylock stands against what he perceives as rigid, irresponsible conduct. In this sense, he adds his voice to other characters in reproaching an incapacity for self-control to the merchant. Antonio epitomises this attitude and the bond Shylock puts forth, a pact established, as he puts it, "in merry sport," (I, iii, 144), which rests on a similarly ludicrous tenet: a pound of Antonio's flesh should he be unable to pay back the loan. The arrangement is of no concrete value for the Jewish usurer initially. He admits as much when he asks Antonio and Bassanio:

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[305] Lewis, 55.
[306] Levin, *Love and Society in Shakespearean Comedies*, 30.

> What should I gain
> By the exaction of the forfeiture?
> A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
> Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
> As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats (I, iii. 162-166).

In other words, the bond is established on Shylock's awareness of the absurd, detrimental behaviours of Venetians such as Antonio. The stipulations confirm that Antonio will place his own safety at risk, but will do so on a theoretical plane. It is only once his daughter elopes and that all of Antonio's ships conveniently vanish that Shylock becomes intent on seeing the bond honoured.

In his insistence upon seeing his bond upheld, Shylock also critiques Venetian behaviour more generally. Shortly before the trial begins, the Duke of Venice deplores Antonio's situation, remarking that he has

> Come to answer
> A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
> Uncapable of pity, *void and empty*
> *From any dram of mercy* (IV, i. 3-6, emphasis mine).

The lines attest to the overly humoural discourses that the characters indulge in. The duke's comment implies that he perceives Shylock as someone whose humours, as Paster would argue, are "unwavering," once again stressing the importance that notions of self-control occupy in the play. When Portia inquires as to why he would prefer a pound of Antonio's flesh rather than the money he is owed, Shylock's answer further highlights his derision:

> You'll ask me why I rather choose to have
> A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
> Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that,
> But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?"
> …
> Some men there are love not a gaping pig,
> Some that are mad if they behold a cat,
> And others, when the bagpipe sings i'the nose,
> Cannot contain their urine; for affection,

Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes or loathes (IV, i. 40-43; 47-52).

In a sense, Shylock "mockingly presents himself as a Venetian aristocrat whose 'humour' it is to demand Antonio's pound of flesh. Shylock mirrors Venice."[307] The answer also points to a rejection of responsibility and refusal on the individual's part to alter his temperament. The absurdity of Shylock's examples, focusing on a loss or lack of control over specific behaviours, recalls Jonsonian humour comedy but the speech nevertheless indicates a disdain for the lack of self-control that humours engender in his Christian adversaries. His stubbornness effectively coalesces with Antonio's. Once he yields to this rage, he emulates Antonio in giving in to an irrational passion. Despite being in direct opposition for most of the play, both characters possess predominant characteristics which they refuse to temper, which leads to their respective exclusion from the play's conclusion.[308] In the case of *Merchant*, this idea suggests that some characters will not alter their makeup in order to be included in society; Shylock will have his bond and Antonio will remain melancholic despite protestations from his friends. Each stance renders them tonally ineligible to properly partake in the final celebrations.

René Girard's notion of scapegoating offers perhaps the most adequate theoretical model to delineate this connection. What Girard describes as the scapegoat effect within a community, a process where "two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters,"[309]

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[307] Levin, 31.

[308] As Henry Turner remarks, "both characters end the play alone, the former as the unbefriendable enemy and the latter as the undesirable friend," Henry S. Turner, "The Problem of the More-than-One: Friendship, Calculation, and Political Association in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 57.4 (Winter 2006): 413-442, 434.

[309] *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams, New York: Crossroad, 1996, 12.

elucidates the fate of each character. For Girard, scapegoating exists within a system of persecution that considers victim and perpetrator in explicitly social terms. Scapegoats can only exist on a collective plane, as a necessary communal entity once the society in question faces a crisis that threatens its cultural basis. As Girard writes, in a crisis, "human relations disintegrate in the process and the subjects of those relations cannot be utterly innocent of this phenomenon. But, rather than blame themselves, people inevitably blame either society as a whole, which costs them nothing, or other people who seem particularly harmful for easily identifiable reasons."[310] Scapegoating appears possible solely under these criteria, and it is through these people that the community "purifies itself of its own disorder through the unanimous immolation of a victim."[311] The scapegoat figure thus embodies the symbolic outlet that allows for the eventual restoration of social harmony.

Admittedly, the scapegoat figure exists in a much larger microcosm than the one encompassing Shakespearean comedy. Girard uses a plethora of literary examples to underscore basic human patterns tied to acts of physical persecution. Dramatically, as he discusses in *A Theatre of Envy*, the mechanisms of scapegoating permeate Shakespeare's canon extensively. Not surprisingly, Shylock is pegged as *Merchant*'s scapegoat. Of all the arguments he posits in his study, Girard's analysis of the Jewish moneylender as the victim of communal scapegoating is perhaps the most convincing. He nevertheless alludes to the fact that Antonio's position is eerily similar to Shylock's and concludes that the merchant indulges in self-victimizing acts that showcase how "the scapegoat process [can] turn back upon itself

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[310] René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986, 14.
[311] *The Girard Reader*, 11.

and become reflective."[312] I concur with much of Girard's interpretation of Shakespearean drama. Characters are unequivocally singled out from a community and labelled (rightfully or not) as a root cause of whatever crisis affects the group. To that effect, it proves difficult to ignore the blunt mistreatment of Shylock (or the misogynistic outbursts of Claudio and Leonato upon hearing of Hero's rumoured immorality in *Much Ado*). Where my analysis differs is in the recognition of guilt, specifically concerning melancholic characters. For Girard, it is scapegoaters that bear the blame rather than the victims, who become predominantly sacrificial. Thus, the term scapegoat, for Girard, "indicates both the innocence of the victims, the collective polarization in opposition to them, and the collective end result of that polarization."[313] I would argue that Shakespeare's scapegoats are not devoid of guilt or, at the least, of guilty agency in their opposition to comic progression. Both Antonio and Shylock actively resist altering their dispositions. Whether they are fully conscious of it or not, their stubbornness poses a serious threat to comic celebrations. In other words, they are partly responsible for the crisis that leads to their scapegoating.

The importance of the trial scene is undeniable in any interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice*. Beyond its narrative implications, the scene becomes a social arena where the play's three central figures battle for supremacy. The trial's premise posits an interesting conundrum: if Shylock wishes to see the law uphold his bond and grant him a pound of Antonio's flesh, and Portia simultaneously attempts to rescue Antonio and secure Bassanio's

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[312] Though he rapidly dismisses him as being of trivial importance in the play's overall plot, Girard recognizes Don John as *Much Ado*'s scapegoat figure when discussing the action of other characters, arguing that Shakespeare "enables them to project upon a scapegoat the violence that is in fact evenly distributed among all characters … What really matters," Girard writes, "is the attitude of the prince." According to him, rumours and hearsay are the main culprits which, as they "move from individual to individual … produce extremes of idolatry and scapegoating very similar to what the wild imagination of a single insecure individual such as Claudio produces," *A Theatre of Envy*," 87-88.
[313] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 39.

affection, what, then, is Antonio striving for? Although he vies for Bassanio's affection,

Antonio is anything but vocal during the trial. His melancholy prevents him from laying any

claims regarding his fate. Irremediably encased in passivity, Antonio sees death as a way to

complete the sad role he was meant to play. His self-description at the start of the trial alludes

to this notion: "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. 114-116). Similarly, his request for

the court "to give the judgment" (IV, i. 239-240) suggests a distancing from any possible

decision on the matter. His earlier declaration that the world is "but a stage" certainly applies

in this case. Even with his life in the balance, Antonio is determined to play the sad role to its

end.

At this juncture, the merchant's apparent disregard for death does reveal a conscious

manipulation of his friends' feelings and sense of loyalty. When it initially appears that

Shylock has triumphed, Antonio asks Bassanio to

> Commend me to your honorable wife.
> Tell her the process of Antonio's end,
> Say how I lov'd you, speak me fair in death;
> And, when the tale is told, bid her judge
> Whether Bassanio had not once a love (IV, i. 271-275).[314]

Antonio, aware that he cannot actively compete with Portia for Bassanio's affection, hopes

that his demise can successfully cement his position as Bassanio's primary object of

affection.[315] This is the only approach he can resort to and, by sparing him, Portia foils his

plan. Though his life is saved, Antonio can no longer compete with what she offers Bassanio,

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[314] Again, I do not believe these lines are intended to vehicle any homoerotic desire towards Bassanio. Rather, they signal Antonio's self-positioning as a melancholic martyr.

[315] To that effect, it is worth noting how Antonio speaks of himself here in the third person and how his overall input in the trial scene is a far cry from active discourse.

who returns to Belmont free of the grief that his friend's death would have caused.[316] Antonio is a primary example of the masculine identity in crisis, a dramatic self, according to Enterline "whose contours appear, in fact, only in contrast to self-loss."[317] His opening avowal of sadness, which, she notes, goes unanswered, "directs attention away from the seemingly unanswerable question of personal suffering and toward the vagaries of the marketplace."[318] Following Girardian logic, Enterline argues that this shift in the play's focus also leads to a redirection away from individual identity and towards a broader social microcosm. At the core of this process, she underscores the importance of both the identification of a scapegoat and the subsequent "collective act of expulsion."[319] Shylock, however, leaves the play too quickly to betray any evidence of the effect Antonio's punishment exerts on him, other than his vague, open-ended remark on how he is "not well" (IV, i. 393). Antonio's inflexibility and refusal to shake off his melancholic passivity proves costly once the play reaches its resolution. His final status within the play provides a final illustration of the social disability his melancholic disposition incurs. Taking into account the play's dual settings of Venice and Belmont, Girard's idea of a reflective scapegoating could actually be pushed further, as both Shylock and Antonio could be conceived of as respective scapegoats for each locale. While Shylock's purgation happens with much fanfare and dramatic gusto, Antonio's rejection is more understated. Though the merchant undertakes the journey to Belmont, he is nevertheless excluded from marital celebrations. The system of mercantile male friendship he relies on

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[316] Interestingly, Antonio's most active gesture in the play is his sentencing of Shylock. His decision to deprive Shylock of two of the quintessential characteristics he possesses—his religion and his money-- proves telling. The ruling represents an attempt to deprive Shylock of what constitutes his identity and possibly transform him into as passive a figure as he himself proves to be.
[317] Enterline, 190.
[318] Enterline, 229.
[319] Ibid.

does not hold sway in Portia's domain. If Antonio is not explicitly cast aside at the end of the play, he unmistakably hovers on its fringes.

The final act opens in Belmont, where Lorenzo and Jessica relate tragic love stories to one another (V, i. 1-24). This predominantly melancholic mood recalls Portia's initial sorrow, one caused by the limits and impossibilities of love. It momentarily casts a dark cloud over the pairs of newlyweds returning from Venice. The melancholy they express echoes the lyrical sorrows of romantic love and has little to do with the inexorable sadness Antonio exhibits. In Belmont, the merchant is a definite outsider. Most evidently, the pairing up of six of the play's characters in bonds of marriage (Lorenzo and Jessica, Bassanio and Portia, and Gratiano and Nerissa), all of which have critiqued or contrasted his melancholy, leaves him the odd man out. In most stagings of the play, this is visually flagrant at the very least: as characters exit to celebrate the nuptials, logic dictates that each couple exit together, leaving Antonio to depart alone.[320] The critical need to ultimately include him in these final moments is external to the text, harking back to the aforementioned struggles associated with describing the nature of Shakespearean comedy.[321] Though these interpretations proclaim Antonio to be cured by the end of the play, quietly content in being alongside his newly married friend, I suggest, rather, that the merchant's melancholy is not purged.[322] Pragmatically, his humour is never directly addressed following his opening speech. Moreover, since Antonio suffered from melancholy

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[320] See Gilbert, *The Merchant of Venice*, 145-57, for an account of the problems associated with Antonio when staging the final act.

[321] Daniel and Enterline both perceive the character to be rid of his melancholic fancies at the start of the fifth act.

[322] In doing so, I draw from a number of critics who, against dominant critical currents, have also raised doubts as to Antonio's state of mind at the end of the play. See Trevor, 115-127 and Ryan, 114-115. Critchley and McCarthy's article does not explicitly make this claim, but their assessment of the return of Antonio's ship as a "lame but necessary plot twist," speaks volumes as to the problematic status of the merchant by the end of the play, 14.

prior to entering into a bond with Shylock, to suggest that his dire emancipation at the trial

would shock him back into mirth would be to overlook how he functions within the play.

Although Portia welcomes him to Belmont, there is a lingering impression that

Antonio does not belong, a notion reflected in a final confrontation with Portia. When a clash

concerning the ring trick erupts (V, i. 144-237), Antonio, in an effort to resolve the problem,

declares:

> I once did lend my body for his wealth,
> Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
> Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
> My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
> Will never more break faith advisedly (V, i. 249-253).

Antonio hopes to repeat the earlier pattern where he passively staked his body in Bassanio's

favour. Faced with the prospect of being sidelined opposite three newlywed couples, this is the

only manoeuvre available to him. However, the result of his sacrificial gesture is somewhat

different. Portia, having conceived of the ring trick, successfully subjugates both Antonio and

Bassanio by the end of the scene. On the one hand, the trick grants her control in her

relationship with Bassanio, as he must now ask for her forgiveness and swear fidelity.[323]

Moreover, even though Antonio is allowed to remain in Belmont, Portia has effectively

pushed him down a step on the scale of Bassanio's affection. Through the highly improbable

return of Antonio's ships as the play ends, she scores a final victory over him. By professing

to have "better news in store for you / Than you expect" (V, i. 274-275), she effectively

renders him even more indebted to her –in fortune and in life. Subsequently, Portia has no

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[323] Orgel casts this last scene in an overwhelmingly uncomic light. "The episode is, once one notices it, genuinely disruptive," he writes, "pitting friendship against love, and leaving the conflict significantly unresolved. Its consistent elision from the history of criticism is not a matter of simple emphasis or dismissal. It has been, like Viola the eunuch and Roslaind the catamite, all but invisible," "*Impersonations*," 74-75.

need to concern herself with his well-being as she previously did. Their last exchange suggests as much:

> ANTONIO. Sweet Lady, you have given me life and living;
> For here, I read certain that my ships
> Are safely come to road.
> PORTIA.   How now, Lorenzo?
> My clerk hath some good comforts too for you (V, i. 285-289).

Despite professions of warmth and hospitality, Portia seems uninterested in Antonio. His salvation served her well in securing her husband's affection, but his presence in Belmont comes to be perceived as a nuisance. Moreover, his previous denial of any correlation between his sadness and the state of his affairs negate the possible curative effects that the return of his ships might have exerted. If anything, his missing argosies could have been one last card to play in his attempt to guilt Bassanio.[324] This final dismissal of Antonio validates his position as a passive observer. Despite the threats he faces throughout the play, Antonio's behaviour never fluctuates. His melancholy renders him a tolerable inconvenience, one that can be socially entertained but that must ultimately be kept away from one's private, married life; Antonio's 'want-wit sadness' has left him on the outside looking in. While certain critics hold that his very presence on stage in Belmont (*versus* Shylock's absence) constitutes inclusion,[325] the glaring asymmetry found on stage—the melancholic merchant surrounded by three couples—supersedes any claim of integration. This last scene is not one of Shakespearean

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[324] On this subject, Luke Wilson notes, interestingly, that it "proves important to demand why Antonio has not insured his ships, especially since the practice was routine among merchants in the sixteenth-century London (and for that matter Venice); this refusal to insure," he argues, "exposes the ethics of risk as not only masochistic but antisocial too," "Monetary Compensation for Injuries to the Bodies, A. D. 602-1697," *Money and the Age of Shakespeare*: *Essays in the New Economic Criticism,* ed. Linda Woodbridge, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 203, 1-38, 33.

[325] Pequigney contends that by sheer Shakespearean logic, Antonio cannot be thought as excluded since "the moral law peculiar to this comedy coincides with the law common to all Shakespearean comedies, according to both of which felicity and, in cases of suffering, equitable to superabundant compensation await the virtuous, be they lovers, spouses, siblings, rulers, servants, or friends, and this Antonio is no exception," 217. See also Jensen, 23-43.

rejoicing which encompasses friends and family relations, in the vein of *The Comedy of Errors* or *As You Like It*. The emphasis is clearly on the romantic couples themselves and the need to include him, ultimately, seems to be a pressure from outside the text.[326] W. H. Auden offers the most concise opinion of the inevitability of Antonio's exclusion from a theatrical standpoint:

> in a production of the play, a stage director is faced with the awkward problem of what to do with Antonio in the last act. Shylock, the villain, has been vanquished and will trouble Arcadia no more, but, now that Bassanio is getting married, Antonio, the real hero of the play, has no further dramatic function … if Antonio is not to fade away into a nonentity, then the married couples must enter the lighted house and leave Antonio standing alone on the darkened stage, outside the Eden from which, not by the choice of others, but by his own nature, he is excluded.[327]

Following the initial celebrations in Belmont, Antonio can either return to Venice away from his friends or remain in Belmont, where his value as a single man in Portia's household will be severely diminished. This is more disconcerting considering the potential symmetry laid out by the play's initial premise, where one could expect both he and Bassanio to find love in Belmont and live happily thereafter. Rather, it is Gratiano that receives access to the newly created social realm, claiming the hand of the servant Nerissa, joining Bassanio and Lorenzo as married men, rather than lagging behind as a melancholic third wheel.[328] It is at this

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[326] Bulman recalls a production by Henry Irving where, as she is about to exit the stage, Portia "suddenly remembers Antonio and conveys in pantomime how selfish it was of them to have forgotten him. She turns around, graciously smiles, extends her hand," 50. This idea highlights perfectly the external constraints that a reading of the ending as inclusionary entails. Bulman also notes that Irving eventually left out the final entirely to refocus the play around Shylock's character, *The Merchant of Venice*, 51.

[327] W. H. Auden, "Brothers and Others," in *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*, New York: Random House, 1962, 233-234. Though Antonio's final status remains contested, I tend to agree with John McVeagh who, on the subject of Auden's comments, writes that "this reading of the final scene strikes me as much too attractive to be wrong," 195.

[328] This idea is supported by the fact that In Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*, the older merchant character (Ansaldo) marries the rich widow's lady-in-waiting, completing the heterosexual symmetry that is conspicuously absent in Shakespeare's version, highlighting once again how at odds Antonio proves to be at the end of the play, 98. For an account of several productions that leave Antonio alone on stage at the end of the play (as well as some that attempt to include him), see Gilbert, *The Merchant of Venice*, 152-155.

juncture that readings which ascribe a definitive source to his melancholy usually break down, unable to properly reconcile his inflexible resistance to comic closure with the various lines of criticism they cast onto the play. In such interpretations, by the time the comedy comes to a close, Antonio truly seems, 'racked even to the uttermost.' Despite his physical presence in Belmont, the character ultimately sticks out like a sad thumb.

The symmetrical models operating in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, which sought to neutralize melancholy in order to usher in a satisfying climax, erodes sharply in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, where dissonant characters command exclusion. While characters continue to rely on Galenic lexicon when describing their inner turmoil, the traits they display and the unease it creates for other characters becomes an increasingly communal problem. Characters such as Don John and Antonio refuse to bend to the comic will and properly integrate the newfound social worlds that close out their respective comedies. In actuality, they never truly belong to the worlds they inhabit, nor do they attempt to fit within them with any particular vivacity. What unites the two characters lies outside of the play's realm. In both cases, Shakespeare creates a deferment of traumatic events; the fate of these characters is left to a theoretical future that transpires after the play ends, where they perhaps experience a harsher treatment. Shakespeare's development of comic melancholy changes drastically once again in plays such as *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, which move away from individual characterizations of melancholy and in which the concept undergoes a radical transformation. Melancholy becomes an almost ethereal dramatic element, which comes to engrain itself within the fabric of the plays it occupies. This alteration suggests an endpoint of Shakespearean comedy that looks ahead to later tragicomic works.

Chapter 4: Leaving on a High Note: The Melancholic Close of Shakespearean Comedy

Following the uneasy considerations of melancholy that develop in *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Merchant of Venice*, this chapter posits that both *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* bring the comic treatment of melancholy to its paroxysm. From critical and chronological standpoints, these mature, complex works represent the apogee of Shakespearean comedy. I maintain that comic melancholy similarly reaches its apex in these plays as it moves away from individual characterizations and ingrains itself in the play's fabric, creating a sense of wistfulness that looms over their comic qualities. Melancholy is rampant in both comedies, affecting a wide array of characters and stemming from an equally disparate set of sources. Characters who profess melancholy, I argue, do so in increasingly contrived and artificial manners, while a more elusive, ethereal kind of sorrow emerges from the periphery. These characterizations yield under increasing dramatic pressure exerted on their incommodious makeup. Indeed, characters such as Jaques and Orsino, though they represent some of the most overt treatments of melancholy in all of Shakespearean comedy, are criticized for the disingenuousness of their affect. They do not suffer a fate akin to that Don John or Antonio, however, since their portrayals come across more like parody than pathos. In actuality, these characters no longer threaten comic progression in any serious manner. Even the more genuine depictions of melancholy enacted by female protagonists (Rosalind and Viola) come under scrutiny, since they do not engender the expected purgative effects of their predecessors. In spite of each heroine shouldering the bulk of dramatic progression, both plays, in effect, prove too melancholic to yield to its comic agents.[329]

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[329] For Orgel, the participation of these comic heroines represents "strikingly self-reflexive moments in which Shakespeare makes the practice of his theatre, the substitution of boys for women, into the subject of his

The melancholy associated with a stubborn refusal to change is gradually displaced by a new type, which burgeons in *As You Like It* before blooming onto the stage in *Twelfth Night*. Rather than an easily identifiable affect, this strain translates into the bitter sorrow that accompanies a growing awareness of the unrelenting passage of time and the inevitable end of festivity it triggers. To that effect, the comedies introduce remote settings where melancholy can proliferate to previously unparalleled degrees. In each case, it is championed by the fool characters (Touchstone and Feste), who epitomize the novel balance between mirth and melancholy that these plays promote. Melancholy is seen as cyclical rather than exceptional; it becomes a necessary encumbrance of everyday life that should be accepted rather than fought against. Such an idea offers a synecdochic interpretation of the endpoint of Shakespearean comedy, where revels and mirth grow dim, and a more sober tone challenges festive outcomes. Consequently, by the end of *Twelfth Night*, the mainly humoural characterizations of melancholy have been supplanted by this different type, whose emotional duality provides a bridge to the late romances and their own peculiar reliance on comic melancholy.

'Either a fool or cypher': The Melancholic Underside of Arden Forest

I usually resist echoing Harold Bloom's prodigious bouts of bardolatry, but I want to begin this discussion of *As You Like It* by drawing attention to one of his observations that connects with my reading of the play, which posits that the forest of Arden acts as a dramatic repository for melancholy. The comment, though it concerns Falstaff (Bloom's seminal Shakespearean fetish), underscores the multifarious nature that the concept enjoys within the play. On the subject of Philip the Bastard in *King John*, Bloom remarks that "readers are likely

drama," "*Impersonations*," 53. This increased focus on the act of cross-dressing, I would add, diminishes both characters' ability to quell melancholic fancies in their respective plays.

to feel that the [character] deserves a better play than the one in which he finds himself."[330]

This affords him with the perfect opportunity to indulge in personal revisionism of

Shakespearean drama: "being a hopeless Romantic," he continues, "I would also like Falstaff

at the end of *Henry IV, Part Two*, to forget the ungrateful Prince Hal and go off cheerfully to

the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*."[331] Certainly, a pastoral backdrop promoting self-

indulgence, personal gratification, and idleness constitutes a haven for the likes of Sir John

Falstaff. Setting aside Bloom's infatuation with the old knight, the comment is significant to

this chapter because it draws specific attention to the transformative and restorative qualities

associated with the play's sylvan setting. Bloom's fantasy testifies to the remarkable nature of

Arden as a comic locale, where even a boisterous rogue can seemingly find solace. Its

underpinnings of pastoral recreation and romantic persuasion reveal themselves as an ideal

conduit for the revelry and celebrations that close the play. As I argue, it is also a setting

where melancholy thrives, breaks loose from the shackles of individual characterizations, and

begins to pervade the comic structure more ubiquitously.

Melancholy is addressed in most discussions of the play, but *As You Like It* has rarely

been read specifically through a melancholic lens. Similarly, though much has been made of

its transformative powers, they have seldom been linked directly to the melancholy that

suffuses it. I contend that the play represents the dramatic pivot Shakespearean comedy

undertakes towards its pinnacle. The setting, read by most critics as a temporary site of

regeneration prior to a return to courtly society,[332] performs a similar function as it pertains to

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[330] Bloom, 51.
[331] Ibid.
[332] The argument concerning an expected return to court is best defined by Anne Barton, who notes that the play puts forth a "better world created in Arden which prepares now to reinvigorate the court," " Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 103.

melancholy, which flourishes in the forest without impeding comic resolution the way it did in Ephesus, Messina, or Venice. Arden offers a space where characters can fully indulge their melancholic fancies before reintegrating into the courtly existence they left behind. Although the play channels some of the staple elements of Shakespearean comedy, notably its contrast of a female protagonist with several male characters along melancholic lines, I argue that, in *As You Like It*, it is no longer necessary to purge such melancholic displays off the stage ahead of the final celebrations. Such a shift is primarily represented through the character of Jaques, who acts as a syphon for melancholy within Arden. His unabashed melancholic indulgences— his craving for such a state—severely undercuts what impact he might have exerted on the comic structure. It is through their interaction with him that characters such as Rosalind and Orlando come to reject their own melancholic tendencies. Thus, the fostering of self-transformation that Arden Forest promulgates rests on Jaques' capacity to act as a melancholic lightning rod.

It is undoubtedly paradoxical that, in a play that marks a turning point in Shakespearean comedy's treatment of melancholy, we find its most overt individual characterization. Jaques is not only forthcoming about his melancholic nature (he is *exceedingly* so), but displays a clear awareness of why such a disposition afflicts him. More importantly, he does not frustrate comic efforts the way Don John or Antonio previously did. Jaques participates actively in the comedy of *As You Like It* as one of its chief agents. I contend that the character represents a simulacrum of Arden's transformative powers. Encountering him leads other characters to cast off their own melancholic tendencies. This function ultimately proves a self-defeating role that leaves him at odds with the critique of rigid characterizations the play fashions. Other characters are neither concerned nor interested

in his melancholic fancies, and Jaques ends up on the losing end of a contrast with the alternative strain of melancholy that emerges. In a brilliant essay, Cynthia Marshall puts forth the idea that "the requirement of a melancholy Jaques, so crucial to the play's emotional equilibrium, testifies to an undertow of sadness in it that is brilliantly held at bay by a Shakespearean game of Fort/Da, and thus Jaques reveals how the carefully managed relation between melancholy affect and textual representation enables this comedy to function."[333] As an emblem of traditional dramatic melancholy, his eventual departure from the play (and his implied refusal to return to court with other characters) highlights the dramatic crossroads that melancholy reaches by the end of the play, underscored by the larger, growing concern that Shakespearean comedy can no longer successfully assimilate or exclude melancholic characters.

As You Like It borrows profusely from Thomas Lodge's prose romance *Rosalynd*.[334] Yet, as is customary of Shakespearean comedy, the play undertakes a stark departure from its source material in infusing the story with a considerable amount of melancholy. Lodge's characters occasionally fall prey to bouts of melancholy, but these instances relate mainly to the fact that the romance "offers a harsher world than *As You Like It* … In its metamorphosis of pain into pleasure," he writes, "the cost is counted in ways that are in fact more like Shakespeare's last plays."[335] Faced with adversity, the characters of *Rosalind* give in to their "sundry passion," falling prey to "a discontented melancholy,"[336] but the sorrow experienced

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[333] Cynthia Marshall, "The Doubled Jaques and Constructions of Negation in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49.4 (Winter 1998): 375-392, 375.

[334] The initial premise of both texts closely mirror each other: a pair of young lovers, both of whom fled miserable living situations, meets up in the forest, where the heroine, under male guises, manages to both win her beloved's affection and restore the social order by the end of the narrative.

[335] Brian Nellist, Introduction, *Rosalynd*, ed. Brian Nellist with Simône Batin, Staffordshire: Keele UP, 1995, 7-22, 22.

[336] Lodge, 60.

by characters is a condition that rapidly dissipates as the action moves forward, or when fortunes suddenly improve.[337] Lodge's use of melancholy harks back to Galenic doctrines much more than its Shakespearean equivalent. As a Shakespearean innovation, the character of Jaques clearly denotes this fundamental difference.[338] This emphasis on melancholy also reverberates through the play's setting, as Arden Forest gains tremendous importance in Shakespeare's comedy. While nearly half of *Rosalynd* takes place before its protagonist enters the forest, it takes all but three scenes for Shakespeare's characters to do the same. *As You Like It* proves anxious to get its characters into the forest so that their transformations can begin.

More than any other previous comic effort, *As You Like It* makes considerable use of lovesickness as a source of melancholy. The play opens with a crisscross of scenes showcasing the deplorable premises of its two protagonists, Rosalind and Orlando.[339] Over the course of the first act, each of them abandons a bitter courtly existence in favour of Arden Forest. They do so after having fallen in love with one another following a chance encounter at a wrestling bout (I, ii. 141-247). Though romantic turmoil and frustrated desire are intrinsic elements of most Shakespearean comedies, they are seldom tied expressly to melancholy, a

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[337] Barton expresses a similar idea when she writes that the primary difference between the Shakespearean comedy and Lodge's source text is a desire on Shakespeare's part to "mitigate the violence inherent in the original story," "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 98.

[338] As noted by Nellist, one finds a faint echo to Jaques in Lodge's story *Rosalind*, when Adam rails on the condition of man early on: "Oh how the life of man may well be compared to the state of the ocean seas, that for every calm hath a thousand storms, resembling the rose tree, that for a few fair flowers, hath a multitude of sharp prickles! All our pleasures end in pain and our highest delights are crossed with deepest discontents." The speech distantly recalls Jaques' "Seven Ages of Man Speech" (II, vii. 139-165), 62. Steve Mentz argues that, in reworking Lodge's story, Shakespeare substituted two of its characters (Old Adam and the evil brother Saladyne) with the "theatrical standards" that Jaques and the clown Touchstone represent, "A Note Beyond Your Reach?": Prose Romance's Rivalry with Elizabethan Drama," in *Staging* Early Modern Romance: *Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare*, eds. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne, New York: Routeledge, 2009, 75-90, 77.

[339] For an elaboration on such dramatic symmetry, see Ryan, 199-201.

dramatic staple more reminiscent of the court plays of John Lyly.[340] Lovesickness was

nevertheless a widespread dramatic theme, as Carol Thomas Neely explains, due to the

suddenness and arbitrariness with which it could break out. "Because it can strike anyone and

fasten on anything," she writes, "it has the effect of making gender roles and erotic object

choices fluid and the relation between them unstable." [341] Melancholy certainly fulfils this

function in *As You Like It*, but, by ascribing such a clear and easily remediable cause to their

afflictions, the play pre-emptively attests to the inefficiency of individual melancholic

characterizations to complicate comic structures. Lovesickness comes across as facilitator of

the comic genre rather than its detractor.

Orlando de Boys opens the play by railing against the mistreatment he endures at the

hands of his eldest sibling, Oliver, following their father's passing. Trapped under his

brother's rule, Orlando sees his noble parentage and social aspirations frustrated.[342] Unlike

other male protagonists examined so far, his turmoil does not immediately translate into a

melancholic affectation. What comes across most strongly in this first scene is a sense of utter

contempt for the life imposed on him, a frustration that reaches its tipping point as he warns

his brother that the "spirit of my father grows strong in me, and I will no / Longer endure it"

(I, i. 66-67).[343] This situation concords well with his status as comic protagonist, being at odds

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[340] For an overview of the condition of lovesickness and its connection to melancholy, see Burton, III, 1-258; and Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness*. For a discussion of Lyly's theatre and uses of lovesickness, see Cartwright, 207-239.

[341] Neely identifies both *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* as Shakespearean comedies that fully exploit such a notion, especially in terms of its "gender-bending effects," 100. Drawing on the work of Ficino, Wells writes that the concept of lovesickness as "a kind of optical infection carried in the fine vapor of the spirit engages with the medico-literary trope of love as a hidden or secret wound," further emphasizing the suddenness with which the ailment can strike, 51.

[342] As Ryan notes, the idea of being a proper gentleman which Orlando entertains would have been dear to Shakespeare, who purchased a coat of arm for his family in 1596, 209-210.

[343] This proves a stark contrast to characters such as Antonio or Don John, and the helplessness they express vis-à-vis their dispositions.

with the world he inhabits and desirous for change. It is once he encounters Rosalind at the

wrestling bout that Orlando grows melancholic:

> Can I not say 'I thank you'? My better parts
> Are all thrown down, and that which here stands up
> Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block.
> …
> What passion hangs these weights upon my
> Tongue? I cannot speak to her, yet she urged conference.
> O poor Orlando! Thou art overthrown! (I, ii. 239-241; 248-250).

Fresh off his triumph over the wrestler Charles, Orlando rapidly loses another contest, being

"overthrown" by his budding romantic infatuation with Rosalind. This countenance is

exacerbated once his servant Adam[344] warns him of a ploy by his brother to murder him. The

old servant urges him to flee, and Orlando resigns himself never to see Roslaind again as the

two men head for Arden. Orlando's depiction in this first scene proves fundamentally

dualistic, echoing Louis Montrose's assessment of the character as "physically mature and

powerful, but socially infantilized and weak."[345] His stand against his brother's tyranny

showcases a strength of spirit worthy of a comic hero, but it somewhat deflates under the

weight of his melancholy. His journey to Arden sets the stage for an eventual self-

transformation where Orlando gains social acumen and overcomes lovesickness,[346] as he will

benefit from a romantic education at the hands of his beloved in disguise.

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[344] Note the use of the name "Adam" and its direct connotation to the character of the same name in Lodge's work.

[345] Louis A. Montrose, "The Place of a Brother in *As You Like It*: Social Process and Comic Form," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32.1 (Spring 1981): 28-54, 38. Montrose's description also underscores the mirroring at play between Orlando and Rosalind, who appears physically weak but socially ingenuous.

[346] Moreover, as Jay L. Halio notes, Orlando's family name 'de boys' (as opposed to "de Bordeaux" in Lodge's tale), echoes the prominence that Arden Forest holds within the play. The connotation is even stronger when taking into account the French pronunciation 'des bois' (*of the woods*), "'No Clock in the Forest': Time in *As You Like It*," in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of As You Like It: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Jay L. Halio, Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1968, 88-97. 91.

Orlando's premise is paralleled by that of Rosalind at the opening of the second scene. Distraught by the banishment of her father, Duke Senior, at the hands of his usurping brother Frederick, Rosalind sulks as Celia, her cousin, attempts to console her:[347]

> CELIA. I pray thee, Rosalind, sweet my coz, be merry.
> ROSALIND. Dear Celia, I show more mirth than I am
>   Mistress of; and would you yet were I merrier? Unless
>   You could teach me to forget a banished father you
>   Must not learn me how to Remember any extraordinary
>   Pleasure.
> …
> CELIA. Therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear
>   Rose, be merry.
> ROSALIND. From henceforth I will, coz, and devise
>   Sports. Let me see, what think you of falling in love? (I, ii. 1-6; 21-24).

Their exchange echoes the one that occurs near the beginning of *The Merchant of Venice* between Portia and Nerissa (I, ii. 1-9). Like Portia, Rosalind initially laments her situation but quickly resolves to change her fortune, refusing to be ruled by an inert melancholy.[348] Her rapid turn to romantic endeavours ("what think you, then of falling love?") denotes a certain playfulness in the face of adversity, but it also marks another instance where a female comic character actively seeks to improve her lot. Rosalind's involvement in *As You Like It* represents another Shakespearean innovation on Lodge's story. Critics generally hail the character as the corrective agent *par excellence* of Shakespearean comedy.[349] Once in Arden, she skilfully inculcates its inhabitants with proper romantic behaviour, arranges the multiple

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[347] Much like Orlando, she vehemently opposes a familial authority figure she deems guilty of disrespecting her father's reputation.

[348] Marshall, who also notes the parallel between this scene and the one found in *Merchant*, argues that Rosalind's fleeing into Arden, along with the concealment of her identity, are instrumental to her overcoming this initial affliction. "Displacement," she writes, "is shown to be the key to characterological recognition, even though all such recognition is bracketed: the tantalizing promise of a reality hidden by the veiling signifier cannot be confirmed; the signifier cannot prove that it does not lie," 380.

[349] Bloom is quite fond of the character and actually describes her as standing "in sequence, between Falstaff and Hamlet, just as witty and as wise but trapped neither in history with Falstaff nor in tragedy with Hamlet, and yet larger than her drama even as they cannot be confined to theirs," 211.

nuptials that take place at the end of the play and sets the stage for the eventual return to court.

For Grace Tiffany, the character is emblematic of how the play "resurrects feminine agency within a shared human search for authentic identity,"[350] a manoeuvre, she argues, achievable mainly through Rosalind's participation in the play. "Rosalind," she writes, "enables actual love, involving friendship and erotic fulfilment to replace poetic illusion."[351] Part of this feminine agency revolves around suppressing her own melancholy as much as that of other characters.

She also becomes enamoured with Orlando at the wrestling bout and, when Frederick banishes her from court in following scene (I, iii), her position mirrors that of the young de Boys: stricken with melancholy and bound for Arden accompanied by Celia. For their safety—"Alas," she tells her cousin, "what danger will it be to us, / Maids as we are, to travel forth so far! / Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold" (I, iii. 106-108)—she decides to don the masculine persona of Ganymede. Her cross-dressing efforts grant her the freedom to interact with Arden's inhabitants and seize control of the comedy from that moment on. Rosalind's disguise thus follows the Shakespearean tradition of depicting comic heroines as more adept than their masculine counterparts at altering their disposition. However, as most critics point out, the disguise represents a remarkable departure from any previous usage of such a feature in Shakespearean comedy[352] since it is "self-consciously assumed [and] does not lead to the kind of confusion and suffering," generally associated with early

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[350] Grace Tiffany, *Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters: Shakespeare, Jonson, and Comic Androgyny*, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1995, 182.

[351] Tiffany, 183.

[352] Neely concurs with such an assessment, arguing that Rosalind's cross-dressing not only points to the problematic notion of normative desire, but helps the play to "unfold extended characterizations [which] elicit extended identification with lovers and considerable investment in their satisfaction," 115.

Shakespearean comedies. [353] More importantly, the foregoing of her female identity affords

her the opportunity to cast off her melancholy, unlike Orlando, who, even in Arden, remains

love-stricken.

This notion, which underscores the originality *As You Like It* showcases in its gendered

treatment of melancholy, finds its underpinnings in Stephen Orgel's discussion of the inherent

pliability of gender in early modern theatre. For Orgel, characters such as Rosalind and Viola

offer irrefutable evidence that dramatic enactments of gender appear "mutable, constructed

[and] a matter of choice."[354] The gender binary of comic melancholy I have been discussing

finds its roots in such an idea, since it is predicated on the notion that, through a construction

of masculinity, comic heroines appear better suited to curb unruly behaviour in their male

counterparts. Dramatic representations of gender bypass the humoural gender division

altogether in Shakespearean comedy. The fluidity of gender categories counteracts the

inelasticity of melancholic affectations. William Carroll writes that *As You Like It*:

> is making comically explicit what has been implicit in most of these comedies, that
> transformation and mutability are powers somehow linked to feminine energies, and
> that these powers are finally healthier and more realistic than the masculine rigidities
> of [men] … Shakespeare goes beyond the allegory to locate this power of self-
> transformation in individualized, mysterious, believable young women.[355]

Thus, the combination of Rosalind's ingenuous determinism and Arden's propensity for

transformation create the perfect opportunity for comic melancholy to permeate the play's

fabric without unravelling it. In essence, it allows, if only preliminarily, for integration rather

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[353] Newman, 94.

[354] Orgel, "*Impersonations*," 57. "One thing such moments certainly suggest, even for us," Orgel subsequently writes, "is the degree to which both gender and sexual desire, in any era, are socially and culturally constructed. This is true for both sexes; and women profit from these representations and are empowered by them precisely through that recognition," 82.

[355] Carroll, 133.

than purgation, a shift reflected in Celia's parting words as they leave court: "Now go we in content / To liberty, and not to banishment" (I, iii. 135-136).

In having its chief pair of lovers reach Arden so rapidly, the play underscores the prevailing contrast it seeks to establish between the worlds of court and forest. The first act showcases a corrupt, aging realm that proves inhospitable to the spirit of romantic comedy. As the wrestler Charles comments to Oliver, "There's no news at the court, sir, but the old / News" (I, i. 95-96). Their exchange also introduces the idea of Arden as possessing mystical qualities. Charles answers Oliver's queries pertaining to Duke Senior's whereabouts by relating that:

> The old Duke is banished by his younger
> Brother, the new Duke, and three or four loving lords
> Have put themselves into voluntary exile with him,
> Whose lands and revenues enrich the New Duke;
> Therefore, he gives them good leave to wander.
> …
> They say he is already in the forest of Arden,
> And a many merry men with him; and there they live
> Like the old Robin Hood of England. They say many
> Young gentlemen flock to him every day, and fleet the
> Time carelessly,[356] as they did in the golden world (I, i. 96-100; 110-114).

The description of the duke's makeshift court underlines Arden's pastoral, idyllic nature and its potential as an alternative site of dwelling for those discontented with the actual court. As a comic setting, it allows for the play's disparate cast of characters to congregate by loosening the binds of realism that prevailed elsewhere. In Arden, Rosalind can become Ganymede, Duke Senior can establish a utopian society, rooted in the laws of nature, and find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything" (II, i. 16-17),

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[356] Note the allusion in Charles' description to a desire to escape from the merciless grasp of time.

and court jesters can converse with shepherds. Above all, Arden Forest is a place where

melancholy is not only present but actively solicited.

The setting of Arden has been much discussed in critical responses to the play.[357] Yet,

in looking to extricate a comprehensive reading of the play out of its transformative abilities,

critics have often overlooked the preponderance of melancholy that characterizes it. In shifting

the discourse away from a direct oppositional binary of courtly and sylvan attitudes, Joseph

Alulius has come closer to a critical outlook that accounts for this melancholic ubiquity. For

Alulius, the distinction at hand "is not one between a corrupt state of society and an idyllic

state of nature but rather between two different social states or ways of life: one a way of

wealth and brilliance, the other, of simplicity and freedom."[358] This initial repositioning leads

him to consider what he terms "the relation between nature and convention, the former

understood as both standard and native impulse, the latter understood as a society's accepted

ideas of right and wrong and the mechanisms by which such ideas are made to govern our

lives."[359] By redirecting Alulius' distinction specifically along melancholic lines, where the

pastoral realm welcomes it as a natural impulse—whereas the court would condemn its

affectation—Arden's capacity as a repository for melancholy materializes. While it welcomes

Orlando's and Rosalind's melancholic afflictions, they come under considerable duress upon

entering the forest. Rosalind and Celia rapidly deplore their situation—"O Jupiter," Rosalind

exclaims, "how weary are my spirits! … I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's /

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[357] The importance given to Arden Forest is epitomized in C. L. Barber's analysis of Shakespearean comedy as a festive, ritualistic form of drama. For Barber, *As You Like It* stands as a prime example of how Shakespearean comedy addresses the notions of "the rhythms of man and nature in relation to the power of love," 10. See also Montrose, 38; and James C. Bulman, "*As You Like It* and the Perils of the Pastoral," in *As You Like It from 1600 to the Present: Critical Essays*, ed. Edward Tomarken, New York: Garland, 1997, 597-602.

[358] Joseph Alulius, "Fathers and Children: Matter, Mirth, and Melancholy in *As You Like It*," in *Shakespeare's Political Pageant: Essays in Literature and Politics*, eds. Joseph Alulius and Vickie Sullivan, Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996*, 37-60, 38.

[359] Ibid.

Apparel and to cry like a woman" (II, iv. 1; 3-4)—while Orlando, desperately seeking food for the ailing Adam, refers to Arden as a "desert inaccessible, [where] under the shade of melancholy boughs, [one can] / Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time" (II, vii. 109-111). Orlando's comment provides the play's initial, understated allusion to the inescapable passage of time, the futile desire to delay it, and the melancholy that arises from such a sentiment. The very essence of Arden, it seems, creates a melancholy that challenges more traditional, humoural characterizations.

At the onset of the second act, Duke Senior entreats a few of his lords to go deer hunting. One of them answers by relating a peculiar spectacle he beheld moments prior:

> *The melancholy Jaques* grieves at that,
> And in that kind swears that you do more usurp
> Than doth your brother that hath banished you.
> Today my lord Amiens and myself
> Did steal behind him as he lay along
> Under an oak, whose antic root peeps out
> Upon the brook that brawls along this wood,
> To the which place a poor sequestered stag
> That from the hunter's aim had ta'en hurt
> Did come to languish. And indeed, my lord,
> The wretched animal heaved forth such groans
> That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
> Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
> Coursed one another down his innocent nose
> In piteous chase. And thus the hairy fool,
> Much markèd of the *melancholy Jaques*,
> Stood on th'extremest verge of the swift brook,
> Augmenting it with tears (II, i. 26-43, my emphasis).

As was the case with Don Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost*, mention is made of Jaques before he appears on stage.[360] The scene described here positions him as both a melancholic character

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[360] As mentioned in my second chapter, the two characters develop along similar lines in their respective comedies. Both are somewhat outsiders within a pastoral setting, and are afflicted by a superficial melancholy. According to Robert B. Bennett, the character of Jaques, in contrast to Armado, represents not only a change in the nature of Shakespearean comedy, but also in England's political climate. "By 1600," he writes, "the Spanish

(being explicitly referred as such at the beginning and at the end of the speech) and an object

of curiosity for other characters. While male characters introduced so far can be perceived as

men of action (hunters and wrestlers), Jaques is first presented lying by the water and reacting

to a wounded stag's last moments. The vivid description of the agonized deer arouses Jaques

melancholy and provides him with an opportunity to rail against nature and mankind alike.

Yet, the character's involvement in *As You Like It* proves slightly more complex than the

appellation might suggest. Critics seeking to demystify such an odd addition to a pastoral

comedy have written extensively on his presence in the play, an endeavour which has

produced varied and sometimes antagonistic readings. Given *As You Like It*'s date of

composition (c.1599-1600), several scholars have drawn obvious parallels between Jaques and

Hamlet, evidently based on their unequivocal embracing of melancholic dispositions.[361]

Jaques is a comic character, however, and to limit his purpose to such a connection,

subordinating it to what is generally beheld as a more complex, tragic version of the

melancholic figure, deprives him of most of his agency to that affect.

Other critics situate Jaques firmly within the tradition of the melancholic malcontent, a

dramatic character type which, according to Babb, stems from the persona of the travelling

melancholic. Such individuals, he explains, "were disappointed and disgruntled by their

countrymen's failure to recognize and reward the talents and acquirements which they

believed they had, and they were given to railing satirically at their unappreciative

contemporaries."[362] Within the scope of dramatic representations of melancholics, Babb

classifies Jaques as a cynic, noting that this particular type was "regarded with tolerant

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armada was no longer topical, and the traveler's fashion of malcontent was well-established," "The Reformed
Malcontent: Jaques and the Meaning of *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 183-204, 193.
[361] See Trevor, 63-73 and Heffernan, 96.
[362] Babb, 75.

amusement [and] granted … privileges like those of a court jester. He may be sour and surly

as he pleases, as acidly satiric, even as offensive as he pleases."[363] Despite its accurate

identification of Jaques as a social commentator, the perplexity of aligning this

characterization with the romantic comedy genre mitigates this interpretation.[364] It seems there

is more to Jaques' character than mere discontent, particularly given Arden's propensity for

melancholy.[365] To that effect, my interpretation echoes critics who read the character as a

response to Ben Jonson's humour comedies—even as a parody of Jonson himself.[366] Chief

among these is Tiffany, who perceives *As You Like It* not only as Shakespeare's participation

in the theatre wars of the period,[367] but as a direct rebuttal of Jonson's *Every Man Out of his*

Humour that "reject[s] the satiric method demonstrated and championed by that play."[368]

Certainly, Jaques' overwhelming melancholy recalls the powerlessness that Jonsonian

characters evoke in relation to their humours. Moreover, the disinterestedness with which

other characters react to Jaques is concordant with a lampooning of Jonson's style of humour

plays. However, to treat the character as a stand-alone caricature of Jonsonian comedy would

be to ignore his larger dramatic contributions to *As You Like It*. In essence, Jaques embodies

both the capacity of Arden to draw in melancholy, as well as the waning influence of

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[363] Babb, 91-92.

[364] This character type was mostly found in tragedies of the period, such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, or in John Marston's eponymous work *The Malcontent* (1602).

[365] For an overview of the malcontent figure in early modern drama (from which Jaques is conspicuously absent), see James R. Keller, *Princes, Soldiers and Rogues: The Politic Malcontent of Renaissance Drama*, New York: Peter Lang, 1993. See also Kitzes, 85-10, for a contrast of Jaques with Jonson's prime depiction of a comedic malcontent, *Every Man out of his Humour*'s Macilente.

[366] See Kitzes, 60-90, and Bloom, 214-215.

[367] "This famous quarrel," Tiffany writes, "had most obviously and explicitly raged between Ben Jonson, John Marston, and Thomas Dekker, who—reviving a tradition as old as Aristophanes' Frogs—satirically attacked one another in successive London stage productions between 1599 and 1601," 170.

[368] Tiffany, 172. See Tiffany's final chapter, 170-197, for a detailed account of this contrast.

individual melancholic characterizations, which eventually yields to a more elusive emotional counterpart.

The first mention of Jaques emphasizes his emotional volatility, likening him to a wounded animal.[369] Critics often interpret the image of the crying stag as an iconic visualization of Jaques himself. Winifred Schleiner points out that early moderns believed the deer possessed both the coldness and dryness generally associated with melancholic dispositions. For that reason, he writes, "medical authorities of the Renaissance strictly and consistently forbid melancholics to eat of the stag."[370] This connection is solidified when Jaques is later described as "weeping and commenting / Upon the sobbing deer" scene (II, i. 65-66), the image of Jaques adding his tears to the animal's as they agglomerate in the nearby brook underscores the pervasiveness of melancholy within Arden; it can be found in animals and bodies of water alike.[371] What is crucial here is not so much what Jaques' reaction to the scene represents but, rather, the way other characters perceive the event. Jaques' antics are met with amusement more than with careful consideration. Duke Senior is fascinated by the story. "But what said Jaques?" he asks promptly, "Did he not moralize this spectacle?" (II, i. 43-44). The lords comply and give him a detailed account of how Jaques broke "into a thousand similes … of his weeping in the needless stream" (II, i. 45-46). Jaques' power as critic (and as melancholic) is undermined by the fact that the stag episode is merely related second hand. The scene offers a pre-emptive characterization of the character "so that when he arrives in

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[369] See Michael Bath, "Weeping Stags and Melancholy Lovers: The Iconography of *As You Like It*, II, I," *Emblematica* 1.1 (1986): 13-52, for an account of how the scene "is probably the closest approximation we have in Shakespeare to an actual emblem … all the details of [the] description are iconographically heavily loaded in terms of the visual arts of Shakespeare's time," 14

[370] Winifred Schleiner, "Jaques and the Melancholy Stag," *English Language Notes* 17 (March 1980): 175-79, 176.

[371] The symbiosis between tears and a body of water recalls the metaphor used by both Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors* to describe the feelings of overwhelming helplessness they suffer under.

propria persona he is a known quantity, a comic figure who can ground his performance in an audience's expectations."[372] It positions him as source of entertainment in Arden more than a dissonant element that warrants serious concern. Jaques' role resembles that of a jester's within the duke's makeshift court. This idea also implies the inefficiency of melancholic afflictions to encumber comic development; Jaques actually seems to foster comedy, a notion that the duke's parting words at the close of the scene suggests: "show me the place / I love to cope him in these sullen fits, / For then he's full of matter" (II, i. 66-68).

When Jaques does appear on stage, he relies on different animal imagery to represent himself. To encourage Lord Amiens to continue singing to him, he declares: "more, I prithee, more. I can suck melancholy / Out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs. More, I / Prithee, more" (II, v. 11-13). Jaques' first speech stresses his propensity for melancholy even further. The weasel metaphor is striking given that it only occurs once more in all of Shakespearean drama.[373] In this case, it offers valuable insight as to Jaques' own perception of the melancholy that afflicts him. His claim that he can extricate it from any situation highlights both a dependence on melancholy, as he figuratively feeds on it as a source of nourishment,[374] as well as a strong narcissistic attitude towards it. Jaques takes pride in the idea that he could drain melancholy so dextrously, as a weasel would with the content of an egg.[375] Though the

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[372] Jensen, 94.

[373] There are various references to weasels in Shakespearean drama, but the association of the animal with sucking eggs is only found in one other play. Near the beginning of *Henry V*, the Earl Westmoreland declares that "for once the eagle England being in prey, / To her unguarded nest the weasel Scot / Comes sneaking and so sucks her princely eggs" (I, ii. 314-316), a remark that carries an explicitly predatory connotation.

[374] The image is reinforced by readings such as Maynard Mack's, who defines Jaques as a "type of comic vampire feeding curiosity on the acts and feelings of those more vital than himself," in *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of As You Like It: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Jay L. Halio, Englewood: Prentice Hall, 1968, 112-115, 112-113.

[375] In early modern zoology, it was believed that the weasel could suck "an egg through very small orifice at one end, leaving the shell itself entire," *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare's As You Like It,* ed. Richard Knowles, New York: MLA, 1977, 101.

scene moves on to different concerns, the symbiosis between Jaques and the condition that

afflicts him remains its prevalent feature, one that guides if not dictates his interactions from

then on. Jaques not only feels melancholic, he *is* melancholy, and possesses a clear idea as to

the genesis of his condition. The speech he delivers to Rosalind later on as to the nature of his

ailment delineates his understanding of it in details:

> 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 humourous sadness (IV, i. 10-19).

Jaques defines his melancholy by enumerating what it is not, a manoeuvre that underscores its

inauthenticity.[376] By drawing attention to the highly artificial nature of melancholy in general

(and to its seemingly endless subdivisions), he undercuts the plea for intellectual depth and

gravitas elaborated through his use of pseudo-scientific vernacular (compounds, extracts) and

the aura of exclusivity he wishes to project. Moreover, his insistence that the melancholy he

revels under is self-fashioned renders it even less plausible than the types he so adeptly

enumerates. Rather than offset the comic drive, this attitude accentuates it, as other characters

prove dismissive of his moralizing philosophies and, by the same token, echo the ongoing

critique of more traditional characterizations of melancholy which Jaques embodies.

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[376] As Kitzes notes of this technique, "Jaques defines himself through a series of negations which ultimately show that to be authentically melancholy is to be tautologically melancholy as well," 68.

As the play's key comic agent, who masterfully waltzes other characters toward self-identifying epiphanies, Rosalind suspects that Jaques' disposition is counterfeit and immediately derides it:

> A Traveller! By my faith, you have great
> Reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your 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. 20-23).

Rosalind undercuts Jaques' attempt to legitimize his melancholy by recalling the figure of the travelling melancholic, which Jaques actually fails to include in his account.[377] In addition to its disingenuousness, Rosalind, animated by a dynamism that guides her throughout the play, castigates him for the apathy he displays:

> ROSALIND. They say you are a melancholy fellow.
> JAQUES. I am so. I do love it better than laughing.
> ROSALIND. Those that are in extremity of either are
> Abominable fellows, and betray themselves to every
>   Modern censure worse than drunkards.
> JAQUES. Why, 'tis good to be sad and say nothing.
> ROSALIND. Why then, 'tis good to be a post (IV, i. 3-9).

Rosalind reveals a weariness of excessive behavioural traits not unlike that of other Shakespeare comic heroines. Since she cast off her own melancholy prior to entering Arden, she has no patience for such an overbearing display of it. When Jaques points to the life experience that his many travels have procured (as an offset to his melancholic disposition), she retorts: "your experience makes you sad. I had / Rather have a fool to make me merry than experience / To make me sad— and to travel for it too!" (IV, i. 25-27). Her comment

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[377] Drawing on the work of Zera S. Fink, Babb writes that "the disgruntled or seditious traveler had become well established as a social type by the 1580s … English travelers who were prone to imitate foreign manners acquired the melancholic attitude in Italy and brought it home with them … melancholy was definitely linked in the minds of Elizabethan Englishmen with Italy, with Englishmen who had traveled, and with the various vices which … young Englishmen acquired in Italy," 74-75. Lyons refers explicitly to Jaques as "melancholic traveller," 23. Paradoxically, travelling was also thought to be beneficial in alleviating bouts of melancholy. Burton notes that there is "no better physic for a melancholy man than change of air and variety of places to travel abroad and see fashions," II, 67.

encapsulates her disinterestedness concerning Jaques's character type and, by the same token,

validates her jester, Touchstone, in the ongoing contrast the play develops between the

melancholy man and the fool. Rosalind essentially endorses the romantic pastoral comedy she

occupies, favouring the clown over the cynic. She ends their exchange by lampooning the

theatrical nature of his melancholy once again:

> Farewell, Monsieur Traveller. 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 the countenance
> You are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a
> Gondola (IV, i. 31-36).

In drawing further attention to the distinctive traits of the travelling melancholic, Rosalind

renders Jaques' melancholy utterly predictive, depriving it of the authenticity for which he so

adamantly clamours.

This vehement dismissal of Jaques is echoed throughout the play by other characters.

Though Duke Senior derives great pleasure from listening to Jaques' cynical rants, he does not

hesitate to reprimand him when he grows too ostentatious, reminding Jaques of his previous

life at court:

> Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin.
> For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
> As sensual as the brutish sting itself;
> And all th'embossèd sores and headed evils
> That thou with license of free foot hast caught
> Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world (II, vii. 64-69).

The duke alludes to Jaques' time as a courtier (and to the venereal disease he might have

contracted due to his lasciviousness).[378] Much like Rosalind's mockery of his professions of

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[378] As Alan Brissenden explains, the duke most likely refers to "the sores of venereal disease(s) (*evils*), bulging and swollen (*embossed*). The duke uses the phrase literally," he writes, "referring to the result of Jaques'

travel, the comment casts doubt on the genuineness of Jaques' melancholy. The episode also suggests that Jaques somewhat transformed himself when coming to Arden, trading in a ravenous sexual appetite for an equally voracious melancholic one. The idea further challenges the validity of the melancholy he so proudly exhibits, and the duke seems keenly aware of such a fact. His reprimand serves as a caution not to indulge in such a tendency excessively, as it would not be suitable for actual court life.

Orlando proves as dismissive of Jaques when they encounter each other shortly thereafter.[379] While Jaques grows fond of their dialogue, making a plea for them to "rail against our mistress the world, and all our / Misery" (III, ii.274-275) together, Orlando's dislike comes across strongly. He promptly rejects the offers, declaring that "I will chide no breather in the world but / Myself, against whom I know most faults" (III, ii. 276-277). The verve with which Orlando refutes Jaques' declarations throughout the scene highlights not only the hollowness of his disposition, but the melancholic's apparent inability to grasp mockery as well:

> JAQUES. I thank you for your company,
>   But, good faith, I have as life have been myself alone.
> ORLANDO. And so had I; but yet for fashion's sake,
>   I thank you to for your society.
> JAQUES. God b'wi'you. Let's meet as little as we can.
> ORLANDO. I do desire we can be better strangers.
> JAQUES. I pray you mar no more trees with writing
>   Love-songs in their barks.
> ORLANDO. I pray you mar no more of my verses with
>   Reading them ill-favoredly.
> JAQUES. Rosalind is your love's name?
> ORLANDO. Yes, just.
> JAQUES. I do not like her name.

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unrestrained behaviour, and metaphorically to refer to his foul bitterness," *As You Like It*, ed. Alan Brissenden, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993, 147.

[379] Orlando and Jaques initially meet in II, vii, when the young de Boys emerges from the woods and disrupts Duke Senior's banquet. What little interaction they have then follows a similar pattern.

> ORLANDO. There was no thought of pleasing you when
> > She was christened.
> …
> JAQUES. The worst fault you have is to be in love.
> ORLANDO. 'Tis a fault I would not change for your best
> > Virtue. I am weary of you (III, ii. 250-264; 278-280).

Orlando redirects every comment back at Jaques, mirroring the cadence of his highly artificial speech pattern; every line is meant to imply rejection. Their encounter ends on a final dismissal of the melancholic, which harks back to his initial illustration:

> JAQUES. By my troth, I was seeking a fool when I
> > Found you.
> ORLANDO. He is drowned in the brook. Look but in,
> > And you shall see him.
> JAQUES. There shall I see mine own figure.
> ORLANDO. Which I take to be either a fool or a cipher (III, ii. 281-286).

Once again, Jaques' cynicism prevents him from fully grasping the meaning of Orlando's jab. More importantly, it provides a succinct metaphor through which to consider Jaques' function in the play. The melancholic, who added his tears to those of the dying stag by the brook, currently finds himself at the bottom of the river. The price to pay for syphoning all the melancholy he can find, it would seem, is to ultimately drown in it. The scene intimates that he is both fool *and* cypher. His melancholy represents the way in which Arden fosters self-transformations by allowing characters to momentarily contemplate how they act. Jaques' excessive reliance on melancholy affords characters such as Orlando and Rosalind the opportunity to assess the detrimental effects of such a disposition and, consequently, to cast it off, letting the melancholy weasel feed on it. Jaques also proves a target of ridicule, a fact of which he appears not altogether aware. These encounters showcase the character's irrelevance to the romantic plot. While his antics entertain the lords exiled in Arden, they prove of little value to young lovers entangled in games of courtship. This series of exchanges signals the

obsolescence of individual melancholic characterization within the confines of Shakespearean romantic comedy.

A contrast between Jaques and Touchstone best exemplifies this notion. When the fool enters Arden with Rosalind and Celia, he brings with him an impressive arsenal of wit and social acumen that undermines Jaques's status as critic within Duke Senior's court. Jaques is profoundly marked by his first encounter with Touchstone, which transpires offstage. [380] As he relates to the duke:

> A fool, a fool! I met a fool i'th'forest,
> A motley fool. A miserable world!
> As I do live by food, I met a fool,
> Who laid him down and basked him in the sun,
> …
> When I did hear
> The motley fool thus moral on the time,
> My lungs began to crow like Chanticleer,
> That fools should be so deep-contemplative,
> And I did laugh sans intermission
> An hour by his dial (II, vii. 12-15; 28-33).

Jaques is both exhilarated and stunned by Touchstone's linguistic displays. His admission of laughter at the fool's antics suggests his subservience to him as well. As Bente A. Videbeak contends, the scene demonstrates Touchstone's verbal dexterity as much as it does Jaques' ineptitude at relating the fool's material. In acting out the encounter for the duke, he attests to his own inferiority. [381] The idea is solidified once Jaques expresses a desire to play the fool's part: "O that I were a fool!" he tells the duke, "I am ambitious for a motley coat" (II, vii. 42-43). By professing his envy, Jaques speaks to the precariousness of his position in Arden, and suggests that playing the fool might grant him greater freedom and credence. The fool is not

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[380] This continues the play's overall trend to have characters described on stage prior to their initial appearance (Duke Senior, Jaques).

[381] "Touchstone's mirror,' Videbeak writes, "shows us Jaques's distortion," *The Stage Clown in Shakespeare's Theater*, London: Greenwood, 1996, 87.

only a gifted orator, being "so deep-contemplative," but he manages to do so "in good terms," avoiding the melancholic pitfalls his counterpart plunges into willingly.

Consequently, characters respond to him in a much more positive fashion. Rosalind's aforementioned endorsement of Touchstone to Jaques—"I had / Rather have a fool to make me merry than experience / To make me sad" (IV, i. 25-27)—epitomizes this distinction. Simply put, the melancholic fool is no match for the professional one, a fact best exemplified through the parody he delivers of Jaques' famed "Seven Ages of Man" speech (II, vii. 138-165). While the actual soliloquy looks to paint a bleak, unrelenting portrait of an ever-degenerating cycle of human life, Touchstone's caper, the "seven degrees of the lie" (V, iv. 68-102), mocks the elaborate recitation point for point. Beyond the verbal dexterity Touchstone displays in doing so, it is Jaques' credulity that proves most significant in this moment. Much like his encounters with Orlando, Rosalind, or the duke, Jaques is unable to grasp the nonsensical, absurd nature of Touchstone's utterances, questioning him further on the degrees of lying—"Can you nominate in order the degrees of / The lie?" (V, iv. 87-88). He proves so engrossed by Touchstone's jest that he fails to realize that he represents its target. Duke Senior's comments following Touchstone's performance offer a final image of the uneven relationship that unites both characters: "He uses his folly like a stalking-horse, / And under the presentation of that he shoots his wit" (V, iii. 105-106). In the sylvan context of Arden, filled with wounded stags, hungry lions and concealed serpents, the image of a stalking horse (a device used for camouflage in hunting)[382] imprints the contrast of characters with an

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[382] Bevington glosses 'stalking horse' as "a real or artificial horse under the cover of which the hunter approached his game," "As You Like It," 288-325, 323.

almost predatory dimension, depicting Touchstone as hunting his melancholic counterpart

through the forest.[383]

Touchstone represents a stark departure from previous fool characters in

Shakespearean comedy such as Lancelot Gobbo or the Dromios. Rather than a bumbling

clown, he proves an acerbic commentator, akin to Lear's fool, possessing razor-sharp wit and

a remarkable ability to assess and best other characters. While this characterial shift in can be

attributed partially to Will Kemp's departure from Shakespeare's acting company in 1599 and

the subsequent addition of Robert Armin,[384] it points to a larger transformation in the

treatment of melancholy within Shakespearean comedy. Beyond their witticism, Touchstone's

antics also suggest an undertow of sadness in the wake of the implacable passage of time.

Touchstone betrays an acute, almost nihilistic temporal awareness, particularly as it relates to

its cyclical nature. His first encounter with Jaques revolves around this notion as he "moral[s]

on the time" (II, vii. 29). "And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe," he professes to Jaques,

"And then from hour to hour we rot and rot, / And thereby hangs a tale," (II, vii. 26-28).[385]

The lines carry an understated advocacy for a balance between melancholy and merriment as

equally valid emotional responses. For Touchstone

> To have is to have.
> For it is rhetoric that drink, being poured
> Out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty

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[383] This idea is reinforced by the fact that, as Michael Hattaway points out, the term "forest," in the early modern period, was "a legal term as well as being a topographical description or a site licensed for the sport of hunting," Introduction, *As You Like It*, ed. Michael Hattaway, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000, 3.

[384] Armin became the company fool following Kemp's departure, and thus starred as both Touchstone and Feste when each play was first performed. His musical abilities and penchant for minimalist acting are thought to have influenced the composition of both roles. See James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599*, New York: Harper, 2005, 221-223. For an account of Armin's career, distinct style and contributions to Shakespearean drama, see David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clowns: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987, 136-163.

[385] This last notion is also present in his comment to Rosalind early on concerning love: "We that are/ True lovers run into strange capers; but as all is mortal / In nature, so is all nature in love mortal folly," (II, iv. 51-53).

The other (V, i. 39-42).

Such pragmatism sows the seeds for the transmutation of comic melancholy, one no longer framed by specific characterizations such as the melancholy Jaques.[386] Touchstone does not change in Arden since he already possesses both facets.[387] According to him, every element has its time, and none should hold precedence over the other.[388] The play exemplifies this attitude through the interaction between Touchstone and Jaques, a dovetailing that contributes to what Barton describes as the play's "tonally even" emotional charge. "*As You Like It*," she writes, "harbours a stillness at the center which no turn of the plot, apparently, can affect."[389] This assessment strikes at the heart of the play's generic neutralizing of Jaques' melancholy, but it somewhat fails to account for the alternative that Touchstone's temporal moralizing hints towards. Though it merely begins to take shape through the fool's antics, it produces a definite impact on the play's closing moments.

As You Like It's final act precipitates the comedy to an unparalleled degree of whimsy, as it bears witness to four simultaneous marriages,[390] two *in extremis* conversions, and a visit from the Goddess Hymen, who reveals Ganymede's true identity. [391] Reunited with her father, Rosalind can now marry Orlando, joining their marital celebrations to those of Sylvius and Phoebe, Touchstone and Audrey, as well as Celia and Oliver de Boys. The ceremonies are blessed by Hymen and the festivities are completed with the announcement of Duke

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[386] See Halio's essay for a discussion of how Touchstone represents "the time-consciousness of court and city" that infects Arden, 88.

[387] This attitude is also reflected in the first words he utters upon entering the forest, which stresses his ability to balance his temperament: "Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I. / When I was at home I was in a better place, but / Travellers must be content," (II, iv 14-16).

[388] Similarly, his discourse on the merits of court versus those of the forest (III, ii 37-55) paint both worlds ambiguously, leaving neither in a superior position over the other.

[389] Barton, "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 98-99.

[390] With four marriages, *As You Like It* can be thought of as completing the romantic symmetry that *Love's Labour's Lost* had left unfinished.

[391] "Good Duke, receive thy daughter; / Hymen from heaven brought her," (V, iv. 110-111).

Frederick's sudden departure from court and his vow to live as a hermit (V, iv. 150-164). The stage is set for Duke Senior to reclaim his power and lead everyone to a triumphant return to court. In a final act laden with startling twists and sudden transformations, Jaques' departure creates an interesting dissonance in an otherwise harmonious conclusion. Though he appears initially content to sit by and comment on the revelry that transpires before him, his position is problematized by the sudden arrival of the third de Boys brother—also named Jaques—who delivers the news of Fredrick's unexpected conversion (V, iv. 150-164). Critically, this mysterious doubling generally lessens Jaques' impact on the play. Most critics subscribe to the idea that the dual Jaques constitutes the vestigial remnant of a previous version of the play, where the melancholy Jaques and Jaques de Boys are, in fact, one and the same.[392] It appears not only improbable but unnecessary that the scholar and the melancholic Jaques could be the same character. Beyond the fact that the melancholy and scholarly Jaques converse with one another concerning Duke Frederick (V, iv. 179-182), the doubling concords with a reading that positions Jaques as Arden's melancholic syphon. Tatyana Hramova, for example, remarks that this particular doubling is but one of several that occur in *As You Like It*, a manoeuvre symptomatic of the play's depiction of "a split world of the 'self' and the 'other', the name and the referent, where everyone is in the process of constant metamorphoses, searching for a 'true' name."[393] For Hramova, the meeting of the two Jaques allows for the melancholy Jaques to exit the play. She writes that:

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[392] Marshall entertains such a possibility, questioning Orlando's efficacy at recognizing individuals he purports to know intimately. "Orlando, she writes, "fails to recognize Rosalind, his proclaimed love, during their extensive interactions in Arden. Might he not," she subsequently asks, "also fail to recognize his brother, especially if that brother has been changed, translated, by melancholy?" 377. Marshall's overarching claim concerning the dual Jaques in the play is that they serve "as intratextual markers of theory's possible relation to the text," 376.

[393] Tatyana Hramova, "The Mystery of the Two Jaques in Beckett and Shakespeare," *Notes and Queries* 58.1 (2011): 122-125, 123. Hramova also notes the doubling of Olivers (between Orlando's brother and Sir Oliver Martext) as well as a stylistic doubling between the character of Sylvius and the play's forest setting.

Jaques meets his name-sake Jaques De Boys at the end of the play and decides to stay in the forest, hence literally becoming De Boys—'of the forest'. It is interesting to note that, in the play, Jaques' melancholy is said to come from his travelling experience, which Rosalind doubts, referring to him ironically as 'Monsieur Traveller' (IV, i. 29). It is Jaques De Boys who is the real traveller, and, thus, both characters seem to have 'wrong' names, which, nevertheless, show their relation to each other.[394]

The arrival of Jaques de Boys triggers the exit of the melancholy Jaques from the play, as he loses what little agency he possessed. The fact that it is Jaques de Boys who delivers the news of Duke Frederick's conversion only solidifies the dramatic substitution. The announcement gives the melancholic Jaques the cue to eclipse himself from the play prior to the return to court. "To him will I," he declares, "Out of these convertities / There is much to be heard and learned" (V, iii 183-184). In the pivotal moment of the play, where one can embrace change in the face of an imminent return to society, cynicism and intellectual melancholy appear useless. Despite an invitation from Duke Senior to remain, Jaques leaves the stage, declaring:

> So, to your
> Pleasures.
> I am for other than dancing measures.
> …
> To see no pastime I. What you would have
> I'll stay to know at your abandoned cave (V, iii. 190-192; 194-195).

Herein lies Jaques' inherently paradoxical nature: the character who lives out his days in a pastoral comedy declares himself averse to dancing. Unlike other melancholic characters, he *could* fit in, but this option requires changes, and his rigid disposition cannot abide by such an option. Still, he cannot be read in the same way as Antonio or Don John, whose melancholy clearly impedes comic development. There is room for melancholy in *As You Like It*, but not for Jaques' contrived version. His refusal to join in sparks a dramatic swan song for individual

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[394] Hramova, 123.

characterizations of comic melancholy that previously infused Shakespearean comedy. Jaques'

melancholy was never seriously considered within the scope of the play and the unexpected

addition of Jaques de Boys marks the final blow to his dramatic agency.

For all the mockery he endures, the play lends some credence to Jaques' cynical

identifications of other characters' shortcomings. His criticism of the duke's hunting practice

(II, i. 45-63), though heavy-handed, proves accurate. Likewise, though Jaques is no match for

Orlando's youthful determination, his appeal to stop carving out poems on the bark of trees

sounds justifiable once the verses are actually recited on stage. Additionally, Jaques' "Seven

Ages of Man" speech (II, vii. 138-165) remains one of the play's most stunning passages, and

the bitter portrayal of human life it offers, with its unavoidable descent into debilitation that

leaves the individual in "second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans

taste, sans everything" (II, vii. 164-165), allows for a particularly high degree of

theatricality.[395] Even Jaques' plea to Touchstone to "Get you to / Church, and have a good

priest that can tell you what / Marriage is" (III, iii. 77-79), rather than marry the shepherdess

Audrey in the middle of the forest, is a sensible defense of the sanctity of marriage. However,

though he might be accurate in decrying those actions, Jaques' opinions are in the minority

and, more importantly, out of place within the confines of a romantic comedy. The artificiality

of his most dominant trait undercuts the validity that these interventions might enjoy. In the

end, the melancholy man must make way for a new type of melancholy.

Despite a great festive spirit, the play's ending, as Hattaway notes, carries a hint of

uncertainty, since "the main characters have bound themselves within an artful and possibly

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[395] According to Mentz, the speech offers "a thoroughly dramatized early modern biography," "A Note Beyond Your Reach?," 86.

unstable contract that is defined by the multiplicity of 'if's' that stud the play's conclusion."[396]

In other words, because the much touted return to court does not transpire on stage, the play

offers the *potential* for a return to normalcy rather than its concretisation. Such ambiguity

proves tantamount to the more elusive sense of melancholy that persists in the end. The

allusions to the cyclical nature of time, political reigns, and love underwhelms these joyous

closing moments ever so slightly. This particular melancholy is never explicit in the play,

which culminates in the expected fashion for a romantic comedy, bathed in marital bliss and

the prospect of long-lasting happiness. Rather, it is earmarked as a dramatic sign of things to

come in Shakespearean comedy. It resonates in Rosalind's warning that "maids are May when

they are maids, but / The sky changes when they are wives" (Iv, i. 141-142). It persists in the

unresolved fate of Old Adam, it seeps out of Amiens' songs and their allusion to winter wind,

bitter skies, and the refrain cautioning that "most friendship is feigning, most loving mere /

Folly" (II, vii. 181-182). It is within Shakespeare's subsequent comedy, *Twelfth Night*, that

this melancholy brings comic hegemony to their rupture point.

To say that *As You Like It* merely sets the stage for the notions explored in *Twelfth*

Night, however, would be to overlook its own remarkable dramatic power. It remains a rich

tapestry of comic revelry, a skilfully woven set of plots infused with some of Shakespeare's

most complex comic creations and astounding speeches. It also offers up the last, true

melancholic characterization within Shakespearean comedy, which, ironically, turns out to be

its less genuine personification. Jaques exacerbates melancholic traits until they can no longer

be taken seriously. His departure foreshadows the shift that occurs with the composition of

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[396] Hattaway, Introduction, 11.

Twelfth Night and the following "problem comedies," where Shakespearean drama itself seemingly reveals itself to be for other than dancing measures.

Twelfth Night, the Whirligig of Time, and the Last Laugh of Shakespearean Comedy

In an early attempt to sketch out a comprehensive chronology of Shakespearean drama, eighteenth-century critic Edmond Malone reached the editorial conclusion that *Twelfth Night* constituted Shakespeare's final play. Malone explains this selection by pointing out that the comedy "bears evident marks of having been composed at leisure, as most of the characters that it contains are finished to a higher degree of dramatic perfection than is discoverable in some of our author's earlier comic performances."[397] While the chronological argument is erroneous—*Twelfth Night* was composed at least a decade before works such as *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII*—Malone's justification attests to the prominent critical position that the comedy holds as the apogean Shakespearean comedy. My contention is that the play also marks the climax of a development of comic melancholy. *Twelfth Night* completes the break from traditional depictions of the concept that was undertaken in Arden forest, as a melancholic mood gradually overtakes Illyria's otherwise festive atmosphere to foster a lingering sense of sadness.

At its core, the comedy is splendidly reiterative. For Ryan, it performs a "brazen plundering of virtually all Shakespeare's previous comedies for characters, predicaments,

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[397] Edmond Malone, "An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays Attributed to Shakspear Were Written," in *The Plays of Shakspear*, eds. Samuel Johnson and George Stevens, 2nd edition, 6 volumes, London, 1778, vol. 1, 344. Gordon McMullan writes that, in his chronological endeavour, Malone favoured style over genre, which could explain this order, *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship in the Proximity of Death*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007, 130.

theatrical devices and motifs."[398] Indeed, *Twelfth Night* revisits numerous staples of

Shakespearean comedy and, indubitably, the melancholic connotations they encompass. The

play revolves around the romantic entanglements that a cross-dressing heroine creates, as well

as the mistaken identity crisis engendered by a pair of identical twins.[399] Additionally, the

shipwreck which brings both siblings to Illyria can be construed as another affirmation of the

sea's transformative powers within Shakespearean comedy.[400] The play even draws on

mercantile concerns reminiscent of *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Merchant of Venice*,

though its own dealing with the merchant life, as some critics point out, is much more

tentative, if not resistant.[401] Mercantilism hovers on the play's fringes; it can be found in

Viola's parentage, in Antonio's nebulous maritime background, or within the understated

allusions to Illyrian commerce that populate the play.[402] All of these allusions contribute to a

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[398] Ryan 235. Freedman concurs with this viewpoint and writes that "to read Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is to take part in an intriguing game of lost and found, since the play returns us to the earlier comedies, to the problem of (re)presentation as repetition and return, and to the question of our desire in relation to the letter," *Staging the Gaze*, 192.

[399] Harold Jenkins makes the case that *Twelfth Night* stands as a direct amalgamation of the plots of both *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Comedy of Errors*, "Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells, New York: Garland, 1986, 171-190, 172. Though *Two Gentlemen* offers little in the way of comic development of melancholy, is worth noting that it does contain its own lovers' quandary, where a young woman, Julia, decides to spy on her beloved with the use of a male disguise. She pretends to be a page named Sebastian (the name of Viola's brother in *Twelfth Night*).

[400] Mentz, *Shakespeare's Ocean*, 51. For Mentz, the fact that Viola initially appears on shore is quite significant to the play's overall schema. The no-man's-land of the sea shore," he writes, "characterizes ... [the play's] swirling mix of sentimentality, cynicism, and ale-soaked mirth," 55.

[401] See Cristina Malcolmson, "'What you will': Social Mobility and Gender in *Twelfth Night*," in *New Casebook: Twelfth Night, ed. R. S.* White, New York: Palgrave, 1996, 160-193, especially 184, for a discussion of such a peculiarity. See also Elizabeth Pentland, "Beyond the 'Lyric' in Illyricum: some Early Modern backgrounds to *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, New York: Routeledge, 2011, 149-166, for an account of how Illyria was held as a commercial hub in the early modern period, and the ramifications that this engenders on a reading of the play's relationship to mercantilism.

[402] According to Valerie Forman, the play sustains a Freudian Fort/Da relationship with mercantilism, drawing on its tropes while constantly rejecting their dramatic concretizations. "While the play de-emphasizes its merchant roots ... through the play's highly conventionalized romantic and courtly pursuits, and through the highly affective qualities of Viola's disguise," she writes, "they find their way back through the cracks in the beauteous wall of Viola's disguise." "Material Dispossessions and Counterfeit Investments: The Economies of *Twelfth Night*" in *Money and the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in the New Economic Criticism*, ed. Linda Woodbridge, New York: Palgrave, 2003, 113-129, 116.

general embracing of melancholy at play, but do so without much dramatic impact. The uniqueness of *Twelfth Night*'s exploration of melancholy lies in its complete integration of the notion as a comic feature.

To say that melancholy is rampant in *Twelfth Night* would understate the degree to which the play relies on it as a vehicle for dramatic progression. The condition manifests itself in a slew of characters, including its three protagonists, who find themselves ensnared in a love triangle, where mistaken identity and confusion rule the day. All of these affectations, from lovesickness to excessive grief, reiterate the ongoing critique of excessive, superficial behaviour traits that Shakespearean comedy develops. Much like Jaques' grandiloquent moralising, however, these characterizations heighten the comic tone rather than challenge it. Where *Twelfth Night* truly differentiates itself lies in its overt embracing of melancholy as a cyclical, unavoidable emotional response rather than a humoural anomaly. What Joel Fineman famously described as the play's "vaguely inappropriate melancholy"[403] has troubled critics because of its jarring detachment from the thematic staples of Shakespearean comedy. Ultimately, melancholy supersedes the play's comic spirit, casting its final act in an unusual mixture of mirth and sorrow.[404] This shift is best understood, I argue, as the end result of the transformation of comic melancholy that began to take shape in *As You Like It*. This transference occurs mainly within the play's subplot, where the efforts of a group of revellers led by Sir Toby Belch, who conspire to punish the austere steward Malvolio, reveal a wistful attempt to prolong merriment in the face of the waning hours of festivity.

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[403] Joel Fineman, "Fratricide and Cuckoldry: Shakespeare's Doubles," in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, eds. Murray Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980, 70-110, 85. According to Fineman, *Twelfth Night* "alternates between lyric fantasy and realistic deflation," 93.
[404] For a comprehensive history of the play's critical reception (and the problems pertaining to its tone), see James A. Schiffer, "Taking the Long View: *Twelfth Night* Criticism and Performance," in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, New York: Routeledge, 2011, 1-44.

The advent of such melancholy, I argue, is spearheaded by the clown, Feste, whose bittersweet antics are emblematic of the sorrowful tone that moderates the play's comic spirit. His participation is crucial in instilling a new perception of comic melancholy as a fundamentally cyclical component of everyday life rather than a sudden and troublesome affliction. On a synecdochic level, Feste's character, as an aging, dishevelled jester embittered against the world he inhabits, mirrors the breakdown of Shakespearean comedy underway in *Twelfth Night*, where the comic spirit can no longer keep the pressing melancholic mood at bay. This notion is made explicit in the convergence of mirth and melancholy that the final act witnesses, exemplified not only in the conflation of both plotlines, but mainly, within the concluding song Feste performs. The melody has gathered a considerable amount of critical attention, being read as either a customary acknowledgment of the audience at the end of a performance, or as a symbol of the play's ceremonial closing of Shakespearean comedy.[405] In this later sense, which dovetails with my reading of the play, *Twelfth Night* marks the endpoint of both Shakespearean comedy and of its exploration of melancholy. The works that follow, the so-called "problem comedies" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*), not only rarely make mention of melancholy, but bear considerable tonal and stylistic differences that distances them from traditional comic underpinnings. The melancholy present at the end of *Twelfth Night* looks beyond these works and the mature tragedies that were to follow, and towards the romances that would conclude Shakespeare's writing career.

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[405] Richard Levin notes that the song "adds a certain depth to the comedy," 154. For Jensen, it represent a "bridge between the play world and the world of the audience [which] fulfills or extends its pre-enactment," 116. See also Ryan 240-241 and 271-273 for an association of Feste's song with melancholy.

David Schalkwyk notes that *Twelfth Night* opens with consecutive melancholic

iterations, "a triple blow of separation, mourning, and loss,"[406] in which the play's

protagonists, Orsino, Olivia, and Viola, each express an overwhelming sense of sadness. The

first scene showcases Duke Orsino's melancholic propensity. Following a musical interlude,

Orsino rapidly begs for more:

> If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken, and so die.
> That strain again! It had a dying fall;
> O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound
> That breathes upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odor (I, i. 1-7).

Melancholic fancies drench this initial passage.[407] Evidently lovesick, Orsino seeks the

eradication of his sorrow through saturation, recalling the humoural notion of purgation

through excess. His craving for music translates into a means to feed and eventually quench

his melancholic passion, killing the appetite he possesses for it.[408] Orsino's paradoxical

relationship to excess frames his melancholic experience with melancholy. He appears

overwhelmed by a lovesickness that he simultaneously caters to and resents. Stephen Booth,

who argues that this ambivalence is exemplified by Orsino's obsession with music,[409] further

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[406] Schalkwyk, 130.

[407] Winfried Schleiner notes that Orsino's name (meaning "little bear," an animal often connected with melancholy) and the mention of the violets (or their Latin name "Viola"), which, according to him, "were generally considered a medication against melancholy," hint at the prevalence that melancholy enjoys within the play, "Orsino and Viola: Are the Names of Serious Characters in *Twelfth Night* Meaningful?," *Shakespeare Studies* 16 (1983): 135-141, 135-136.

[408] See David Schalkwyk, "Music, Food, and Love in the Affective Landscapes of *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, New York: Routeledge, 2011, 81-98, for an analysis of the Galenic undertones in Orsino's speech. Orsino's desire is not unlike the one Jaques expresses in his first appearance on stage in *As You Like It*: "More, I prithee, more. I can suck melancholy / Out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs. More, I / Prithee, more" (II, v. 11-13).

[409] According to Booth, Orsino, in this first scene, "wishes to free himself from an addiction to music," *Precious Nonsense: The Gettysburg Address, Ben Jonson's Epitaphs on His Children, and Twelfth Night.* Berkeley: U of California P, 1998, 126.

remarks that the scene "creates a music of ideas—a music of ideas that is inconsequential in all that world's senses,"[410] effectively sketching out the themes that will unfold later in the play.[411] Though he never mentions it explicitly, melancholy suits Booth's pattern, as the images and emotions Orsino evokes tie into its development quite strikingly. Music in *Twelfth Night* contributes to the more intangible representations of melancholy that looms over Illyria.[412] The musical connotation in Orsino's mention of a "dying fall" (I, i. 4), as Stevie Davies points out, offers an interesting parallel with the play's overall tonal arc. As she explains, the dying fall "was a quite specific technical device, vital to ayres, ballets and madrigals of the Elizabethan collections, in which the melodic curve moves characteristically upward to a graceful peak, in order to descend conclusively to the lowest or one of the lowest notes in the range."[413] Similarly, the play gradually climbs towards the ultimate spheres of romantic comedy before descending into profound melancholy in its final moments.

After encouraging his attendant to continue playing, Orsino suddenly cuts him off. "Enough, no more," he declares, "'Tis not so sweet now as it was before" (I, i. 7-8), showcasing an inconstancy of desire that betrays volatility and underscores his penchant for

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[410] Booth, 123.

[411] Among these themes, Booth cites "music, gluttony, disease, hunting (in a recurring concern for finding people and in a complex alliteration of various ideas of following), dogs, payment (of debts and services), sibling relationships (of course), the word alone (and its significance and its etymological roots and their significance), achieved or frustrated entrance, the sea, seeing and onstage judgements of onstage performances," 144-145.

[412] In the words of Stevie Davies, the play is not only "all music," but its musicality is tied predominantly to melancholy, "Music and Melancholy," *Shakespeare: Twelfth Night*, New York: Penguin, 1993, 34-61, 36. Christopher R. Wilson discerns in this relationship a preoccupation with "moody music," *Shakespeare's Musical Imager,* London: Continuum, 2011, 1. Virginia Woolf offers a beautiful assertion on the play's musicality, writing that "Shakespeare is writing, it seems, not with the whole of his mind mobilized and under control, but with feelers left flying that sport and play with words so that the trail of a chance word is caught and followed recklessly. From the echo of one word is born another word, for which reason, perhaps, the play seems as we read it to tremble perpetually on the brink of music," "*Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic," in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells, New York: Garland, 1986, 79-82, 79.

[413] Davies, 38.

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excess. From this point on, the duke soliloquises on love, turning his attention more specifically to the object of his affection, the Countess Olivia:

> O spirit of love, how quick and fresh art thou,
> That, notwithstanding thy capacity
> Receiveth as the sea, naught enters here,
> Of what validity and pitch soe'er,
> But falls into abatement and low price
> Even in a minute! So full of shapes is fancy
> That it alone is high fantastical.
> …
> Why, so I do, the noblest that I have.
> O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
> Methought she purged the air of pestilence.
> That instant was I turned into a hart,
> And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
> E'er since pursue me (I, i. 9-15; 17-22).

In praising the passion that afflicts him, Orsino draws upon familiar metaphors associated with lovesickness (disease, water, animals), underscoring once again the predictability of his melancholy.[414] The final image, where he transforms himself into prey being mercilessly tracked by his predatory desire also underscores the lack of responsibility that accompanies Orsino's melancholy. His own ambivalence towards his affliction, and the manner in which he discusses it, arouse suspicions as to its authenticity. For Schalkwyk, according to whom the play fosters a dual understanding of music in an effort to mirror its twofold examinations of romantic love,[415] Orsino's behaviour stresses his own dissonance. The character betrays a "tendency to think of himself as the incarnation of a humoral psychology that combines a materialist reduction of passion to the workings of digestion and evacuation with an inherited misogyny … As both the exemplum and spokesman for humoral theory, Illyria's duke is the

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[414] See the elements pertaining to melancholy and lovesickness discussed in relation to *As You Like It*, notably by Neely, 99-115 and Ferrand.

[415] "The double-sided aspects of love," he writes, "thus echo those of music, each being potentially good or bad, capable of achieving spiritual and social harmony or instability and destruction," "Music, Food, and Love," 84.

sign of the excessive, the anachronistic, at a remove from reality."[416] This last notion

reverberates in Orsino's imagining of the effects that passion would exert on Olivia's body:

> How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
> Hath killed the flock of all affections else
> That live in her; when liver, brain, and heart,
> These sovereign thrones, are all supplied and filled
> Her sweet perfections, with one self king! (I, i. 34-38).

Unlike his self-assessment, this description is predominantly physiological. While Orsino

feeds his passion, the one he envisions taking hold of Olivia assails her organs.[417] Despite

marked differences between this portrait and the more poetic one he sketches of himself,

Orsino's envisioning of female love is framed by a similar implacability to that of his own,

particularly in terms of his inability to resist it. He imagines love as a force which wrestles

control away from Olivia and overtakes her body. Such an understanding is tantamount to the

masculine relinquishing of control characteristic of comic melancholy examined so far. Orsino

appears ruled by a rigid disposition and proves unwilling to waiver from it.

This opening scene also provides insight as to Olivia's rather peculiar practice

following the passing of her brother. As one of Orsino's attendants relates to him:

> The element itself, till seven years' heat,
> Shall not behold her face at ample view;
> But like a cloisteress she will veilèd walk,
> And water once a day her chamber round
> With eye-offering brine—all this to season
> A brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh
> And lasting in her sad remembrance (I, i. 25-31).

Surprisingly, given the Shakespearean tradition of resourceful comic heroines, Olivia proves

as mechanical as Orsino in imposing on herself such a rigid conduct regiment. In vowing to

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[416] Schalkwyk, "Music, Food, and Love", 89.

[417] Though specific accounts and hierarchies differ from one write to another, classical medicine believed that the body was ruled by the brain, heart and liver, see Hoeniger, 131-139.

cloister herself in her house for the next seven years and weep for her brother, Olivia vows to remain in the throes of melancholy. Both characters yield to all-encompassing affects which shuts them off from the world they inhabit. As Elliot Krieger points out, Olivia's mourning is self-defeating, since it "does not acknowledge death, but, by making the future entirely predictable and controlled, her mourning protects against loss and decay [yet] refuses to mourn."[418] Her melancholy ties into to a more concrete source than Orsino's, and she displays a greater self-awareness in expressing it, but it remains disingenuous given the context in which she grounds it. Her grief, according to René Girard, becomes a stratagem that allows her to rebuff romantic advances. Girard writes that

> it is significant that the brother is dead: the one intense feeling that Olivia acknowledges remains strictly under her control, since its object does not even exist. This theatrical devotion to a phantom may be a discreet way of advertising her lack of desire for any man alive. As is often the case in Shakespeare, past family relations serve as mask for a present pattern of desire that has nothing to do with them.[419]

This idea heightens the sense that Olivia's posturing is somewhat counterfeit. As the play's dual authority figures, Orsino and Olivia's behaviour sanction the widespread presence of overbearing passions and abnormal conduct that erupt across the play. If melancholy was welcome in Arden, it concomitantly proves the norm in Illyria, a place where, as Fabian puts it, one can be "boiled to death with melancholy" (II, v. 3).

In the following scene, Viola washes up on the Illyrian shoreline after having been separated from her twin brother, Sebastian, during a shipwreck. In her subsequent exchange with the ship's captain, she also expresses a strong sense of melancholy:

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[418] Elliott Krieger, "*Twelfth Night*: 'The Morality of Indulgence,'" in *New Casebooks: Twelfth Night*, ed. R. S. White, New York: Palgrave, 1996, 37-71, 43. Davies also points out that Olivia's self-imposed mourning exceeds early modern customs in an absurd fashion. "Seven years," she writes, "fanatically violates Elizabethan mourning etiquette, which prescribes a period of one year for a brother," 55.
[419] Girard*, Theater of Envy*, 108.

VIOLA. What country, friends, is this?
CAPTAIN. This is Illyria, lady.
VIOLA. And what should I do in Illyria?
      My brother, he is in Elysium.
      Perchance he is not drowned.
…
      O, my poor brother! (I, ii. 1-5; 7).

Despite the glimmer of hope found in her final comment, Viola is evidently mourning her brother's disappearance, if not his death. In doing so, she provides an immediate contrast to Olivia's grief. Since her brother's drowning also takes place outside of the play's frame, Viola's sorrow can initially appear as intangible as Olivia's, at least from a Girardian standpoint. Still, the immediacy of her ordeal, along with her willingness to improve the state of her affairs, underscores her resourcefulness vis-à-vis the Countess' resignation.[420] Rather than encase herself in cumbersome mourning rituals, Viola seeks patronage as a temporary solution, "till I had made mine own occasion mellow" (I, ii. 43). Viola's use of "mellow," which usually pertains to the softening or ripening of organic elements such as fruit,[421] implies a maturation of her character. It differentiates her from the unchanging behaviour of Orsino and Olivia alluded to in the first scene. Viola communicates an understanding of the overwhelming power of affects, and her decision to seek protection until hers have 'mellowed' indicate an awareness that she must contain her melancholy until it is no longer at threat to her safety.

When the captain informs her that Olivia will not admit visitors under any circumstance, she decides to seek refuge in Orsino's court by posing as an eunuch. "It might be worth thy pains," she informs the captain, "for I can sing / And speak to him in many sorts

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[420] This differentiating will actually heighten itself once Viola's brother washes up on shore, alive and well (II, i).
[421] According to the OED, a primary definition of the verb mellow in the early modern period was "to ripen or soften (fruit); to mature (wine, etc.); to render (a food or its flavour) milder, sweeter, or richer; to free from harshness or acidity," "mellow," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed March 11th, 2013, oed.com.

of music / That will allow me very worth his service" (I, ii. 57-59).[422] In a manner reminiscent

of Rosalind on the threshold of Arden Forest, Viola turns to cross-dressing as a safety measure

in the wake of extraordinary hardship.[423] This decision will grant her the freedom to spark a

chain reaction upon entering Orsino's court that ultimately brings about profound

transformations in other characters. This last notion recalls Barbara Freedman's argument that

Viola's arrival in Illyria initiates the process by which characters such as Orsino and Olivia

overcome their moroseness, what Freedman refers to as a sense of "loss and

disillusionment."[424] For her, Viola stands as "the only character in whom autonomy and

relatedness join forces and in whom optimism, vitality, and faith in mutuality share pride of

place with an acknowledgement of the realities of loss and disillusionment."[425]

To redirect Freedman's argumentative line away from its psychoanalytical roots and

towards an explicit understanding of the play as the zenith of comic melancholy, I suggest that

Viola's self-understanding, grounded in the melancholy that afflicts her, accounts for much of

her success, not only in overcoming her sorrow, but in bringing both Orsino and Olivia to

temper their behaviour. Carroll, who argues that "uncertainty and mutability are the very

essence of this play's world,"[426] explains that Viola demarcates herself from other

Shakespearean heroines because she successfully aligns transformation with constancy of

character, a trait he deems emblematic of the "distinction between active and passive

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[422] Note her mention of speaking music to him, which concurs with his desire to receive the food of love. The comment, in a way, attests to Viola's superiority to Olivia as a love interest for Orsino.

[423] Orgel notes that Viola's choice of persona ("Cesario") also bears a connotation to Caesarean births. He thus argues that Viola's self-conception amounts to "not simply a youth in disguise, but as surgically neutered in addition. She seems to be proposing a sexlessness that is an aspect of her mourning," he writes, "that will effectively remove her, as Olivia as removed herself, from the world of love and wooing," *Impersonations*, 54. Orgel's reading draws a helpful parallel between Viola and Olivia that dovetails with the idea that both characters begin the play encased in melancholy.

[424] Freedman, *Staging the Gaze,* 193-194.

[425] Freedman, *Staging the Gaze*, 205.

[426] Carroll, 81.

metamorphosis, between a willed embrace of flexibility and the kind of rigidity which Olivia

displays at the beginning of the play."[427] By dressing up as the page Cesario and eventually

winning the affection of both Orsino and Olivia, Viola emulates other Shakespearean comic

heroines in showcasing activism and adaptability in the face of an overwhelming melancholy.

Yet, as she woos Olivia on Orsino's behalf, she becomes enamored of the duke herself. The

melancholy that her brother's loss engendered is thus supplanted by one similar to that which

runs rampant in Illyria. This conversion underscores the potency of the melancholy that

infuses *Twelfth Night*, and its power to even affect the comedy's heroine. Yet by skillfully

balancing her love of Orsino with the infatuation that Olivia develops for the persona of

Cesario, Viola manages to engender transformation in both characters nonetheless.

At the onset of the fourth scene, Valentine expresses his astonishment at Viola's quick

ascension within Orsino's court. He remarks to her that

> If the Duke continue these favors towards
> You, Cesario, you are like to be much advanced. He
> Hath known you but three days, and already you are
> No stranger (I, iv. 1-4).

While Valentine infers that Cesario might soon overtake them all in the court's hierarchy,

Viola misconstrues the comment as implying that she might fall out of favour with the duke:

"You either fear his humor or my negligence, / That you call in question the continuance of his

love. Is / He inconstant, sir, in his favors?" (I, iv. 5-7). Viola, who is already infatuated with

Orsino,[428] wonders whether his interests might ever waver. The comment can be construed as

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[427] Carroll, 85. Neely identifies a similar contrast of both heroines. The main difference that exists between them, she writes, is that Viola, "blends gender roles," whereas Rosalind, "enacts them sequentially", 115.

[428] At the end of the scene, Viola declares of her mission to woo Olivia: "Yet a barful strife!, / Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife," (I, iv. 41-42). Her infatuation could possibly stem from much earlier. When she asks the captain who governs in Illyria, she declares, after hearing of Orsino: "I have heard my father name him. / He was a bachelor then" (I, ii. 28-29) which could hint at an already established attraction, or at least a mention of

either a concern that Orsino might not remain a benevolent master, or as a hope that his affection for Olivia might eventually dissipate. Orsino seems quite taken with Cesario, to whom he has "unclasped … the book even of my secret soul" (I, iv. 13-14) and entrusted him with the wooing of Olivia. As a man, it would appear that Viola proves superior to Orsino in being able to channel melancholy in a beneficial manner, rather than letting it overwhelm her. Orsino's melancholy, on the other hand, "displaces him from the world of action into the sphere of emasculating contemplation."[429] The relationship that develops between them positions Viola as the ideal conduit for both heterosexual and homosexual desires. As Cesario, she brings Orsino to confess his somewhat instable temperament in the face of romantic endeavours. In a subsequent discussion on love, Orsino characterizes the absurdity with which men usually react in such circumstances:

> For such as I am, all true lovers are,
> Unstaid and skittish in all motions else
> Save in the constant image of the creature
> That is beloved (II, iv. 17-20).

The comment reiterates the rigidity of Orsino's character. What he perceives as a devotion to the constant image of Olivia comes across as an unruly, unyielding passion. Yet, within the confines of male camaraderie, Orsino's friendship with Cesario leads him to betray a surprising candour concerning the instability of men in love:

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it by Viola's father. This can also be a reference to the play's primary source, Barnabe Riche's "Of Apolonius and Silla," which bears close similarities to the plot of *Twelfth Night*. In Riche's tale, Silla has been in love with Duke Apolonius for many years following their first encounter before she meets him again after washing ashore due to a shipwreck and serving him as a male page, *Barnabe Riche: His Farewell to Military Profession*, ed. Donald Beecher, Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1992, 180-201.

[429] Stanivukovic's essay looks at how masculinity is portrayed in the play, as "the subject of melancholy, disguise and comedy." Rather than be heralded at every turn, however, Stanivukovic contends that this particular vision of masculinity "is constantly challenged" throughout the play, "Masculine Plots in *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: New Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer, New York: Routledge, 2011, 114-130, 114. For Stanivukovic, the Orsino-Cesario relationship is primordial to the duke's gender identity. "Orsino's masculinity," he writes, "is determined more by his relationships with Cesario as an object of his desire and his pose of a melancholy lover than by his actions," 125.

However we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are (II, iv. 32-35).

The scene showcases the inconstancy of masculine desire while testifying to the potency of homosocial bonds of friendship (and to Viola's pre-eminence to that effect). Her male persona allows her to bring Orsino closer to a more sensible understanding of love, paving the way for their eventual union.[430] The persona also affects Olivia, who falls in love with Cesario following their initial meeting. Her newfound infatuation yokes her away from the pangs of mourning in which she enveloped herself at the beginning of the play. Following their exchange, Olivia exclaims:

Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. Well, let it be
…
Fate, show thy force. Ourselves we do not owe.
What is decreed must be; and be this so (I, v. 290-293; 305-306).

The speech expresses a sense of surrendering to an overpowering disposition similar to Orsino's; Olivia is now hopelessly love-stricken as well.[431] When she realizes that Olivia has fallen for Cesario, Viola holds a similar discourse:

I am the man. If this be so—as 'tis—
Poor lady, she were better love a dream.
Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.

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[430] Given this duality, Schalkwyk identifies *Twelfth Night* as "Shakespeare's representation of a wholly unconventional combination of eros [love] and philia [friendship] as it may be embodied in a woman. Both its fiction of maleness and its condition of service," he adds, "make the marriage of eros and philia possible," *Shakespeare, Love, and, Service*, 126. In fact, that very act of gender transgression, he argues, is what empowers the master-servant relationship. "The ambiguously gendered figure of Viola/Cesario," Schalkwyk asserts, "is the play's exemplary figure of constancy of affection, not the aristocratic man who indulges in that claim on his own behalf and that of his sex in general," *Shakespeare, Love, and Service*, 133.

[431] Her allusion to catching the plague also furthers the play's preoccupation with contagious diseases as romantic metaphors.

How easy it is for the proper false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we.
For such as we are made of, such we be (II, ii. 25-32).

Viola, also suffering from unrequited love, expresses a comparable sense of helplessness,

completing the melancholic love triangle that binds the three characters. Through the

privileged position that her cross-dressing efforts afford her, Viola develops an acute

awareness of the precariousness of such a situation, which she acknowledges when

mentioning the inherent danger that her charade entails (a surprising viewpoint for a

Shakespearean heroine). Nevertheless, Viola falls prey to the melancholic forces at play in

Illyria. Her love for Orsino prevents her from engendering overarching transformations like

the ones in *As You Like It*. This fact is exemplified by another exchange that Orsino and

Cesario have on the ways in which love affects women. Orsino declares that:

There is no woman's sides
Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
As love doth give my heart; no woman's heart
So big to hold so much. They lack retention.
Alas, their love may be called appetite,
No motion of the liver, but the palate,
That suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt;
But mine is all as hungry as the sea,
And can digest as much. Make no compare
Between that love a woman can bear me
And that I owe Olivia (II, iv. 93-103).

The references to nourishment, excess, and the incommensurable nature of his passion are all

concordant with the volatile nature of Orsino's understanding of love and desire expressed so

far. Though the staging alone offers a visual rebuttal to his stance (Viola conceals both her

identity and desire throughout the scene),[432] Viola does not contradict him, nor does she attempt to educate him romantically the way Rosalind did with Orlando. Rather, she offers a glimpse of the turmoil she endures by relating the story of Cesario's sister, who:

> Never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy,
> She sat like patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief (II, iv. 110-115).[433]

Through the layered narrative of a fictional sibling, Viola manages to express the confines of the lovesickness that afflicts her. The tale provides Orsino with telling clues as to Viola's identity that go unnoticed. "I am all the daughters of my father's house," she replies to his inquiry as to the fate of her sister, "and all the brothers too" (II, iv. 120-121). Viola's awareness concerning the detriment that unavowed romantic feelings may inflict is complicated by her silence concerning her own feelings, and her willingness to pursue the wooing of Olivia at the end of the scene keeps her within the powerful grasp of melancholic fancies.

Despite a farcical degree of convolution, the melancholy that stems from this love triangle does not seem particularly difficult to extricate from the comedy. Once Sebastian appears, the romantic quandary progresses towards a familiar outcome, where an emotional family reunion, the proper redirecting of sexual desires, and joyful romantic unions transpire.

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[432] According to Carroll, Orsino's discourse throughout the play "suggest the restless, cyclical motion typical of the play, where appetite grows, surfeits, sickens, dies and begins again," hinting towards the endless pattern of melancholy under which he suffers, 81.

[433] Female melancholy was often referred to as greensickness in the early modern period, or more specifically, as "virgin melancholy." Under such a condition, where, as Paster writes, "the virgin's body poisons itself … with its own fluids," female subjects were in grave danger of hysteria and ultimately death. Marriage was thought to be the ideal cure, *Humoring the Body*, 92. Note also Viola's mention of 'sitting like patience on a monument,' to describe her melancholy, which recalls Gratiano's comment to Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* when he asks him why a man should sit "like his grandsire cut in alabaster?" (I, i. 84).

It is in its subplot that the play presents a more challenging melancholy that eventually ingrains itself within the comic fabric. Its characters provide their lot of comic moments by exhibiting a penchant for excessive revelry, not unlike the unruly melancholy of their socially superior counterparts. As Olivia's steward, Malvolio, in keeping with his mistress' vows of mourning, attempts to quell the merriment in which members of her household (the cantankerous Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, the lady-in-waiting Maria, and the fool Feste) have been indulging. They, in turn, consort to take revenge on him, a plan which culminates in his utter humiliation. It is through these dramatic agents, described by Leo Salingar as "discordant strains … in the harmony of *Twelfth Night*—strains of melancholy and of something harsher,"[434] that comic melancholy completes its transformation. As the play progresses, the revellers gradually reveal a moroseness symptomatic of the fact that beyond their amusement lies a desperate attempt to retain a rapidly fading sense of mirth and careless gratification. This melancholic reaction to the twilight of festivity, a tonal shift that Yu Jin Ko defines as the "progress from pleasure to decay,"[435] rests predominantly on Barton's seminal reading of *Twelfth Night*'s problematic ending. More specifically, it echoes her underscoring of the sobering reality that ultimately descends on the final act in which, she writes, "a world of revelry, of comic festivity, fights a kind of desperate rearguard action against the cold light of

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[434] Leo G. Salingar, "The Design of *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells, New York: Garland, 1986.191-226, 212. Erich Segal also notes that the melancholy that afflicts these characters "is the central conflict of the play, which … does not reach a wholly satisfactory conclusion," *The Death of Comedy*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 2001, 317

[435] Yu Jin Ko, "The Comic Close of *Twelfth Night* and Viola's *Noli me Tangere*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.4 (Winter 1997): 391-405, 395. See also Richard P. Wheeler, "Deaths in the Family: The Loss of a Son and the Rise of Shakespearean Comedy," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.2 (Summer 2000): 127-153. Wheeler contends that though the melancholy afflicting each protagonist in the first act is primordial to the play's nature, it proves subservient to the one tied to notions of temporality that Ko and Barton discuss. "Psychologically," he writes of Orsino, Olivia and Viola, "it is as if all these characters participate in, or are oriented toward, the same longing, which is not the longing that drives the comic action but the one that must be addressed if the comic action is to move forward toward the marriages that complete," 149.

day."[436] Thus, temporality is paramount to both the elaboration of this concept and the play's conflation of mirth and melancholy. According to her, the play puts forth dual conceptions of time that "run parallel throughout the comedy, diverging only at its end. One is the time of holiday and of fiction, measureless and essentially beneficent … The other is remorseless and strictly counted."[437] Thus, the correlation of time and melancholy, briefly perceptible in *As You Like It*, crystalizes within the confines of Illyria, overshadowing its characterizations of excessive and irrational behaviour.

In his first appearance on stage, Toby deplores the sternness that reigns in Olivia's household. "What a plague means my niece to take the / Death of her brother thus?" he declares, "I am sure care's an enemy / To life (I, iii. 1-3). He immediately opposes the elaborate restrictions Olivia seeks to impose on her household.[438] His drunken carousing with Sir Andrew offers a stark contrast to the romantic extolments of the first act and the melancholic longings of lovesickness that accompany it. Toby and Andrew's final exchange in this scene highlights the prevailing division between lovers and revellers:

> ANDREW. Shall we set about some
>   Revels?
> TOBY. What shall we do else? Were we not born
>   Under Taurus?
> ANDREW. Taurus? That's sides and heart.
> TOBY. No, sir, it is legs and thighs. Let me see thee
>   Caper (I, iii. 132-138).

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[436] Barton, "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 109.

[437] Barton, "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 110. Krieger notes that Olivia also suggests this alternative representation of temporality. By adopting her absurd mourning practices, he writes, she "makes time meaningless to her life by converting time into pure measurement … Her ritual mourning does not acknowledge death, but, by making the future entirely predictable and controlled, her mourning protects against loss and decay, refuses to mourn," 43.

[438] His comment also carries a direct contrast to Orsino's earlier description of Olivia. While the duke believes she 'purged the air of pestilence,' (I, i. 19), Sir Toby refers to her as a plague.

While the lovers are concerned with the heart and the eyes (potential sites of infection by lovesickness), Toby and Andrew praise the lower body stratum, (the "legs and thighs"). Their rhetoric proves much more literal than their romantic counterparts. While Orsino seeks the food of love, Toby and Andrew delight in actual sustenance and libations:

> TOBY. Does not our lives consist of the four
>   Elements?
> ANDREW. Faith, so they say, but I think it rather
>   Consists of eating and drinking.
> TOBY. Thou'rt a scholar; let us therefore eat and
>   Drink (II, iii. 9-14).

The exchange places consumption above humourality. Although they similarly champion excess as a dominant code of conduct, they prove impervious to the galenic logic that affects other characters, showcasing an even greater relinquishing of control over their appetites. More importantly, the commitment to festivity that these characters demonstrate comes in direct opposition to the austerity of Olivia's steward, who seeks to lead the household into replicating his mistress' mournful demeanour.

Malvolio has often been identified as one if not *the* melancholic characterization in *Twelfth Night*. Critics look to his grim temperament and dark garments as evidence of his condition.[439] This association stems mainly from the similitudes that exist between the character and those populating Jonsonian humour plays.[440] However, the character offers very little evidence of possessing any melancholic undertones, especially not the ones developed in the play. At its core, Malvolio is opportunistic more than humourous, and the penchant for

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[439] Segal, for example, argues that Malvolio's "dark costume and even darker temperament symbolize the melancholy pandemic in all Illyria. For a comedy, the mood is unusually dark," 313.

[440] James Schiffer notes that although "no direct source has been found for the Malvolio plot, most scholars recognize a more general kind of debt to the 'humours' comedies of Ben Jonson, with their emphasis on the 'explosion' and expulsion of 'blocking characters," 109.

melancholy he seemingly entertains revolves mainly around social aspirations.[441] Maria, who

initially refers to him as "a kind of Puritan" (II, iii.139),[442] implies as much when she refers to

him as

> A time-pleaser; an affectioned ass, that cons
> State without book and utters it by great swarths; 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; and on that vice in him
> Will my revenge find notable cause to work (II, iii. 147-152).

Her assessment suggests that Malvolio is not melancholic but perceives the affectation to be

advantageous, since Olivia's mourning affords him considerable control over inhabitants of

her household. Serving a mistress who proves, in Maria's words, "addicted to melancholy" (II,

v. 198), Malvolio seizes the opportunity to subdue Sir Toby and the others and climb up the

household's power hierarchy. His longing for social mobility appears most tangible when

other characters eavesdrop on him as he daydreams about gaining prominence within Olivia's

household. His ruminations on becoming "Count Malvolio" (II, v. 34) and possessing "the

humour of the state" (II, v. 51) draw the ire of Toby, Maria, and others, who set about to rid

themselves of his cumbersome presence. Being, as Olivia deems him, "sick of self-love" (I, v.

87), Malvolio thus represents the ideal target for the revellers. The scene in which they enact

revenge upon him (III, iv) is crucial to an understanding of the character as socially

opportunistic rather than melancholic. With the assistance of a forged letter intimating Olivia's

love for him, the characters coerce Malvolio into acting foolishly in front of his mistress, so

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[441] For a discussion of Malvolio's opportunism, see C. L. Barber, "Testing Courtesy and Humanity in *Twelfth Night*," in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells, New York: Garland, 1986, 107-130, 122.

[442] Schleiner who sees in Malvolio, and his ultimate humiliation at the hands of the revellers, "the nexus of madness, melancholy and possession," remarks that the steward's overall countenance, defined by "self-love and pride," would actually suggest the opposite of Puritanism, *Melancholy, Genius and Utopia in the Renaissance*, Wiebaden: Harrassowitz, 1991, 263; 267.

much so that she orders him locked up on suspicions of insanity. Throughout the stratagem,

Malvolio echoes a Bergsonian understanding of the comic figure, whose "inelasticity of

character, of mind, and even of body" engenders laughter;[443] the trick exposes his overly

mechanical demeanour, which the revellers set about to destabilize. Malvolio's fancies grow

out of control once he stumbles on the forged document. "I will smile," he professes to an

imaginary Olivia upon finishing the letter, "I will do everything that / Thou wilt have me" (II,

v. 174-175). The trickery exacerbates a sycophancy that was already dominant in him. This

attribute, however, relates much more to narcissism than it does to melancholy. Malvolio's

subsequent imprisonment underscores this notion even further. As some critics contend, his

confinement, seen by his tormentors as the ultimate corrective measure, draws on early

modern perceptions of madness more than melancholy.[444] In its degrading treatment of the

steward for the amusement of everyone on and off stage, the punishment[445] parallels Jonsonian

humour comedies—particularly the bitterness of *Everyman Out of his Humour*—more than it

does any treatment of overly melancholy characters in Shakespearean comedy.[446] This idea is

solidified by the refusal of the last act to provide any reconciliatory amendment to this

process. Malvolio is not "cured" so that he can join in the final celebrations, nor is he expelled

because he endangers comic progression. Essentially, the character is forgotten, cast aside in a

dark cell as the comedy moves on to the mistaken identity crisis ushered in by Sebastian's

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[443] Bergson, 73. "The comic," Bergson writes, "is that side of a person which reveals his likeness to a thing, that aspect of human events which, through its peculiar inelasticity, conveys the impression of pure mechanism, of automatism, of movement without life," 117. Krieger argues that "there is nothing tragic about Malvolio. The way his aspiration develops and is placed within the drama makes him, in fact, comic in the most elementary— the Bergsonian—sense of the word," 63.

[444] See Neely, 150-166.

[445] Or "scapegoating," as Neely terms it, 152. Not surprisingly, Girard also identifies Malvolio as the play's scapegoat, *Theater of Envy*, 111.

[446] One could make the case that even Don John receives a fairer treatment, seeing his punishment delayed beyond the play's ending.

arrival. The closest Malvolio comes to the sense of melancholy the play fosters resides in his opposition to its emblematic figurehead, Feste.

More so than Touchstone, Feste epitomizes the new type of Shakespearean fool that combines dazzling linguistic abilities with a profoundly cynical worldview.[447] For all his light-hearted repartee and charm, Feste showcases a considerable degree of bitterness that gradually seeps through his playful exterior. Disgruntled by his position as an aging jester, he channels the melancholy associated with the imminent end of revels. The opening of the play marks Feste's return to Olivia's household after a prolonged absence, which has angered the Countess to the point where, as Maria cautions him, he risks being "hanged for being so long absent; Or to be turned away" (I, v. 16-17). Indifferent to either possibility, Feste retorts that "many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage; And for turning away, let summer bear it out" (I, v. 19-20). The reply suggests a carefully constructed carelessness, supported by his prodigious wit and acute social awareness. In professing that being turned away would not be so harsh in the summer time, Feste also hints towards the cycle of temporal progression that proves central to the comedy's development of melancholy. When Olivia enters, Feste, who must beg to maintain his place within her household, succeeds by entangling Olivia in a verbal spectacle that both impresses her and undercuts the absurdity of her grief:

> FESTE. Good madonna, why mournest thou?
> OLVIA. Good fool, for my brother's death.
> FESTE. I think his soul is in hell, madonna.
> OLIVIA. I know his soul is in heaven, fool.

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[447] See Karen Grief, "A Star Is Born: Feste on the Modern Stage," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.1 (Spring 1988): 61-78, for an insightful discussion of the character's rise to prominence in twentieth-century productions of the play. In a footnote, Grief admits that "much the same process has taken place in the criticism. As scholarly interpreters (like their theatrical counterparts) have stressed the play's darker, more ironic tones, they have more and more looked to Feste as its key," 61. James Schiffer expresses a similar idea when he writes that "the rise of Feste has had the profound effect in many modern productions of complicating—and darkening—the mood of the play," 18.

FESTE. The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your
    brother's soul, being in heaven (I, v. 63-68).

The reciprocal cadence of the exchange underlines an inherent complicity, which Feste

cleverly exploits as he attempts to win back Olivia's favour. The jest also provides the most

succinct critique of Olivia's mourning, displaying, once again, the fool's remarkable powers

of perception. Evidently, Feste makes an enemy of Malvolio, who proves weary of his

attempts to lighten Olivia's mood. When she asks his opinion of the fool's dexterous

argumentation, Malvolio rapidly attacks:

I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such
A barren rascal. I saw him down the other day
With an ordinary fool that has no more brain than
A stone. Look you now, he's out of his guard already.
Unless you laugh and minster occasion to him, he is
Gagged. I protest I take these wise men that crow so at
These set kind of fools no better than the fools' zanies (I, v. 80-86).

Malvolio suggests to Olivia that Feste might be past his prime and his usefulness within her

household. Both characters engage in a power struggle for Olivia's favour so as to determine

the household's prevalent mood. She becomes an authoritative endgame to their skirmish,

yoked towards mourning, decorum, and melancholy on the one side, and foolery, revelry, and

merriment on the other. While he belongs on the mirthful side of the conflict, Feste remains

peripheral to the scheming against Malvolio that occupies much of the middle portion of the

play. As Graham Atkin remarks, "Shakespeare allows [the fool] to maintain a distance from

the central levity (if not problematic) of the play, the gulling of Malvolio, by introducing a

new character in the form of Fabian."[448] Fabian actively joins in with Toby, Andrew, and

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[448] Graham Atkin, *Twelfth Night: Characters Studies*, London: Continuum, 2008, 63. The argument that the two characters are linked has been made on numerous occasions. For a concise elaboration of the possibilities of such a conflation, see *Twelfth Night, or, What You Will*, eds. Stanley Wells and Roger Warren, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008, 53-55. Grief's essay also makes mention of the two characters' interconnectedness on stage, 66-67.

Maria in orchestrating Malvolio's punishment while Feste ambulates about Illyria. Despite some affinities with the revelers, Feste remains primarily the play's agent of melancholy.

Drawing on his talent for mediation and social acumen, Feste navigates the Illyrian landscape with ease, blurring the boundary between each plotline. He appears almost ubiquitous, cavorting with Toby and Andrew in one scene (II, iii) before arriving at Orsino's house in the very next one (II, iv). "Foolery, sir," as he informs Cesario, "does walk about the orb like the / Sun; it shines everywhere" (III, i. 38-39). Viola actually provides the best assessment of his remarkable aptitude to curry favour wherever he may be when she remarks that

> This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,
> And to do that well craves a kind of wit.
> He must observe their mood on whom he jests,
> The quality of persons, and the time,
> And, like the haggard, check at every feather
> That comes before his eye. This is a practice
> As full of labor as a wise man's art;
> For folly that he wisely shows is fit,
> But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit (III, i. 59-67).

Feste excels at reading other characters and, as a result, maneuvers to his best advantage by offering them what they seek. He can assuage Olivia's grief by pointing out that her brother's soul is in heaven just as easily as he can drink and rejoice alongside Toby and Andrew. Likewise, he provides Orsino with what he craves the most: melancholic sustenance for his lovesickness. The scene where he sings for the duke begins with Orsino, in a mood reminiscent of the first scene, clamouring:

> Give me some music
> …
> That old and antic song we heard last night.
> Methought it did relieve my passion much,
> More than light airs and recollected terms

Of these most brisk and giddy-pacèd times (II, iv. 1; 3-6).[449]

Feste is merely obliging Orsino, who appears eager to feed on the pangs of melancholy, but the piece, "Come away, death" (II, iv. 51-66), provides a sharp contrast to the festive mood that otherwise dominates the early portion of the play. Its emotional charge actually supplants the one Orsino sought out.[450] The duke nevertheless loves the song. "It is silly sooth," he tells Cesario, "And dallies with the innocence of love, / Like the old age" (46-48). The fool's parting words to Orsino reveal his awareness of the duke's inconstant temperament:

> Now, the melancholy god protect thee, and the
> Tailor make thy doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy
> Mind is very opal. I would have men of such constancy
> Put to sea, that their business might be everything,
> And their intent everywhere, for that's it that
> Always makes a good voyage of nothing (II, iv. 73-78).

In referencing taffeta and opals (objects known for their fluctuating features)[451] Feste harps on the volatility of Orsino's melancholy (much like the absurdity of Olivia's mourning). Nothing is categorical for Feste, especially not dispositions. Just like the cyclical nature of time, countenances will vary, and mirth and melancholy will inevitably succeed each other. As he later affirms to Olivia, anything "mended is but patched; virtue that transgresses is but / Patched with sin, and sin that amends is but patched / With virtue" (I, v. 45-47). Although he proves unparalleled in this regard, Feste's foolery extends well beyond displays of linguistic abilities. His musical prowess acts as a conduit for the melancholy he releases onto the play; the melodies, manage "to create an interlude that puts life on hold for as long as the song

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[449] The speech indicates that Feste was in Orsino's court the previous night, which further emphasizes his ubiquity in Illyria.

[450] Atkin remarks that Feste's song carries with it the potential for infection. "There is a danger at this point," he writes, "if the song is sung expertly and fittingly enough, that the play drowns in melancholy," 62.

[451] Bevington defines changeable taffetas as "a silk so woven of various-colored threads that its color shifts with changing perspective," and opal as "an iridescent stone that changes color when seen from various angles or in different lights," *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will*," 326-361, 341.

lasts,"[452] disrupting other characters and momentarily unhinging them from their unyielding

emotional frames. Masquerading as trivial ballads, Feste's songs carry with them the

harshness of old age and an awareness of the deterioration that accompanies it. The love song

he performs for Toby and Andrew halts their boisterous debauchery (if only temporarily) with

its bleak outlook on love and mocking commentary of old age:

> What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
> Present mirth hath present laughter;
> What's to come is still unsure:
> In delay there lies no plenty;
> Then comes kiss me, sweet and twenty,
> Youth's a stuff will not endure (II, iii. 47-52).[453]

The allusion to the fleeing nature of youth, communicated to a pair of aging buffoons,

provides a moment of clarity that the two men hastily suppress by redirecting the

conversation. After admitting that the fool possesses "a contagious breath,"[454] Toby seems

eager to move on from the performance: "shall we make the welkin dance indeed? Shall we

/ Rouse the night owl in a catch that will draw three / Souls out of one weaver? Shall we do

that?" (II, iii. 57-59). Uneasy with the mood Feste attempts to instill on the scene, Toby seeks

a return to lighthearted carousing. The song Feste performs for Orsino exerts a similar effect.

It provides the duke with melancholic hymns to feed on, but does so to an extreme degree

which renders the scene unsettling. Though Feste possesses the ability to grant characters what

they seek, he also seems to delight in exposing them to the harsher reality they inhabit. The

songs tilt the overall mood further and further away from revelry and toward more serious

concerns

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[452] Ryan, 250.

[453] Toby's comment following the song, "a contagious breath … To hear by the nose, it is dulcet in contagion" (II, iii. 54; 56) also suggests the idea that Feste can infect people with the melancholy he represents.

[454] As Bevington notes, the comment can infer either Feste's "catchy voice, [or] an infected or contagious breath," 338. In both cases, Feste's melancholic song seems to have a powerful effect on Toby.

The argument that Feste personifies the play's bitter undertones has been elaborated previously.[455] Bloom points to the fact that the fool "has grown weary of his role. He carries his exhaustion with verve and wit, and always with the air of knowing all there is to know, not in a superior way but with a sweet melancholy."[456] Feste occasionally betrays a harshness of tone that supports this view. Though this behaviour is mainly reserved for Malvolio, he replies to Cesario's harmless comment that he is "a merry fellow and car'st for / Nothing," (III, i. 26-27) later on with a somewhat hostile retort: "Not so, sir, I do care for something, but in my / Conscience, sir, I do not care for you. If that be to care / For nothing, sir, I would it would make you invisible (III, i. 28-30). My interpretation concords with such a reading, but pushes it further by advocating that the character's larger function purports to the transformation of comic melancholy underway in *Twelfth Night*. Feste' own melancholy reaches beyond the scope of the comedy; no sudden case of lovesickness or loss of a sibling accounts for his moroseness. It stems from an utter disappointment in his status, in a veiled contempt for the patrons he serves, and in an inescapable sentiment that time has passed the jester by. However, this coarser aspect of the character is offset by the amusement he creates throughout the play for other characters and audiences alike. Feste offers the quintessential mixture of mirth and melancholy that *Twelfth Night* depicts. In this sense, he embodies both the "leveling demolition of difference"[457] that prevails in the play, and the more liminal sense of melancholy that gradually takes over. This erasure of difference transpires on several levels

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[455] Richard Levin contends that Feste acts as a binding agent in Illyria, under the supposition that "all the Illyrians suffer from the same malaise that expresses itself differently, depending on age," 158. See also Ryan, 239-241, and Schiffer, especially 16-18. Lisa Marciano argues that Feste, along with Viola, acts as an agent of the play's primary theme, "a dark didacticism, an urgent sense that life must be lived well because it is short," "The Serious Comedy of *Twelfth Night*: Dark Didacticism in Illyria," *Renascence* 56 (Fall 2003): 3-19, 3.

[456] Bloom, 244.

[457] Ryan, 269.

(between lovers and revelers, between masters and servants), but is mainly achieved through the merger of mirth and melancholy that Feste exemplifies, an attitude which the final act unabashedly champions.

The play's final scene, during which romantic and carousing plotlines converge, offers a brittle comic resolution that fails to effectively keep the pangs of melancholy at bay. As a suitable alternative to Cesario, Sebastian, whose arrival exacerbates the anxieties of the romantic triangle, squares its framework by granting Olivia her desired mate and allowing for the union of Viola and Orsino. The final scene thus becomes a recognition-*cum*-reunion scene as well, as Viola finds the brother she envisioned forever lost. However, several factors complicate this seemingly joyous resolution. The mistaken identity crisis creates a certain agitation prior to the siblings' reunion, which casts the last act under a more complex light. As he walks through Illyria, Sebastian encounters Olivia who, mistaking him for Cesario, professes her love to him and persuades him to marry her (IV, iii). The final scene erupts in chaos when Orsino and Cesario arrive at Olivia's household and the duke learns of his page's alleged betrayal. For a man plunged into melancholic torments, Orsino reacts with remarkable vigour. When Olivia rejects him once again, Orsino vows to never send Cesario back to her household. "I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love," he declares, "to spite a raven's heart within a dove" (V, i. 128-129). The comment evokes a surprising degree of violence towards Cesario. It marks a shift in Orsino's affection, away from Olivia and towards his page, a process made explicit through his reaction to the news of Olivia's marriage:

> O, thou dissembling cub! What will thou be
> When time hath sowed a grizzle on thy case?
> Or will not else thy craft so quickly grow
> That thine own trip shall be overthrown?
> Farewell, and take her, but direct thy feet

Where thou and I henceforth may never meet (V, i. 162-167).[458]

Orsino directs his ire at Cesario, as a testament of the strong bond that unites them. The fact that he addresses his page and not Olivia intimates the eventual shift in his affection once Sebastian appears on stage and all can behold the siblings side by side. Orsino's incredulous exclamation summarizes the confusion: "One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons, / A natural perspective, that is and is not!" (V. i. 215-216). As the comment suggests, Cesario has been metaphorically split asunder, offering Olivia and Orsino each a suitable mate. At this moment, Orsino's strong homosocial bond with Cesario is redirected into the heterosexual alternative that Viola offers.

Even then, Viola's reunion with her brother transpires awkwardly and with a surprising degree of emotional restraint. Her stasis in refusing to embrace her brother, echoed in her refusal to celebrate her union with Orsino until she has changed back into her feminine guise, throws an additional wrench in the intended celebrations the final act would foster. "Do not embrace me," she hastily informs Sebastian,

> Till each circumstance
> Of place, time, fortune do cohere and jump
> That I am Viola—which to confirm
> I'll bring you to a captain in this town
> Where lie my maiden weeds (V, i. 251-255).[459]

That Shakespeare would further complicate this final scene by keeping Viola's clothing out of her reach indicates the uneasiness concerning comic resolution reached in *Twelfth Night*. This delay undermines the expected sense of festivity that dual nuptial celebrations would

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[458] Note the animal imagery in Orsino's speech that indicates both the power dynamic at play between Viola and him (in his reference to offspring such as the lamb and the cub), as well the avian contrast he sets up between Olivia (black raven) and Viola (white dove).

[459] See Ko's essay for a discussion of the religious undertones of Viola's delaying on both accounts, referring to the biblical story relating the *noli-me-tangere* moment in John 20:17, 392.

engender, offering a stark contrast to the multiple weddings that punctuate the end of *As You Like It*. As Ko argues, the recognition scene vies "to unearth the painful longing in deferred completion and mix with it the joy of reunion."[460] Though this interpretation is predominantly framed through an understanding of the scene's religious parallels, Ko's contention that Viola's deferment mingles frustration and catharsis supports the notion that the scene also conflates mirth and melancholy as equally integral components of the comic structure.

The reappearance of Malvolio in the last scene adds another element to this sequence of emotional stunting that suggests the failure of traditional comic closure to successfully assimilate the concerns that have cropped up. The fact that his tormentors go unpunished, and that Malvolio exits without any form of resolution or atonement for the treatment he received, creates a tension that even Orsino's subsequent reconciliatory plea cannot fully alleviate.[461] Before Malvolio's departure, Feste mounts final attack against the steward:

> But do you remember? 'Madam, why laugh
> You at such a barren rascal? An you smile not, he's
> Gagged?' And thus the whirligig of time brings in his
> Revenges (V, i. 374-377).

Recalling Malvolio's own words from their earlier exchange (I, v. 83-86) and flinging them back at him, Feste reveals a vindictiveness that, once again, casts his carefree fooling under a suspicious light. The comment can be seen as a final indictment of Feste as overwhelmingly bitter and melancholic. More importantly, the image of the whirligig he conjures up, a spinning top that runs its course before inevitably toppling over, offers an ideal metaphor through which to consider *Twelfth Night* and the overall engraining of melancholy into its

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[460] Ko, 395.

[461] As soon as Malvolio exits, Orsino commands to "pursue him and entreat him to peace" (V, i. 381), which echoes Duke Senior's entreating Jaques to remain in Arden at the end of *As You Like It*. Malvolio's parting words, however, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you" (V, i. 378), prove much more disconcerting than those of his counterpart.

comedic fabric.[462] Much like a whirligig, the revellers are cast aside when the time for

merriment draws to a close. Despite a brief appearance on stage, the participation of Maria,

Toby, and Andrew in the final act proves inconsequential. The play has moved beyond their

desperate attempts to prolong merriment and so their opposition is swiftly quelled. Antonio,

who rescues Sebastian "from the breach of the sea" (II, i. 21) and assists him in his journey to

Illyria, suffers a fate similar to the revellers'. His relation to Sebastian is reminiscent of the

one between Bassanio and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. Antonio showcases a strong,

sudden sense of devotion for the young man that leads him to sacrifice a considerable amount

for his sake (both purse and person).[463] This characterization joins to the play's various

reworking of familiar comic themes.[464] Yet absent from Antonio's character is any sense that

an overwhelming melancholy dictates his actions. Antonio certainly appears dejected when,

captured by Orsino's men, he believes himself betrayed by Sebastian—when in actuality he is

talking to Viola (III, iv. 333-372)—but this proves a far cry from *Merchant*'s reliance on the

affect as a catalyst for comic progression. Moreover, much like the revellers, he is

suspiciously silent in the play's final moments, his last words referring to the stunning

revelations of the twin siblings: "How have you made division of yourself? / An apple cleft in

two is not more twin / Than these two creatures. Which is Sebastian?" (V, i. 222-224). As the

play draws to its conclusion, he is cast aside, a voiceless bystander in the comedy's topsy-

turvy finale.

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[462] Note also Peter Hyland's comment that the use of whirligig, rather than merely conjuring an "affirmation of comic circularity," could also connote "an instrument of punishment formerly used, consisting of a large cage suspended so as to turn on a pivot," which would certainly fit with the idea that Feste holds a grudge against Malvolio throughout the play, "Shakespeare's Whirligig," *The Explicator* 66.4 (2010): 209-210.

[463] As noted by Lewis, both relationships have been ascribed homosexual undertones in various critical readings, 27-28. See also Pequigney, 201-221.

[464] Cynthia Lewis notes the parallel, but adds that the sacrificial nature of *Twelfth Night*'s Antonio comes across less as a martyr than his counterpart, 88.

In Barton's interpretation, the various fates that characters meet in this final act, from marriage to exile, from disillusionment to neglect, underscore the dawn of a sobering reality that ultimately descends on the play and terminates its indulgence in revels. As characters exit, only a vague promise of future celebrations remains. Too many discordant notes have been emitted for the play to offer any harmony in its resolution. Left alone on stage, Feste, whom Barton refers to as the "only character who can restore a sense of unity to *Twelfth Night* at its ending, mediating between the world of the romantic lovers and our own world,"[465] performs a final song that illuminates the intricate tone struck at the close of *Twelfth Night*:

> When that I was and a little tiny boy,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> A foolish thing was but a toy,
> For the rain it raineth every day.
>
> But when I came to man's estate,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> 'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut their gate,
> For the rain it raineth every day.
>
> But when I came, alas, to wive,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> By swaggering could I never thrive,
> For the rain it raineth every day.
>
> But when I came unto my beds,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> With tosspots still had drunken heads,
> For the rain it raineth every day.
>
> A great while ago the world begun,
> With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
> But that's all one, our plays is done,
> And we'll strive to please you every day (V, i. 389-408).[466]

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[465] Barton "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 110.
[466] There exists an interesting parallel between the character of Feste and that of the Fool in *King Lear*, who sings a similar refrain while the storm rages on (III, ii. 74-77).

Feste's song recalls Jaques' "Seven Ages of Man" speech in that it relates episodes from its speaker's life that range from the infancy of a "tiny boy" to what appears as elderly debilitation of the "tosspots" with drunken heads. The refrain's nostalgic undertones and the notion that rain inevitably falls down cradle every verse in a melancholic embrace. Leslie Hotson cautions against underestimating the song's impact, remarking that although "the song has naively been received as a tale in rime but little reason, [Feste] knows precisely what to provide as a fitting farewell to wassail and saturnalian excess."[467] For Barbara Everett, the importance of the song lies not in "what Feste says, but what, with greater detachment, he leaves unsaid that speaks in his 'hey ho' (a kind of yawn). The theme of the song is, after all, simply growing up, accepting the principle that nights before have morning after; that life consists in passing time, and in *knowing* it."[468]

On a theatrical level, the song, with its pledge to "strive to please you every day," fulfils the acknowledgement of an audience that traditionally concludes early modern dramatic performances, being reminiscent of epilogues spoken by Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew*, or even Rosalind's final address in *As You Like It*. Taken in the context of the transformation of melancholy that plays out, however, the song provides a fitting end to a play that has consistently frustrated its comic revelry with more sombre concerns. The song hails a newly fashioned comic perspective of melancholy as an essential component of the cyclical understanding of human nature. [469] Its chorus urges its

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[467] Leslie Hotson, "Illyria for Whitehall," in *Twelfth Night: Critical Essays*, ed. Stanley Wells, New York: Garland 1986, 89-106, 100-101.

[468] Barbara Everett, "Or What You Will," in *New Casebooks: Twelfth Night*, ed. R. S. White, New York: Palgrave, 1996, 194-213, 207. Everett astutely remarks that that play can be thought as bookended by the conditional of Orsino's initial speech ("if") and the declarative of Feste's closing song ("When"), 196.

[469] According to Paul Edmondson, for whom a conflation of melancholy and desire accounts for the play's "mellowness of tone," the particular mood that Feste's song stresses is akin to "the silence between the songs of the Owl and the Cuckoo at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*—caught in the tension between seasonal change

listeners to accept the idea that melancholy, the humoural wind and rain in an otherwise healthy disposition, will manifest itself regardless, and should be considered as an everyday impediment rather than an exceptional threat.[470] Feste thus provides the ideal ending to a play after which Shakespeare was to sever ties with the traditional structures of the comic genre. Like the fool himself, the existence of this sense of melancholy is liminal, on the outskirts of the comedy. Yet beyond the celebrations of the final act, its nostalgic tone urges tolerance rather than upheaval in the face of melancholy. In Feste's song, much like in Shakespearean comedy following *Twelfth Night*, acceptance finally trumps eradication.

Unquestionably, the Shakespearean canon proves much more porous than generic or chronological divisions would illustrate. Consequently, it remains difficult to make a definitive claim that *Twelfth Night* represents the last Shakespearean "comedy." Yet, the fact remains that, at the dawn of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare seemingly abandons romantic comedy (if not comedy altogether) in favour of darker, more tonally complex works. Perhaps, as James Shapiro writes, at this juncture of his career, "Shakespeare was aware that he had nearly exhausted the rich veins of romantic comedy ... He was restless, unsatisfied with the profitably formulaic and with styles of writing that came too easy to him, but hadn't yet figured out what new directions to take."[471] Critics prove divided as to where this new direction might have been headed. Thinking of the tragic masterpieces that follow (*Hamlet* in particular), some have argued that, in ending on such a distinct note, *Twelfth Night* offers a

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and seasonal decline," "Melancholy and Desire in Twelfth Night, or What You Will," in *In the Footsteps of William Shakespeare*, ed. Christa Jansohn, Piscataway (NJ): Transaction Publishers, 2005, 141-158, 146; 147.

[470] Fineman draws a parallel between the song and Jaques' 'Seven Ages of Man' speech along these lines.

[471] Shapiro, 7-8.

bridge to Shakespearean tragedy.[472] In Fineman's words, the play "set[s], as it were, for

Shakespeare's maturity, when he no longer complains about growing old … but begins, rather,

to worry about dying."[473] The shift from romantic comedy to mature tragedy is

chronologically undeniable, but the so-called problem plays that directly follow *Twelfth Night*,

though not comical in the sense of any of their predecessors, cannot be conceived as purely

tragic either. *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* navigate the precarious dramatic territory that

lies between celebrating the apogee of romantic comedy and highlighting its inevitable

breakdown. As a more elusive, cyclical conception of melancholy replaces the humoural

characterizations of earlier comedies, the conflation of comic and melancholic elements

completes its transition from oppositional to symbiotic. Such a transferal is akin to Barton's

identification of clear trajectory between *Twelfth Night*'s enigmatic, bittersweet ending and the

problem comedies that were to follow (*Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*,

specifically), in which, she argues, "realism collides painfully with romance."[474] In charting

out such a link, she also pre-emptively looks to the late romances that were to conclude

Shakespeare's career:

> After *Measure for Measure* Shakespeare abandoned comedy. When he did return to
> the form in *Pericles*, some years later, he made it perfectly clear that he was now
> writing fairy-stories. The last plays as a group flaunt their own impossibilities and
> theatrical contrivance … Only the emotions generated are, miraculously, real. Out of
> this readjustment of form Shakespeare seems to have drawn for a little while—up to
> the point of *The Tempest* and the incomplete symmetries of its fifth act—a renewed
> faith in comedy endings. [475]

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[472] In the years following the composition of *Twelfth Night,* Shakespeare wrote what are generally held to be his four greatest tragedies: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth,* and *Othello*. See also Freedman, *Staging the* Gaze, 224-225, and Richard Levin 165-166.

[473] Fineman, 74.

[474] Barton, "Shakespeare's 'sense of an ending,'" 112. Though she does not refer to it explicitly, *Troilus and Cressida* can be added to Barton's argument as the final "problem play."

[475] Ibid.

This enigmatic group of plays, whether referred to as romance, tragicomedies, or late plays, constitute the focus of the next chapter and provide a consideration of comic melancholy in its last stage, where dramatic precision is supplanted by more powerful emotional impressions that paint a final, stirring portrait of comic melancholy in Shakespeare

Chapter 5: Late Shakespearean Melancholy and the Comic Post-Mortem

Your recent stuff's been pretty peculiar. What was *The Winter's Tale* about? I ask to be polite.
Ben Jonson to Shakespeare[476]

   A great deal has been written about the group of plays that conclude Shakespeare's career. The bulk of such a critical effort, centring on their unusual generic constitution and puzzling emotional makeup, attests to the volatility of such works. In an attempt to properly classify Shakespeare's final plays, scholars have adopted terms such as "romances," "tragicomedies," or, more recently, the straightforward designation of "late plays."[477] Whatever the classification, they remain complex dramatic texts whose abrupt stylistic departures from previous Shakespearean drama often yield more questions than answers. This chapter seeks to move away from such a debate by linking the plays to the comic taxonomies previously explored in this dissertation.[478] It argues that Shakespeare's late works are characterized by a pervasive, spectral sense of melancholy that finds its roots in the comic melancholy developed throughout his career. Conversely, the plays pursue the break away from individual characterizations of melancholy that was previously instigated in romantic comedies. In essence, the melancholy that emerges out of the sobering, disillusioning final moments of *Twelfth Night*, culminating in Feste's nostalgic ballad and its bittersweet appreciation of time, reverberates most forcefully within Shakespeare's final set of plays. All should seemingly be well at the end of Shakespearean romances, yet a strong sense of melancholy compromises the clamour for joyful resolution.

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[476] Edward Bond, "Bingo," *Plays: Three: Bingo; The Fool; The Woman; Stone*. London: Methuen, 1987, 1-66, 44: 2. 4.

[477] See McMullan, 65-126, for a detailed history of the debate surrounding these three terms.

[478] While I follow McMullan in deeming "late plays" to be the more appropriate characterization for these works, I rely on all three designations within the chapter, since they each possess nominal qualities that contribute to a discussion of melancholy.

Essentially, this final set of plays can be understood to distil the concept of melancholy to its purest affective form, a wistful ambiance reflective of a larger emotional tenor. The chapter initially considers *Pericles* as a preliminary renegotiation of comic melancholy on the heels of Shakespeare's mature tragic phase. I argue that, although the play's collaborative authorship and segmented dramatic structure curbs its development of Shakespearean melancholy slightly, the play foreshadows a more exhaustive expounding in *The Winter's Tale*. The latter, I suggest, offers the most detailed evidence of an enduring melancholic mood. At their core, Shakespeare's late works betray a concern with transformation over time, both individual and emotional. This chapter reinscribes such a contention within explicit melancholic overtones. Each play initially presents individual characterizations of overwhelming melancholy in their male protagonists brought on by severe emotional trauma. These depictions differ from the exacerbated caricatures examined in the previous chapter by being rooted in tragic taxonomy. As the plays progress, these feelings intensify and saturate the plays, until they form a lasting emotional imprint. It is through this process that the treatment of comic melancholy in Shakespearean drama undertakes its last permutation.

Taking Russ McDonald's contention that "the verbal obscurity and poetic difficulty of [Shakespeare's] late style" reveals an "increasingly sophisticated way of thinking about the world [and] a stylistic manifestation of his ever-developing view of human experience,"[479] I maintain that it is within late Shakespeare that comic melancholy reaches the apex of its refinement. I thus suggest that representations of comic melancholy prove simultaneously less precise in their interplay with plot structures, generic conventions, and linguistic underpinnings, yet more forceful in their overall affective impact. The drastic shifts that

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[479] Russ McDonald, *Shakespeare's Late Style*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006, 32.

transpire in late Shakespearean works can be understood as a form of dramatic impressionism, as a conscious sacrifice of a sharper dramatic outlining for the sake of a softer emotional brushing.[480] The elusiveness with which this process transpires somewhat obfuscates a reading of comic melancholy in late works, since the issue is seldom addressed directly. The lingering sense of melancholy that characterizes these plays is not uttered on stage but *felt*. Its effects reside in the liminal crevices; the non-said, the unstaged. It is to be found between the words spoken, in the lengthy temporal gaps the plays depict, in the powerful emotional aftermaths of their traumatic events, as well as in a successful resistance to the erosion of such tragic considerations. Simply put, the plays discussed in this chapter create emotional *tableaux* that fluctuate incessantly between comic and tragic axes. Within these powerful emotional portraits, melancholy emerges as the most discernible feature, one that problematizes the seemingly celebratory conclusions of these works.

All in the Family: *Pericles* and the Return of Comic Melancholy

When David Bevington refers to *Pericles* as a "deceptively simple play,"[481] he not only attests to its maligned critical afterlife, due mainly to its collaborative authorship with George Wilkins, but he underscores the play's often overlooked dramatic potential as well.[482] This

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[480] Parallels between Shakespearean drama and painting have been established before, notably by Virginia Vaughan, who argues that "Shakespeare's art is infinitely richer [than painting] because it combines the visual and the verbal. Shakespeare is painter and poet at once," "Shakespeare's Perspective Art," in *Perspective: Art, Literature, Participation*, eds. Mark Neuman and Michael Payne, Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1986, 33. See also Judith Dundas, "The Refusal to Paint: Shakespeare's Poetry of Place," *Comparative Drama* 23.4 (1989-1990): 331-343, where she claims that "it is not only Shakespeare's stage which is "open," but his language, allowing us, his audience, to participate in the creation of the lifelike image," 342. Neither critic, however, establishes the connections made in this chapter.
[481] Bevington, "Pericles," *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* updated 4th ed. Ed. David Bevington, New York: Longman, 1997, 1398-1433, 1398.
[482] Critics have long debated the extent of Shakespeare's participation in *Pericles*, usually pointing to the fact that the play was not included in the 1623 Folio. Though debates still occur, the critical consensus is that George

chapter considers *Pericles* as a significantly Shakespearean delineation of the interplay

between melancholy, temporality, and the various romantic tropes characteristic of late

works.[483] In doing so, I echo critics such as Leah Scragg, who perceives the play as embedded

within the prose romance tradition. For Scragg, the play is "firmly located from the outset

within the framework of romance, the action distanced from the audience by a medieval

narrator who is at pains to assert the antiquity of the tale he has come to pass."[484] This

particular understanding of the play, as a dramatic catalyst that lays out the groundwork for the

more exhaustive developments of comic melancholy that are to follow, also suggests the

centrality of time in heightening the emotional impact. While *Pericles*' titular protagonist

suffers from melancholic woes throughout his quest, the feeling is magnified by the fourteen

years during which he believes his family to be lost. The emotional ambiguity that surrounds

Pericles' eventual reunion with his wife and daughter speaks to the lingering effects of

melancholy within the play. The brief climactic scene cannot alleviate the sorrowful concerns

that were exacerbated by the lengthy temporal breach that divides the play. The sense of lost

opportunity that emanates from the fourteen-year gap is crucial to the development of a final

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Wilkins is responsible for the play's first nine scenes (roughly the first two acts), while Shakespeare wrote the remainder of the play. See Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays,* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002, 291-332, for an extensive discussion of the play's collaborative nature. As Vickers points out, the play is also generally thought of as Shakespearean due to the belief of many scholars that, despite marked grammatical and stylistic differences, Shakespeare somehow revised the bulk of the play. As early as the 18th century, Vickers writes, the critic George Steevens had remarked that "although Shakespeare's hand may be visible in several places, Shakespeare is not the 'original fabricator' of the play, but only its 'mender,' having added some 'partial graces to improve it,'" 292. Vickers quotes from George Steevens' "Notes on *Pericles*," in *Supplement to the 1778 edition of Shakespeare* by Samuel Johnson and George Stevens, ed. Edmond Malone, 2 vols. London, 1780. For an account of Wilkins' maligned critical history, see McMullan, 92-93. See also David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare and the Book*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2001, 64-65, for a discussion of the debate surrounding *Pericles*' omission from the first Folio.

[483] To put it another way, as John Gillies writes, "It is quite possible that Shakespeare discovered what would become the formula for the other plays in the process of writing this play," "Place and Space in Three Late Plays," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Volume IV: The Poems, The Problem Comedies, The Late* Plays, eds. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, 175-193, 179.

[484] Leah Scragg, *Shakespeare's Alternative Tales*, New York: Longman, 1996, 127.

melancholic sentiment. In *Pericles*, as in all late plays, comic melancholy resides in the unsaid, in what is to be found in emotional aftertaste and wasted potentialities.

The play's focus on temporality comes across from its onset, when Old Gower, the play's otherworldly chorus, appears in the Prologue, to "sing a song that old was sung" (1). His speech underscores the power that ancient stories seemingly possess in captivating audiences:

> From ashes ancient Gower is come,
> Assuming man's infirmities
> To glad your ear and please your eyes.
> It hath been sung at festivals,
> On ember eves and holly-ales;
> And lords and ladies in their lives
> Have read it for restoratives.
> The purchase is to make men glorious,
> *Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius* (2-10).

For Scragg, the opening lines are representative of the play's more general championing of antiquated tales, embodied in the Latin maxim: "the older a good thing is, the better."[485] As a figure of the English literary past, Gower embodies the emotional gravitas that the play seeks to attach to ancient artefacts and, by consequence, to its own dramatic content.[486] He acts as the play's temporal agent, the one who "stand i'th' gaps to teach you, / The stages of our story" (IV, iv.8-9), hovering on its fringes as a bridge between characters and audience, and moving the play along in short expositional interventions. This opening speech thus positions past histories as highly valuable, suggesting their inherent appeal to early modern audiences. While this can be understood as a pre-emptive justification for the play's classical setting, the

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[485] "The stories to which Renaissance writers turned to secure the attention of their audiences," she writes, "were not original compositions, but were drawn in the main form a substantial literary stock, itself a hybrid of classical material, medieval romance, and Italian novella. Tales were valued not for their novelty, but for their antiquity, and had frequently undergone a long process of adaptation in the course of their evolution," 2.
[486] As McMullan remarks, the proximity of late plays such as *Pericles* to *King Lear* renders them implicitly old. In other words, the association "operates to import into the late plays the imprimatur of old age," 313.

idea alludes to the temporal liberties that *Pericles* indulges in, an elasticity that accentuates the immateriality of the play's melancholic afterthought. This insistence on remembering the past is thus vital. It attests to Time's ability to intensify passions and actually impress emotions onto certain events. The passage also intimates the play's ability to heal man's infirmities. In a sense, it encapsulates one of the late plays' salient features: the attempt to restore characters to a state of welfare following a lengthy and traumatic separation. Gower's praise of a return to the old and its restorative qualities concomitantly foreshadows the culmination of Pericles' ordeal and the eventual reunion with his family.[487]

Pericles first exhibits melancholy following his return from Antioch, where an attempt to win the hand of a princess uncovers an incestuous relationship between her and King Antiochus. Initially, Pericles' affliction can be attributed to the overwhelming malaise that his discovery of such a vice provokes upon his return home. Distraught by the fatal predicament that his discovery has placed him in, Pericles wonders

> Why should this change of thoughts,
> This sad companion, dull-eyed melancholy,
> Be my so used a guest as not an hour
> In the day's glorious walk or peaceful night,
> The tomb where grief should sleep, can breed me quiet?
> Here pleasures court mine eyes, and mine eyes shun them,
> …
> Yet neither pleasure's art can joy my spirits,
> Nor yet the other's distance comfort me.
> Then it is thus: the passions of the mind,
> That have their first conception by misread,
> Have after-nourishment and life by care;
> And what was first but fear what might be done
> Grows elder now, and cares it be not done (I, ii. 2-7; 10-16).

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[487] As Scragg writes elsewhere, Gower's opening lines "testify to the value of the tale that the drama presents, and its continued bearing upon the lives of successive generations. The occasions on which the story has been related are also significant in relation to this assertion of worth," *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales: Recurrent Plot Motifs in Shakespearean Drama*, New York: Longman: 1992, 191-192.

Beyond his concern that Antiochus will murder him in order to protect his secret, Pericles'

melancholy evolves into a more general weariness as the passage progresses. Fear "grows

elder" into melancholy, which subsequently deprives him of vitality. While some critics

identify this passage as a key example of the play's larger concern with sin and virtue,[488] John

Gillies proves sceptical of the degree to which Pericles indulges in melancholic fancies

following his escape from Antioch. According to him, "while fear of Antioch is perfectly

rational in the circumstances, the tendency to reflective melancholy is morbid, hypochondrial,

and excessive to dramatic needs."[489] Echoing Gillies' doubts, some critics have pointed to a

parallel between Pericles' disgust of incest and Hamlet's similar uneasiness regarding his

mother's hasty remarrying, noting each character's propensity for melancholy.[490] Yet,

Pericles' melancholy, unlike Hamlet's, is not the shrouded marker of a budding interiority.

Despite critical qualms as to its genuineness, his malaise is grounded in concrete torments.

This last fact also differentiates it from other comic characters who suffer under a sometimes

nebulous melancholy such as Antonio in *Merchant*. Rather than urge him to abandon such

woeful humour, his counsellor Helicanes expresses sympathy and concern (I, ii.63-64).

Pericles' fear that Antiochus will bring war to Tyre, delineates the both the cause and

symptoms of his affliction. As he explains to Helicanus, melancholy draws "sleep out of mine

eyes, blood from my cheeks, / [and] Musings into my mind, with thousand doubts" (I, ii. 98-

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[488] Cyrus Hoy maintains that Pericles' misadventure in Antioch brings about melancholy because the character "is brought face to face with the reality of evil," *The Hyacinth Room: Investigation into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy & Tragicomedy,* New York: Knopf, 1964, 271.

[489] Gillies, 182. In a footnote, Gillies explains that "this scene has been thought so odd by Philip Edwards and F. D. Hoeniger as to reflect textual corruption … Even allowing for the reconstruction, however, Pericles' emotional self-absorption is remarkable," 191 (note 6).

[490] See G. Wilson Knight, "The Writing of *Pericles*," 78-113, 82; C. L. Barber and Richard Wheeler, "Excerpts from 'The Masked Neptune,'" 147-163, 150; and Janet Adelman, "Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body: the Return to Origins in *Pericles*," 184-190, 185. All appear in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele, New York: Garland, 2000.

99). The description moves progressively inward, from the eyes, to the bloodstream, and, eventually, to his mental faculties, suggesting the totalizing force of his affectation. Helicanus quickly proposes a remedy, advising him to

> Go travel for a while,
> Till that his rage and anger be forgot,
> Or till the Destinies do cut his thread of life.
> Your rule direct to any; if to me,
> Day serves not light more faithful than I'll be (I, ii. 108-112).

Helicanus' idea infers the assuaging powers of time. Implied in his recommendation is the notion that Antiochus' fury might eventually lessen and that travelling might also alleviate feelings of melancholy.[491] Pericles' initial sorrows thus serve as catalysts, sparking the maritime journey that structures the subsequently episodic dramatic development.[492] This initial bout of melancholy becomes emotional baggage for him to bear.[493]

From then on, melancholy becomes Pericles' dominant feature as he undertakes a series of adventures. His first destination, Tarsus, certainly suits his temperament. The scene opens with Cleon and Dionyza sadly deploring the state of their city:

> CLEON. My Dionyza, shall we rest us here
>   And, by relating tales of others' griefs,
>   See if 'twill teach us to forget our own?
> DIONYZA. That were to blow at fire in hope to quench it,

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[491] Though contradictory opinions existed, travel was commonly thought to be an efficient cure for melancholy. Burton writes that "no better physic for a melancholy man than change of air and variety of places, to travel abroad and see fashions" II, 67. Note also Autolycus, in *The Winter's Tale*, informing the shepherd and his son that King Polixenes is "gone / Aboard a new ship, to purge melancholy and air / Himself; for if thou be'st capable of things serious, / Thou must know the King is full of grief" (IV, iv. 767-770). Interestingly, Burton later mentions that travel is essentially forbidden to a king, who must maintain "his state … in order not to make his royal dignity cheap," II, 149.

[492] Maurice Hunt frames the melancholy that afflicts Pericles in labour-related terms, explaining that "the knowledge of evil freezes him in melancholy idleness. This physical idleness," he adds, "however, contrasts with the profound stir of his passions," *Shakespeare's Labored Art: Stir, Work, and the Late Plays*, New York: Peter Lang, 1995, 74.

[493] Jeannie Grant Moore writes that "the action of the play seems to suggest that as Pericles moves on from place to place, he carries the emotional burden that he has acquired at Antioch," "Riddled Romance: Kingship and Kinship in *Pericles*," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 57.1 (2003): 33-48, 38.

> For who digs hills because they do aspire
> Throws down one mountain to cast up a higher.
> O my distressed lord, even such our griefs are;
> Here they are but felt, and seen with mischief's eyes,
> But like to groves, being topped, they higher rise (I, iv. 1-9).

The profound sense of sorrow that they communicate is vaguely reminiscent of the opening

The Merchant of Venice's final act, where newlyweds Lorenzo and Jessica recall sorrowful

tales of tragic love to one another (V, i. 1-24). Unlike in *Merchant*, however, there is no need

to relate classic tales of woes here since, as Dionyza explains, their personal grief exceeds all

others;

Cleon's response echoes her despair:

> Our tongues our sorrows do sound deep our woes
> Into the air; our eyes do weep, till lungs
> Fetch breath that may proclaim them louder, that,
> If heaven slumber while their creatures want,
> They may awake their helps too comfort them.
> I'll then discourse our woes, felt several years,
> And, wanting breath to speak, help me with tears (I, iv.13-19).[494]

The speech communicates an overwhelming sense of sorrow that will come to parallel the

catatonic state of melancholy that later afflicts Pericles. The city's unhappy situation,

grounded in the concrete concerns that famine and poverty bring about, is rapidly solved by

the arrival of Pericles, who feeds the people of Tarsus with the victuals aboard his ship (I, iv.

90-95). Neither this triumph, nor the adulation of Tarsus' citizens, fails to cure him of his

melancholic fancies however. When word reaches him that Antiochus' assassins are searching

for him, he promptly takes his leave.

Pericles embarks once again on a maritime journey where, caught in a violent storm,

he ends up shipwrecked on the shores of Pentapolis. The misadventures at sea fulfil two

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[494] Cleon's discourse of their griefs echoes Egeon's opening tale of misfortune at the onset of *The Comedy of Errors*, and his promise "to speak griefs unspeakable" (I, i. 33).

functions within the play. On the one hand, they further solidify the play's connection to the romantic tradition. As Helen Cooper argues, the motif of the sea voyage is crucial to the genre of romance, since it facilitates, if not dictates, the tropes of victimhood and self-transformation that usually characterize its protagonists. "The transition to the ship from the chivalric quest, the quest on horseback," she concludes, "marks a transition to a new level of experience altogether: one in which the journey constitutes the adventure in itself."[495] This idea suits Pericles, whose melancholic longing becomes an emotional tether uniting the otherwise disjointed locales to which he travels. On the other hand, the play's reliance on the sea's destructive powers to dictate the hero's quest also reiterates the Shakespearean comic motif of self-discovery through dislocation, where maritime calamites uproot characters and thrust them into unknown lands.[496] Caught in the storm, Pericles links his sorrow to the powerful natural phenomenon by proclaiming:

> Alas, the seas hath cast me on the rocks,
> Washed me from shore to shore, and left me breath
> Nothing to think on but ensuing death.
> Let it suffice the greatness of your powers
> To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes,
> And, having thrown him from your watery grave,
> Here to have death in peace is all he'll crave (II, i.5-11).

The passage reiterates the association of water with the gloomy realms of death and melancholy that was prevalent in plays such as *The Comedy of Errors* and *Merchant of Venice*. Pericles deplores his powerlessness if the face of the ocean's might that left him shipwrecked. Yet, the play does not depict the process by which a melancholic character and a

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[495] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004, 135. See the chapter "Providence and the sea: 'No Tackle, Sail, nor Mast,'" for a complete discussion of the trope of maritime voyages, 106-136.
[496] *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night* all communicate maritime anxieties of some sort.

foreign setting alter one another. Unlike Antipholus of Syracuse in Ephesus, Viola in Illyria, or even Rosalind and Orlando in Arden Forest, Pericles does not remain in one location long enough for such dramatic osmosis to transpire. By eschewing a particular dramatic premise, his melancholy remains unmitigated.

The pattern would repeat itself in Pentapolis if not for the intervention of fishermen, who retrieve Pericles' armour and direct him to the court of their king, "the good Simonides" (II, i. 102),[497] where he enters a tourney to win the hand of the Princess Thaisa. After an impressive victory, Pericles falls back into a stupor: "Yon knight doth sit too melancholy" (II, iii. 56), Simonides remarks to his daughter during the celebratory feast. While he initially perceives the behaviour as disrespectful, "as if the entertainment in our court," he supposes, "hath not a show might countervail his worth," (II, ii. 57-58), the sovereign proves more compassionate once he learns of Pericles's misadventures, eventually vowing to "awake him from his melancholy" (II, ii. 93).[498] Pericles' mood improves as he falls in love with Thaisa and Simonides grants his blessing to their union (II, v. 31-85).

The play undertakes its first temporal jump as Gower relates the nuptial celebrations, the conception of a child, and the ensuing months of marital bliss, until news is brought to Pericles that he must return to Tyre and quell political turmoil. As Thaisa and he sail towards Tyre, another storm erupts, provoking her into an early labour that ultimately claims her life.

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[497] This brief encounter underlines an aforementioned feature of late plays, where comic elements are focalized within secondary, lower-class characters. The fishermen's enthusiastic repartee—"how well this honest mirth becomes their labor" (II, i. 92), Pericles exclaims upon espying them—offers a stark contrast to his own flaccid melancholy.

[498] As several critics mention, his return to melancholy might suggest that the encounter with Simonides and his daughter brings back memories of Antiochus' palace. McDonald notes that "the source of *Pericles* gives Simonides a wife, which Shakespeare seems to have omitted to sharpen the comparison and contrast between the two kings and their daughters," "Fashion: Shakespeare, and Beaumont, and Fletcher," 161. In any case, the connotation would at least be established in the audience's mind, since one of the knights participating in the tourney hails from Antioch (II, i. 28-30).

After throwing her corpse overboard at the urging of superstitious sailors (III, i. 47-49),

Pericles is left with an infant daughter, Marina, whom the nurse presents as "all that is left

living of your queen" (III, i.20). As a paradoxical symbol of the purity of life and the horrors

of death, the birth of Marina embodies the dramatic nexus where tragic and comic elements

converge.[499] It marks a pivotal moment in the play which sparks a multiplicity of departures

from the tragic auspices of its first half. Following her birth, the focus shifts away from the

expounding of traumatic events and towards their resolution, away from Pericles and towards

Marina, and, more importantly, away from a physical sense of melancholic sorrow and

towards a more impressionistic representation of the emotion.[500] Pericles, who must attend to

political affairs with haste, elects to leave the child with Cleon and Dionyza in nearby Tarsus,

with hopes that they will "give her princely training, / That she may be mannered as she is

born" (III, iii. 17-18). In one fell swoop, he thus loses wife, daughter, and any sense of

dramatic respite he had acquired to this point.

Witnessing his family being torn asunder in a fashion reminiscent to the one Egeon

describes at the onset of *The Comedy of Errors*, Pericles seems likely to plummet into

melancholy. The play destabilises the trauma associated with his loss, however, by depicting

Thaisa's resurrection in the very next scene (III, ii), undercutting the audience's reception of

Pericles' grief. As her coffin washes ashore in Ephesus, her corpse is brought to Lord

Cerimon, who miraculously awakens her. As a figure embodying medicine, religion, and

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[499] The character of Marina, whose name translates into "of the sea," thus infers strong maritime connotations, mirroring the play's larger development of such notions.
[500] This also marks the conclusion of Wilkins' portion of the play, and the beginning of Shakespeare's participation.

magic, the character of Cerimon, in actuality, does not do much to restore Thaisa to life.[501] He

initially refers to the process of her revitalization as one he witnessed previously.

> Death may usurp on nature many hours,
> And yet the fire of life kindle again
> The o'erpressed spirits. I heard if an Egyptian
> That had nine hours lain dead,
> Who was by good appliance recovered (III, ii. 84-88).

Though the comment invites a certain suspension of disbelief, it nevertheless points to the fact

that Thaisa might not have been dead to begin with.[502] Though Pericles remains unaware of

this occurrence, her eventual awakening, lessens the dramatic weight granted to his

melancholy. It foreshadows an eventual reunion of the family that once again echoes the

premise found in *The Comedy of Errors*.[503] The parallel becomes even more striking once

Thaisa enters the Temple of Diana (III, iv.), becoming the Emilia to Pericles' Egeon.[504]

The prologue to the fourth act reinforces the shift away from Pericles and towards his

daughter, as Gower urges the audience "to Marina bend your mind, / Whom our fast-growing

scene must find / At Tarsus" (IV. 0. 5-7). Here, the play undertakes its most significant

temporal displacement, looking ahead fourteen years, a process through which, Cooper argues,

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[501] The uncertainty of Cerimon's powers recalls another seminal romantic trope, that of faulty or unsuccessful magic. See Cooper, 137-172, for a discussion of magic as a problematic trope of romance.

[502] Hoeniger explains that since "the play's story is highly romantic throughout and includes many improbable incidents, one readily accepts the conceptions of a physician-priest endowed with magical powers, and the miracle of bringing a person recently dead back to life. Yet that description of how we experience the scene requires strong qualifications. Cerimon's speech on the art of medicine includes no hint of magical powers," 270.

[503] Both plays show particular concerns with the notions of division, loss of self and unification of the familial unit. See Amanda Piesse, "Space for the Self: Place, Persona, and Self-Projection," in *Renaissance Configurations: Voices / Bodies / Space / 1580-1690*, ed. Gordon McMullan, Basingstoke: Palgrave: 1998, 151-170.

[504] The scenes in Ephesus also echo the vision of the city professed by Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors*: "They say this town is full of cozenage, / As nimble jugglers that deceive the eye, / Dark working sorcerers that change the mind, / Soul-killing witches that deform the body, / Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks, / And many such like liberties of sin (I, ii. 97-102). In both plays, characters that are presumed lost or dead are brought back to life in Ephesus.

"a sprawl of place and time, and the irrelevance of human intention," is supplanted by "the precision of its symmetries of structure."[505] The play's spectral sense of melancholy emerges out of the interrogations that such a displacement creates. The sizeable length of time, dramatically necessary to render Marina of marriageable age, nevertheless suggests a wistful sense of lost opportunity. It interrogates Pericles' apparent failure to seek out his daughter and, conversely, Thaisa's decision not to return to her husband during this time. The substantial break heightens the emotional trauma of their separation to the point where the climactic reunion will not fully amend it, allowing a melancholic longing to ultimately linger on.

Much like her birth, Marina's life is characterized by undertones of death and maritime wanderings. The panegyric she delivers for her nurse Lychorida (IV, i. 14-21) is intruded upon by Leonine, an assassin hired by the spiteful Cleon and Dionyza, who believe that her fairness overshadows that of their own daughter. Though criticism has sometime taken her utmost purity as evidence of a lack of character depth, [506] her lengthy exchange with the murderer showcases the compassion and virtue that will later prove instrumental in her cure of "heavy Pericles" (5.0 22). These traits also channel resourceful comic heroines who successfully cast off melancholic demeanours. In this sense, her character is similar to Portia, Rosalind, or Viola, in the way in which she reacts to her melancholic longings. Within the late plays, this attribute is redirected within father-daughter dyads, where the daughters play a crucial role in 'curing' their fathers, while embodying a more spectral sense of melancholy. Before Leonine can carry out his tasks, Marina is kidnapped by pirates and sold to a brothel in Mytilene,

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[505] Cooper, 65.

[506] David Skeele mentions that "any consideration of the character of Marina is inextricably intertwined with [two] scenes, as most twentieth century discussion of her involves her symbolic connection to the incest scene [and] most earlier discussions revolve around the horror of seeing her in a brothel," in "*Pericles* in Criticism and Production: A Brief History," *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele, New York: Garland, 2000, 1-33, 18.

escaping one predicament only to be entangled in another. The scenes in which Marina opposes her dreaded fate in Mytilene with pious courage once again attest to her dramatic resolve.[507] She proves almost defiant in the face of her captors, who identify a considerable financial value in her maidenhood. Here, the character's moral and rhetorical abilities blossom as she begins reforming the unsavoury patrons of the brothel in which she is confined.[508] Chief among these conversions is the one of Lysimachus, lord of Mytilene, whom Marina subjugates through eloquent appeals to morality. Marina's reform of Lysimachus positions her as the eventual vessel of Pericles' redemption. This reading proves concordant with those of critics such as Anne Barton and Amanda Piesse, who identify Marina as a dramatic conduit for some of the play's larger implications pertaining to morality and familial unity.[509] I particularly concur with Piesse in this regard, since her notion that "chief female characters" such as Marina "are allowed by the playwright to appear to construct themselves through their speech in opposition to the familiar, reaching against the stereotypes provided by the male characters in the drama"[510] offers a remarkable synthesis of the gendered contrast that develops within late Shakespearean melancholy. It is Marina's stoic confidence in her self-knowledge that allows Pericles to eventually recognize her in the final act.

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[507] They also continue the process through which secondary characters provide the play's comical output, as the exchanges between Pander, Bawd, and Bolt echo the light-heartedness found earlier in speeches by the fishermen (II, i).

[508] Marina's eloquence contrasts her father's refusal to speak, underlining the ongoing gendered division, where female characters prove far less passive in the face of dramatic hardship.

[509] Barton contends that "Shakespeare appears to be using Marina less as a character than as a kind of medium, through which the voice of the situation can be made to speak," "Leontes and the Spider: Language and Speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays," in *Essays, mainly Shakespearean*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994, 161-181, 168.

[510] Piesse, 154. "Marina," she later adds, "insists on a single construction of her identity despite her continual spatial and social dislocation. She constructs her identity through her knowledge of herself," 168.

Upon learning of his daughter's apparent demise (IV, iv),[511] the powerful turmoil of Pericles' melancholic chimeras leaves him dishevelled and disconnected from the world around him, to the point that he can no longer express his own sense of sorrow. The task falls to Gower, who explains that Pericles is

> In sorrow all devoured,
> With sighs shot through and biggest tears o'ershowered,
> … He swears
> Never too wash his face nor cut his hairs;
> He puts on sackcloth, and to sea. He bears
> A tempest, which is mortal vessel tears,
> And yet he rides it out (IV, iv. 25-31).

Pericles thus impresses physical evidence onto grief as he goes on to drift endlessly and melancholically on the world's waters.[512] The excessive mourning practices listed by Gower recall Olivia's similarly absurd vows in *Twelfth Night*. If anything, Pericles' appear even more ridiculous given the audience's awareness of both Thaisa and Marina's whereabouts. In having previously depicted both Thaisa's resurrection and Marina's escape from Tarsus, the play foreshadows a remedy to his sorrow. Yet, both the arduousness of his cure and the ambiguities surrounding the family's reunion in the final act will suggest the play's inability to restore a mirthful tone.

Pericles's ship docks in Mytilene at the beginning of Act Five, where Helicanes meets with Lysimachus and describes his grieving king as

> A man who for this three months hath not spoken
> To anyone, nor taken sustenance
> But to prorogue his grief.
> ...
> This was

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[511] Cleon and Dionyza make him believed that she died of natural causes (IV, iii. 10-20).
[512] Likewise, his desire to embark at sea and ride out this emotional tempest also echoes the passivity with which other melancholic characters (Antonio, Antipholus of Syracuse) describe themselves in references to water imagery.

> A goodly person,
> Till the disaster that, one mortal night,
> Drove him to this (V, i. 25-27; 36-38).

Upon listening to Helicanes, Lysimachus solicits Marina's help in the matter, warranting that she could unshackle him from the catatonic torpor in which he finds himself and "make a battery through his defeaned ports, / Which now are midway stopped," (V. i. 48-49).[513]

The recognition scene between Marina and Pericles thus affirms her redemptive abilities. Her speech simultaneously eradicates his grief while triggering the pronounced wistfulness engendered by their reunion after such a prolonged absence. During their encounter, Pericles struggles considerably to comprehend what rapidly becomes obvious to everyone else. As Raphael Lyne puts it, the scene "is an endurance test [during which] the abject king moves painstakingly through the process of working out that the girl in front of him is the daughter he thought had died."[514] While this difficulty can be attributed to the heavy sorrow felt by Pericles, who believes Marina to be dead, it also underscores the way in which melancholy facilitates Marina's connection to Pericles. She initially reaches him by appealing to a shared sense of sorrow:

> I am a maid, my lord, that ne'er before
> Invited eyes, but have been gazèd on
> Like a comet. She speaks,
> My lord, that may be hath endured a grief
> Might equal yours, if both were justly weighed (V, i. 87-91).

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[513] Notice the nautical imagery of Lysimachus' speech, which reinforces Marina's connection to maritime matters. To that effect, Scragg describes the lengthy episode during which Marina frees Pericles form his catatonic state of grief as a scene in which Shakespeare "fuses the recovery of individuals with the ebb and flow of the sea, a cycle of death and rebirth, and the beneficence of the gods," *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales*, 180.

[514] Raphael Lyne, *Shakespeare's Late Work,* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007, 58. From Lyne's perspective, Pericles' recognition scene is far more tedious than Leontes' or Cymbeline's.

It is her profession of having endured grief to a similar than Pericles that piques his interest.

He encourages her to further relate the hardship she has endured as a way to validate her

melancholic credentials. He thus invites her to

> Tell thy story.
> If thine, considered, prove the thousand part
> Of my endurance, thou art a man, and I
> Have suffered like a girl. Yet thou dost look
> Like Patience gazing on Kings' graves and smiling
> Extremity out of act (V, i. 137-142).

Once their grief appears proportionate, allusions to Marina's parentage (V, i. 161-166)

provides the other necessary link for their reunion. In her answers to his manifold questions,

Marina slowly guides Pericles towards recognition, until the mention of Thaisa's name

completes the cycle.[515] Overcome with emotion, Pericles implores Helicanus to

> Give me a gash, put me to present pain,
> Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
> O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
> And drown me with their sweetness (V, i. 196-199),

The request echoes the physicality with which he articulated earlier extremes of passions. This

strange desire for pain also recalls the more troublesome notions unearthed through the

recognition scene. The fourteen years during which Pericles never sought his daughter

undercuts the joy with which they greet each other. The scene depicts the reunion of two

characters who, in a sense, have never met; Pericles left a newborn in Tarsus and encounters a

grown woman in Mytilene.

This situation injects a sense of uneasiness into the play's conclusion, exacerbated by

the fact that Pericles' and Thaisa's relationship exists under similarly liminal terms. Such

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[515] Jeffrey Masten writes that "the efficiency of Pericles' self-identification serves to point up the complexity of Marina's (it has required a scene, not a line), and the mother's name is the final piece in a network of interlocking questions," *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and sexualities in Renaissance Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, 87.

concerns are not made explicit in their reunion, and I would not go as far as to suggest that

their exuberant joy upon finding each other should be conceived of as disingenuous.

Nevertheless their reunion is fraught with anxieties that were signposted throughout the play,

from Pericles' intermittent melancholy, to their unaccounted failure to seek each other out.

Following divine intervention by the goddess Diana, Pericles and Thaisa are reunited through

a similar relating of family history (V, iii. 1-12) and the family torn apart by maritime disaster

is reformed, augmented even, by the impending nuptials of Marina to Lysimachus. Pericles

even discards the physical symptoms of his affectation, vowing to "clip to form; / And what

this fourteen years no razor touched, / To grace your marriage day, I'll beautify" (V, iii. 76-

78). As several critics remark, this ending is complicated by a slew of concerns, ranging from

the disquieting image engendered by Pericles' urging of Thaisa to "come, [and] be buried / A

second time within these arms!" (V, iii. 45-45) to the more disturbing implications inferred by

the union of Marina and Lysimachus.[516] Despite professions of reform, the virtue of

Lysimachus's character remains ambiguous. Much like Pericles and Thaisa's reunion, his

marriage to Marina carries a considerably sobering sense of melancholy in its potential for

disaster.[517]

Likewise, Gower's retrospective epilogue recalls the initial depravity of Antioch:

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[516] Caroline Bricks notes that, contrary to source material, the ending of Pericles makes no mention of future children for the reunited couple. The familial unit is restored, but seemingly halted," "Backsliding in Ephesus: Shakespeare's Diana and the Churching of Women," in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele, New York: Garland, 2000: 205-227,222. See also Marianne Novy "Multiple Parenting in *Pericles*," in *Pericles: Critical Essays*, ed. David Skeele, New York: Garland, 2000: 238-248 and Susan Gossett, "'You not your child well loving': Text and Family Structure in *Pericles*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Volume IV: The Poems, the Problem Comedies, Late Plays*, eds. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003: 348-364.

[517] Margaret Healy, who perceives an ongoing association between the character of Lysimachus and syphilis, argues that the dreaded possibility that Lysimachus might have contracted a venereal disease in the houses of ill-repute he visited, which he would pass on to Marina, lingers at the end of the play. For her, it furthers the trend found in the play where "irresponsible father-rulers are putting both the health of their offspring and the state in jeopardy," "*Pericles* and the Pox*," Shakespeare's Romances,* ed. Alison Thorne, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, 53-70, 61.

> In Antiochus and his daughter you have heard
> Of monstrous lust the due and just reward.
> In Pericles, his queen, and daughter seen,
> Although assailed with fortune fierce and keen,
> Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast,
> Led on by heaven, and crowned with joy at last (V, iii. 1-6).

Though the narrative declares 'joy at last,' the play's closing lines (V, iii. 97-104) detail the punishment that Cleon and Dionyza suffered at the hands of their own people, once word of their treachery spreads.[518] The epilogue fosters a tragic aftertaste that reinforces the similar emotional undercutting developed throughout the last act. More importantly, the play's ending does not forebear an eradication of the melancholy brought about by the play's timeframe. The fourteen-year breach in the characters' relationships and the misfortunes that befell them during that time cannot be overturned with a promise of renewed happiness, a fact indicated by the inherent anxieties of the final act. The episodic structure that characterizes *Pericles* limits the possibility for an extensive development melancholy, but its whispers are strong enough to persist. By the time Shakespeare turns to *The Winter's Tale*, the melancholic impressions that germinated throughout *Pericles* blossom to their full potential.

"In storm perpetual": Melancholic Afterthought in *The Winter's Tale*

In many regards, *The Winter's Tale* stands as the quintessential late Shakespearean play: it offers the starkest amalgamation of comic and tragic elements, a clear dramatic pivot from comedy to tragedy in its third act, and an emotionally-charged conclusion that challenges generic classification. As a solo-authored work, it also sidesteps qualms concerning collaborative practices in Shakespeare and, as a result, is often considered to mark the actual

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[518] This outcome proves similar to the one suffered by Antioch and his daughter (II, iv. 1-12) in that they represent the culmination of the play's ongoing concern with notions of divine wrath and retribution, where immoral characters are punished and virtuous ones rewarded.

beginning of Shakespeare's late phase.[519] In any case, its affinities with *Pericles*, particularly

its development of a similar sense of bittersweet melancholy that punctuates the play from

inception to conclusion, are undeniable. In *The Winter's Tale*, the melancholy of unresolved

conflict, of lingering emotional scars, and of insurmountable temporal distance reaches

dramatic maturity.

Despite its evident conflation of tragic and comic taxonomies, the play's unabashed

generic mingling often troubles critics, particularly those who argue that such a coalescence of

emotional antipodes creates considerable dramatic anxieties. More so than other late works,

the play has generated multiple elucidations of its paradoxical nature.[520] Ruth Nevo perhaps

said it best when she wrote that the play, "fissured by its oppositions of time, place, tempo,

mood, style, mode, and genre is bound by innumerable linkages and mirrorings; yet in it

tragedy will not absorb or synthesize comedy, nor comedy tragedy."[521] This fervent opposition

to generic unity partially accounts for the critical unease surrounding the play's emotional

makeup; ultimately, *The Winter's Tale*, neither fully comic not tragic, denies allegiance to

either side. This resistance, I argue, can be explained by the prevalence of melancholy and its

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[519] I refer here to readings of Shakespearean comedy such as Larry Champion's, which contends that Shakespeare experienced "a decade in the wilderness" in between *Twelfth Night* and plays such as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, *The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedy: A Study in Dramatic Perspective*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard UP, 1970, 97.

[520] Robert G. Hunter traces its heritage back to what he terms the comedy of forgiveness genre, where "hatred's conquest of the mind … sets of a chain reaction of consequent crimes which almost succeeds in permanently destroying an orderly, love-dominated world," "Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness in *The Winter's Tale*," in *The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, ed. Maurice Hunt, New York: Garland, 1996, 156-173, 161. Conversely, David Houston Wood contends that the play represents a "reverse tragedy, in that the moment of tragic insight (anagnorisis) occurs in the beginning of the play," "He Something Seems Unsettled": Melancholy, Jealousy, and Subjective Temporality in *The Winter's Tale*," *Renaissance Drama* 31 (2002): 185-213, 199.

[521] Ruth Nevo, *Shakespeare's Other Language*, New York: Methuen, 1987, 97. Nevo extends this idea by arguing that these "recurrences bind the contrasting structures, but they bind with a difference—as the suturing of a wound draws attention to the wound. They suggest the unstable asymmetry of a triad struggling, again and again, to right itself," 99.

status as one of the few dramatic elements that successfully navigate the play's diametrically opposite halves.

The Winter's Tale draws profusely from Robert Greene's *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time*. Indeed, the bulk of its dramatic premise is lifted from the prose romance, where King Pandosto, overtaken by a tremendous fit of jealousy, imprisons his wife and banishes his infant daughter Fawnia. After the tragic passing of his wife and son, Pandosto falls into inconsolable grief. Several years later, he encounters Fawnia, now a fair maid enamoured of young Dorastus. Unaware of her true identity, he initially woos her himself before her discovering her true identity. Pandosto is reunited with his soon-to-be-married daughter but, overcome with guilt and shame he ultimately slays himself.[522] Beyond providing a dramatic blueprint for Shakespeare's play, Green's tale offers a harrowing vision of the disastrous potential found at the core of *The Winter's Tale*'s. There is no possible redemption for Pandosto's jealousy. The romance's subtitle, "The Historie of Dorastus and Fawnia," shifts the narrative focus away from him from the onset, while the brief summary of the story in its introduction unmistakeably foretells its sorrowful conclusion.[523] The story's final moments, in which a grieving Fawnia and Dorastus travel to Bohemia with Pandosto's corpse "where, after they were sumptuously intombed, Dorastus ended his dayes in contended quiet,"[524] create a lasting tragic impression that bespeaks the story's destructive forces. Though *The Triumph of Time* develops merrier elements, the concluding episode unequivocally tilts the romance towards a melancholic axis. *The Winter's Tale* moves away from such unadulterated tragedy

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[522] Robert Greene, "Pandosto: The Triumph of Time." In *The Descent of Euphues: Three Elizabethan Romance Stories*, Ed. James Winny, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957: 67-121.

[523] "Wherein Pandosto (furiously incensed by a causeless jealousie), procureth the death of his most loving and loyall wife, and his own sorrow and misery," 67.

[524] Greene, 121.

by yoking together comic and tragic tropes in a more calibrated way, and thereby avoiding a clear endorsement of either tone. The first half brings about the splintering of Leontes' family, through jealousy, anger, and death. The play's later acts, which centre on Leontes' daughter Perdita, bring about a tearful family reunion but, in doing so, channel earlier tragic events, now exacerbated by the temporal distancing that divides the play. I thus posit that *The Winter's Tale* follows the pattern initiated in *Pericles*, where the overwhelming melancholy of a male character is supplanted by an immaterial sense of sorrow that his daughter comes to embody. This association ultimately undermines the play's resolution, framing its climax in a masterfully impressionistic melancholic *tableau*.

The play opens with an insistent praising of the bonds of amity that unite the kingdoms of Sicilia and Bohemia and their respective rulers, Leontes and Polixenes. Thus, the premise situates the play "where many of Shakespeare's earlier comedies have ended [in that] friendship, no longer love's rival, has found a spacious if subordinate place for itself within the domain of marriage."[525] Yet, the introductory scenes concurrently reveal underlying tensions within these relationships, or at the very least, the potential for catastrophic separation that they carry. Archidamus suggests early on that "there is not in the world either / Malice or matter to alter" the kings' cordial relationship (I, i. 33-34), throwing down the dramatic gauntlet for the rest of the play by pre-emptively attesting to the power of the woes that will subsequently befall the characters. Likewise, Archidamus and Camillo's subsequent praise of Leontes' son Mamilius foreshadows the grief that will torment both king and kingdom upon

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[525] Barton, "Leontes and the Spider: Language and Speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays," 162.

the latter's death.[526] Both instances serve to surreptitiously amplify the emotional trauma of

the ensuing scene, where Leontes infamously falls prey to a perplexing fit of jealousy.

Though it begins with mutual commendations of friendship and hospitality, Polixenes'

request to depart at the onset of the second scene betrays fears that his extended welcome in

Sicily has created political uncertainty in Bohemia:

> I am questioned by my fears of what may chance
> Or breed upon our absence, that may blow
> No sneaping winds at home to make us say
> 'This is put forth too truly.' Besides, I have stayed
> To tire your royalty (I, ii. 11-15).

Anxieties about what may "breed" back home during Polixenes' absence foreshadows the

apprehension with which Leontes will come to behold notions of cuckoldry and progeny later

in the scene, an idea reinforced by the fact that the visit has lasted nine months. It also alludes

to a more general concern that the Bohemian sovereign has somehow exhausted Leontes'

generosity. Within this context, the comment introduces the idea, as Michael Bristol suggests,

that the friendly conversation conceals "something much more than a routine exchange of

courtesies,"[527] namely, a more troubling relation between the two kings where temporality

looms predominantly. For Bristol, who perceives Leontes' jealousy as an offshoot of the

concerns surrounding the ethos of gift-giving, the scene characterizes the play's ongoing

contrast between classical and contemporary temporal perceptions. As he explains,

> the action of *The Winter's Tale* unfolds within a temporality both classical and
> contemporary in its semantic and social content. Viewed as a whole, moreover, the
> play seems equivocally situated between the narrative space-times of 'here and now'

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[526] "it is a gallant child," Camillo declares, "one that indeed, physics / The subjects, [and] make old hearts fresh," (I, i. 39-40).

[527] Michael Bristol, "In Search of the Bear: Spatiotemporal Form and the Heterogeneity of Economies in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.2 (Summer 1991): 145-167, 155.

and of 'once upon a time.' … The spatiotemporal heterogeneity of this play is now most often understood as a question of genre.[528]

This analysis is crucial to an understanding of the dramatic function of melancholy, since the ubiquity, elusiveness, and resiliency that characterize the emotion are largely predicated on Bristol's model of duelling temporality. Initially, its oscillation saddles the play with an aura of apprehensive inescapability in the wake of impending disaster. The exchange between Leontes and Polixenes embodies the aforementioned dyad of folkloric and current times; Polixenes' vague sense of uncertainty concerning the extensiveness of his stay is contrasted with Leontes' insistence that he remains in Sicily for one more day. Implied in Polixenes' desire to depart is an attempt to preserve the cordiality of his friendship with Leontes. I suggest that such concerns also play out generically. Time-wise, the play opens at a juncture where its underlying anxieties reach a breaking point, provoking an irrational crisis that stems from the strained comic underpinnings alluded to by Barton. Polixenes' stay in Sicily, with its excessive practices of congeniality, seemingly overexerts the play's comedic stock; the additional day Leontes requests turns out to be one too many. Essentially, *The Winter's Tale* begins as its comic structure collapses, and the breakdown manifests itself through Leontes' inexplicable jealousy. The competing temporal perceptions usher in a crisis whose magnitude allows for comic melancholy to subsequently suffuse the play. This predicament materializes in Leontes' sudden and catastrophic breakdown.

Leontes' jealousy erupts unexpectedly as he solicits his wife Hermione to join him in entreating Polixenes to remain in Sicily a while longer. In essence, he misinterprets her persuasions as evidence of adulterous betrayal. The swiftness with which his countenance transforms itself matches the linguistic and affective breakdowns he concurrently undergoes.

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[528] Bristol, "In Search of the Bear," 146.

This shift is evident in the chaotic speech in which a cluttered syntax provokes a simultaneous loss of grammatical and emotional accuracy. As he further slips into his jealous delirium, Leontes' speech turns increasingly towards the monosyllabic:

> Too hot, Too hot!
> To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.
> I have *tremor cordis* on me. My heart dances,
> But not for joy, not joy (I, ii. 108-111).[529]

Language is condensed as Leontes elides the condition of tremor cordis into the vision of a heart which "dances but not for joy," and, ultimately, into an emotional absence ("not joy"), rather than its converse feeling. As he further buckles under the increasing weight of emotional torment, this process intensifies with utterances such as "inch-thick, knee-deep, o'er head and ears a forked one!– / Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I / Play too" (I, ii. 186-188), which obfuscate the source of his jealousy while providing clear emotional snapshots of it.[530]

The play's failure to produce a satisfying cause for Leontes' sudden jealous rage has generated a substantial amount of critical interrogations.[531] David Houston Wood's engagement with the issue comes close to the understanding that this chapter proposes, by

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[529] Leontes' linguistic breakdown is also discernible in the polyptonic shift between "too" and "to" in the first two lines.

[530] For McDonald, these stylistic divergences relate to the larger dramatic potency of these plays. They are key features of the "narrative amplitude and structural looseness" that pervade late Shakespearean works, *Shakespeare's Late Style*, 38.

[531] Bristol remarks that Leontes' volatile emotional state offers no evidence of logical progression. For him, the character displays a "discontinuous sequence of fullblown affective states, such as friendship, jealousy, hostility, and so on, without any idea of a graduated sequence or evolution from one of these states to another," In Search of the Bear," 154. Neely suggests that Leontes' breakdown is symbolic of the way in which the play "delineates the complex interaction of 'affection,' language, and perception, suggesting how language may corrupt and divide feeling and seeing, but may also clarify and reconcile them," "*The Winter's Tale* and The Triumph of Speech," *The Winter's Tale: Critical* Essays, ed. Maurice Hunt, New York Garland, 1995, 243-25, 243. For Janet Adelman, Leontes stands for "the destructive logic of tragic masculinity itself" within the play's ongoing exploration of the anxieties that the pregnant female body creates, "Masculine Authority and the Maternal Body in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. Alison Thorne, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, 145-170, 149.

reading this scene as indicative of the play's reliance on humoural and physiological markers in order to convey emotional distress. In his view, Leontes'

> terminology points specifically to a subjective expression of the sudden onset of an illness that follows an early modern understanding of the nature of physical and psychological cause and effect within the humoral body. Further, Leontes' narration of his subjective bodily transformation from one humoral state into another can be seen to carry with it a commensurate psychological transformation, [which] itself conveys an analogous shift in the subject's impression of time.[532]

The reliance on humoural lexicology, and the frantic expressions of discomfort that results from it validates this interpretation. As in *Pericles,* the play depicts a more traditional, humoural melancholy in its male protagonist so as to heighten the contrast with the more ethereal form of the emotion it ultimately brings about. Yet, Leontes' affliction transcends both humoural and psychological interpretation in its dramatic implications. The crisis might begin under psycho-humoural terms, but it rapidly shifts away from such concepts. His breakdown affects the structure of *The Winter's Tale* as much as its characters and, as a result, melancholy cannot be purged by customary means. The affliction brings about a totalizing dramatic collapse, the irremediable effects of which are crucial to the intangible sense of melancholy that governs the second half of the play. Moreover, Houston Wood's idea that Leontes' transformation, anchored in melancholy, is produced "through emotions of nostalgic loss that stem from a troubled moment of intense self-reflection"[533] overlooks the suddenness with which it is communicated. Leontes is not afforded an adequate amount of time to convey his emotional turmoil. His descent into jealousy develops too suddenly to appear as the tragic exacerbation of a dramatic flaw.[534] The peculiarity of the king's behaviour stems from larger

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[532] Houston Wood, 190-191.
[533] Houston Wood, 187.
[534] The scene essentially depicts the bulk *of Othello*'s plot without any of its meticulous dramatic signposting.

rifts in the play's precarious conflation of tragic and comic taxonomies, an idea that Barbara

Mowat alludes to in her assertion that

> we see too little of Leontes in his normal state to be able to judge of his true character
> … Considering Shakespeare's usual practice of commenting on the virtues of his tragic
> heroes through the other characters in the play, it is significant that not once in the
> 'Leontes-story' does a character refer to Leontes' goodness, or single out any of his
> virtues for praise. Antigonus' recognition that Leontes is an essentially laughable
> character (II, i. 197-199), shocks us out of any tragic pity we might have felt for
> Leontes, and reminds us that the 'jealous husband' is, in fact, a stock comic
> character.[535]

Mowat's identification of jealousy as the scene's primary element of dissonance underlines the

ties to the comic taxonomy that such a character trait channels. It accurately points out that the

abruptness of Leontes' breakdown, on some level, negates the possibility of properly

explaining it *within this scene*. What remains undeniable is the impact the passions exerts on

the character. Beyond his suspicions of cuckoldry and juvenile memories of emasculating

sexual inadequacies, the scenes furthers Leontes' linguistic crisis:

> Is this nothing?
> Why, then the world and all that's in 't is nothing,
> The covering sky is nothing, Bohemia is nothing,
> My wife is nothing, nor nothing have these nothings,
> If this be nothing (I, ii. 291-295).

The emphatic reiteration of "nothing" suggests the swift disintegration of Leontes' rationality,

and the hasty emotional collapse that accompanies it. "Nothing" stands as a destructive force

that can unravel anything from queen to country.[536] His initial declaration that "the world and

all that's in 't is nothing" already contains all the subsequent "nothings" he denounces, yet

Leontes identifies specific targets as "nothings": the sky, Bohemia, his own wife, until this

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[535] Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances*, Athens: U of Georgia P, 197, 14-15.
[536] The word nothing is uttered on twenty-six occasions in *The Winter's Tale*, second only to *King Lear*'s twenty-nine references in Shakespeare's entire dramatic canon. *The Shakespeare Concordance*, accessed April 3rd, 2013, opensourceshakespeare.org.

syntax itself breaks down under the weight of nothings—"nor nothing have these nothings, / If this be nothing." Critics have puzzled over the linguistic quagmire that Leontes' jealousy posits, and I would agree with Stephen Orgel that the play's "linguistic opacity" reveals itself as a conscious feature of his crisis.[537] The inward progression of the remarks demonstrates the totalizing force of Leontes' affliction. Once Leontes gives in to his jealousy, "nothing" is essentially what remains of the comic *status quo* that prevailed at the start of *The Winter's Tale*. The episode severs the play's ties with Bristol's "once upon a time"[538] frame and collapses onto the melancholy that emerges from the trauma.

This collapse, in Barton's view, proves symptomatic of a larger pattern within late Shakespeare, where the plays bend "to the demands of a new mode, one in which plot, on the whole, has become more vivid and emotionally charged than character."[539] Leontes' speech becomes representational of a more general permeating of melancholy within the plays, one that also sacrifices clarity for emotional impact. In an interesting reversal from Greene's romance, where "a certaine melancholy passion entering the mind of Pandosto,"[540] eventually drives him into a jealous rage, Shakespeare inverses the affects, placing heavier dramatic

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[537] Orgel makes the claim that some of the obscure passages in *The Winter's Tale* suggest that, in dialogue of this sort, Shakespeare intentionally aims to communicate "vagueness and confusion," to his audiences. "The Shakespearean text," he writes, "characteristically, gives us no guidance on the matter. We do it wrong when we deny that it is problematic and has always been so, and reduce it to our own brand of common sense," "The Poetics of Incomprehensibility," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42.4 (Winter 1991), 431-437, 437. See also Howard Felperin, "'Tongue-tied our Queen?': the Deconstruction of Presence in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, New York: Methuen, 1985, 3-18. For Felperin, the first scene, which lays out Leontes' destructive jealousy, alludes to the idea of linguistic interdeterminacy. "The imagination operating under 'strong emotion,'" he writes, "has the power to transform something into nothing, or nothing into something, a bush into a bear, or that which is subjectively felt into that which seems objectively there," 11.

[538] Bristol, "In Search of the Bear," 146

[539] Barton, "Leontes and the Spider: Language and Speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays," 180-181.

[540] Greene, 70. Pandosto's passion later morphs into a more threatening extreme, as he is said to be "inflamed with rage, and infected with Jelousie," 77.

insistence on the melancholy that afflicts Leontes in the aftermath of his outburst.[541] This

affective transference foreshadows the shift through which comic melancholy eventually

supersedes the sorrows that grow out of this fury.

In the following scene, Leontes learns that lord Camillo, whom he had instructed to

poison Polixenes, has helped the Bohemian sovereign escape. Enraged by such betrayal,

Leontes publicly accuses Hermione of adultery. Faced with Leontes' unwarranted wrath,

Hermione exclaims:

> There's some ill planet reigns.
> I must be patient, till the heavens look
> With an aspect more favorable. Good my lords,
> I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
> Commonly are, the want of which vain dew
> Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have
> That honorable grief lodged here which burns
> Worse than tears drown (II, i. 106-113).

Her answer furthers the trend in which female characters prove more adept at managing their

passions than their male counterparts by framing her grief outside of generally accepted

gender boundaries. Hermione initially alludes to the astrological understanding of humours,

which associates the planet Saturn with the humour of melancholy.[542] Her comment undercuts

the notion by intimating that, while Leontes seemingly suffers under Saturn's influence, she is

invoking the heavens' assistance, re-inscribing the situation in religious (Christian) terms.[543]

Moreover, through a manipulation of humoural language, the passage contrasts the grief she

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[541] Shakespeare's play performs several reversals of this sort. When Fawnia is tormented by her feelings for Dorastus she exclaims: "better it were to dye with griefe, than to live with shame," 97, offering a counterpoint to the philosophy that infuses *The Winter's Tale*, where experiencing such shame is an integral part of an eventual redemption resolution.

[542] See Klibansky et al., 127. See also Richard Kearney, Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness, New York: Routledge, 2003, 163-178, for a mythological history of Saturn, time, and melancholy.

[543] Klibansky et al. note that the deification of Saturn was not that kindly received in Christianity, and that the view of planets overseeing mankind was eventually "brought into direct relation with Christian ethics" in later stages of the Middle Ages, 165.

endures because of Leontes' irrational jealousy with the imaginary one that he has cast on himself. Hermione subverts both gender and humoural expectations by invoking the generally-masculine qualities of heat and dryness, rather than their cold and wet feminine counterparts.[544] She refuses to weep, instead framing her sorrows under the more 'honourable' masculine auspices of a heated passion. Her rebuttal of Leontes is strengthened by the fact that other characters reiterate her call for temperance. Still, while other comic melancholics could be coerced into modifying their behaviour or simply brushed aside, Leontes rules the play's first half. His resolution to punish Hermione must be obeyed, despite mounting evidence that he is mistaken. Leontes rebukes his lords' protestations by proclaiming

> Cease, no more!
> You smell this business with a sense as cold
> As is a dead man's nose; but I do see't and feel't,
> As you feel doing thus, and see withal
> The instrument that feel (II, i. 151-155).

 The statement encapsulates Leontes' inability to rationally assess the situation as he impresses unfounded suspicions unto the physical world. He blames the lords' numb senses for failing to observe something that he can not only see but *feel*. This conflation of visual and sensory evidence mirrors the play's more general substitution of dramatic clarity in favour of emotional impression. Leontes' eventual decision to consult the oracle in order to "give rest to the minds of others," (II, i. 192), furthers this process. As an "instrument that feels," the oracle is expected to provide an answer to the issue without sight or impression of it.

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[544] As Paster writes, women were generally thought to be of a colder disposition than men as well as to be less capable of retaining their humourous fluids such as blood and tears. For a discussion of female coldness see *Humoring the Body*, 77-134; for a discussion of the "leaky" female body, see *The Body Embarrassed*, 23-63.

While awaiting the oracles' decision, Hermione is remanded to prison where she gives

birth to Perdita.[545] Perceiving an opportunity to alleviate the king's frenzy, Hermione's

devoted servant, Paulina, delivers him the news in hopes, as she explains, that her "words as

medicinal as true, / Honest as either, [will] purge him of that humor / That presses him for

sleep" (II, iii. 37-39). Paulina represents a challenging force to Leontes' authority. Much like

Cerimon, she proves instrumental in orchestrating the eventual reunion between Hermione and

him, miraculously resurrecting her in the statue scene. Yet, as alluded to previously, Leontes'

affliction extends well beyond humourality. Paulina's medicalized language in this scene

represents the ostensibly logical avenue for resolution that misses the mark given the unnatural

character of Leontes' woes; neither medicine nor truth can restore him. Leontes wants nothing

to do with the child, which he holds as physical evidence of his wife's betrayal, and thus

charges his lord Antigonus, Paulina's husband, to dispose of it, ordering him to carry

> The female bastard hence …
> To some remote a desert place, quite out
> Of our dominions, and that there thou leave it,
> Without more mercy, to its own protection
> And favor of the climate (II, iii. 175-179).

In banishing his infant daughter, Leontes goes a step further than Pericles, who severs ties

with his child in a protective fashion. Leontes elects to condemn her to die by having her

abandoned in a wasteland. On the heels of his wife's imprisonment and his son's sudden

illness (II, iii. 11-16), the casting away of his daughter removes Leontes' final tie of kinship.

The oracle's verdict negates all of Leontes' suspicions and plunges him into an overwhelming

sense of melancholy:

> Hermione is chaste, Polixenes blameless,
> Camillo a true subject, Leontes a jealous tyrant,

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[545] This continues the pattern established in *Pericles*, where daughters are born under traumatic circumstances.

His innocent babe truly begotten, and the King shall
Live without an heir if that which is lost be not
Found (III, ii. 132-136).

The emotionlessness and simplicity of the statement contrasts the theatricality with which

Leontes has professed his accusations. The king initially proves sceptical of the oracles'

exculpation of Hermione. "There is no truth at all i'th'oracle," he exclaims, "the session shall

proceed. This is mere falsehood" (III, ii. 140-141). It is only he once he is informed of the

deaths of Hermione and Mamilius deaths that his jealousy dissipates and that the vitriolic

disjunctions of language that characterized Leontes' earlier speeches morph into a melancholic

torpor reminiscent of Pericles' in its totalizing effect. Leontes asks Paulina to

> Bring me
> To the dead bodies of my queen and son.
> One grave shall be for both. Upon them shall
> The cause of their death appear, unto
> Our shame perpetual. Once a day I'll visit
> The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
> Shall be my recreation. So long as nature
> Will bear up with this exercise, so long
> I daily vow to use it. Come, and lead me
> To these sorrows (III, ii. 232-241).

The obliteration of the familial unit is much stronger in *The Winter's Tale* than it was in

Pericles, mainly because it lays the bulk of the blame on Leontes' himself, avoiding any

external interference from storms, divinity, or other characters. Leontes' oath to visit the

chapel daily and weep recalls Olivia's somewhat excessive vows of mourning in *Twelfth*

Night. The king finds himself afflicted by a similarly all-encompassing grief. The reliance on

images of death and sorrow makes it clear that Leontes abandons himself over to melancholy

from now on. Having methodically brought Leontes' down to a sorrowful, catatonic state, the

focus shifts to Perdita's journey to Bohemia. If a sad tale truly is best for winter, as Mamilius

professes to his mother early on (II, i. 25), then the scenes in Sicily fulfil the dictum unfortunately well.

The seemingly inescapable tragic spiral that governs the play's first half culminates on the stormy Bohemian shores, where Antigonus plans to abandon Perdita. The scene represents an almost palpable tonal pivot, in which the death of Antigonus, devoured by a bear, pushes the play's tragic overtones to their point of rupture. This dramatic moment, and what is probably the most infamous Shakespearean stage direction, "*Exits, pursued by a bear*" (III, iii. 57), has been largely recognized by critics as the embodiment of the play's shift from tragedy to comedy. In essence, the bear itself becomes a tragicomic device, eliciting both surprise and relief in short succession.[546] For Bristol, the appearance of the bear offers a vivid dramatization of the duelling temporal conceptions on which the play is built. According to him, the scene conjures "the symbolic identification of the bear with the winter season,"[547] suggesting a turn toward a cyclical understanding of time. The animal, Bristol writes, can be perceived as "a figure of boundaries and of transformations, marking both the moment of ending or death and the moment of new beginnings or birth.[548] Hence, the bear's appearance in Bristol's view marks a temporal pivot as much as a tonal one. He writes that

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[546] See Andrew Gurr, "The Bear, the Statue, and Hysteria in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34 (1983): 420-425, for a discussion of the responses the appearance of the bear would have elicited from early modern audiences. Gurr writes that the animal, being "the most familiar kind of wild beast in London ... exploits this base level, the hysterical reaction, and then pushes the level of audience response higher up the scale by the blatant challenge to ... In this way tragic realism is transformed into comedy through the exploitation of theatrical illusion," 423-424. Likewise, Joan Hartwig asserts that the scene is fundamentally tragicomic due to its pacing. "The surprise of the bear's appearance and the quick shift in Antigonus' prospects from life to death," she writes, "are the points which cause laughter and prolonging the action between Antigonus and the bear, which some critics would do, violates the effect ... Shakespeare leaves little to chance, carefully directing audience response into the appropriate channel," "The Tragicomic Perspective of *The Winter's Tale*," in *The Winter's Tale: Critical Essays*, ed. Maurice Hunt, New York Garland, 1995, 174-199, 189.
[547] Bristol, "In Search of the Bear," 159
[548] Bristol, "In Search of the Bear," 161.

in the second half of *The Winter's Tale*, the patterns of adventure time and of the time of the Winter Festival are augmented by the time of agricultural labor and market exchange. This additional layer of time, however, is much more than the completion of an annual cursus of liturgical, natural, and practical commemorations. Spatiotemporality has been changed in fundamental and irreversible ways here.[549]

The episode allows for a shift in melancholic manifestations as well, away from Leontes' inconsolable grief and towards the more immaterial melancholy of lost time and wistful revelry. The play veers rapidly into comedy following Antigonus' frantic exit, and the entrances of both a shepherd and a clown offers further evidence of this generic shift. The clown's recollection of the shipwreck and of the bear's attack on Antigonus oscillates between the horrors he witnessed and the amusement with which he describes them:

> O, the most piteous cry, of the poor souls!
> Sometimes to see 'em, and not to see 'em; now the ship
> Boring the moon with her mainmast, and anon swallowed
> With yeast and froth, as you'd thrust a cork into
> A hogshead. And then for the land-service, to see how
> The bear tore out his shoulder bone; how he cried to
> Me for help, and said his name was Antigonus, a nobleman!
> But to make an end of the ship: to see how
> the sea flapdragoned it! But first, how the poor souls
> Roared, and the sea mocked them, and how the poor
> Gentleman roared, and the bear mocked him, both
> Roaring louder than the sea or weather (III, iii. 88-100).

The clown's description anthropomorphises every component of the scene he witness, from the sea, through the ship, to the bear, each element inferring death and annihilation. Concurrently, the allusions to consumption—the ship swallowed with yeast and froth, the bear's "land-service" of Antigonus—undercuts this seemingly dreadful vision. The passage conflates both tragedies into an amalgamation of wilderness, roaring and destruction. The sheer hideousness surrounding Antigonus' death commands a cathartic shift towards the pastoral merriment of the following act. In a sense, comedy and tragedy encounter each other

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[549] Bristol, "In Search of the Bear," 163.

on the Bohemian shores, much like the bear and Antigonus do. This transference is embodied

in Perdita, who provides a tragicomic bridge between both dramatic halves as she is taken in

subsequently by the shepherd, who advises to his son to "bless thyself. Thou mett'st with

things / Dying, I with things newborn … 'Tis a lucky day, boy, and we'll do good / Deeds

on't" (III, iii. 112-113; 133-134). These elements reiterate to what degree the conflation of

comedy and tragedy hinge on this particular scene. Life succeeds death and the comedy of

Perdita supplants the tragedy of Leontes, while melancholy gradually ascends over the

sorrows of the first half, prompted by a lengthy temporal interval between acts.

The fourth act opens with the figure of Time, recalling Gower's role in *Pericles*,

relating the sixteen years that have unfolded hence:

> I, that please some, try all, both joy and terror
> Of good and bad, that makes and unfolds error,
> Now take upon me, in the name of Time,
> To use my wings.
> …
> Leontes leaving—
> Th'effects of his fond jealousy so grieving
> That he shuts up himself—imagine me,
> Gentle spectators, that I now may be
> In fair Bohemia.
> …
> To speak of Perdita, now grown in grace
> Equal with wondering. What of her ensues
> I list not prophesy; but let Time's news
> Be known when 'tis brought forth. A shepherd's Daughter (IV, i.1-4; 17-21; 24-27).

Just like the bear, Time represents another tragicomic figure that channels both "joy and

terror." While the speech looks to the merrier event ahead, it also ties into the past tragedies

that have occurred, and in so doing, traces a clear link between Leontes and his daughter

Perdita, now a shepherd's daughter. It intrinsically links both characters, reinforcing the

splintering of Leontes' family while looking ahead to their eventual reunion. The intervention

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simultaneously emphasizes the distance between the play's two realms, yet maintaining the emotional turmoil of the first half within its scope. The references to Leontes, much like Camillo and Polixenes' subsequent discussion of Sicily and its "penitent" king (IV, ii. 6) in the next scene, further this dovetailing.

The fourth act develops under the auspices of pastoral celebrations of the sheep-shearing festival (IV, iv.) and represents the play's most overt claim to the comic genre. Polixenes and Camillo's aforementioned discussion quickly turns to the whereabouts of the former's son, Florizel, and his sudden interest in a shepherd's daughter "of most rare note" (IV, ii. 42). Perdita encounters fewer hardships than Marina did, yet her dramatic participation, centred on her courtship with Florizel, develops along a similar extolment of qualities that transcend the setting she occupies. Polixenes thinks her

> The prettiest low born lass that ever
> Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems
> But smacks of something greater than herself,
> Too noble for this place (IV, iv. 156-l59).

Though she does not exert the type of dramatic influence with which *Pericles* endowed Marina, she nevertheless provides a virtuous contrast to her morally-flawed father. This notion distances her from her Bohemian counterparts—the shepherds, clowns and rogues—that represent another way in which late plays focalize comedic aspects in precise enclaves, preventing their livelier spirits to fully infiltrate the works they inhabit. Among them, it is the roguish antics of Autolycus that occupy most of the comic limelight. The character, at once fool, cozener, and peddler, has proved a compelling critical subject, whose wit and his ability to interact with characters across social classes recall comic predecessors such as Feste. Much

like the Bohemian episode in general, however, he proves more acerbic than first impressions may suggest.[550]

Despite a considerable degree of merriment, the Bohemian scenes remain mitigated by the spectre of the earlier tragedies that transpired at the Sicilian court, represented by the "sad talk," (IV, iv. 310) that Camillo, Polixenes, and the shepherd engage in while the festivities take place. The revelry momentarily delays the play's larger concerns, yet it must inevitably defer to them. The overall dramatic situation appears more troublesome than it did in *Pericles*. The play has made no indication that a reunion between Leontes and Perdita will result in a similar instance of emotional rejoicing, nor has it given any hint of Hermione's survival. The compelling tragic afterthought present in this scene, in addition to the strong echoes to *Pandosto*'s story and its disastrous outcome, subjugates the revelry that takes place.[551] *The Winter's Tale* makes it quite clear that no single character can alleviate the traumatic forces at play; the task necessitates a series of fortuitous reversals and a crafty plan orchestrated by Camillo to bring Polixenes, Florizel, and Perdita back to Sicily. Melancholy seeps in through those persistent reminders of past trauma that remain to be addressed. After the brief respite of

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[550] For an analysis of Autolycus' roguish archetype, see Barbara A. Mowat "Rogues, Shepherds, and the Counterfeit Distressed: Texts and Infracontexts of *The Winter's Tale* 4.3," *Shakespeare Studies* 22 (1994), 58-76; for an insightful comparison of Leontes and Autolycus as dramatic counterweights, see Pascale Drouet, "Breaking Boundaries: Tyranny and Roguery in *The Winter's Tale*," *Cahiers Elisabethains* 67 (2005), 15-22. Barbara Correll locates Autolycus as "a figure whose self-conscious lawlessness and less than sentimentalizing competition with the aristocratic family and marriage plots highlights the thematics of law and legitimacy and give him a remarkable role in the play," "Scene Stealers: Autolycus, *The Winter's Tale* and Economic Criticism," *Money in the Age of Shakespeare: Essays in New Economic Criticism,* ed. Linda Woodbridge, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 53-66, 57.

[551] Scragg notes that although the "supposed death was one of the most popular contrivances employed on the Renaissance stage," *The Winter's Tale* reliance on it, unlike other uses in the Shakespearean corpus, would have perhaps surprised the audience, given its echoes to Greene's *Pandosto*. As she explains it, "already attuned to a universe in which man's errors are productive of terrible consequences … the members of the audience have no cause to suspect the truth of [Hermione's death] … as the statue of Hermione gradually comes to life, the members of the audience, like Leontes and his household, are gripped with a sense of wonder, crossing with them into a universe made radiant by an apprehension of the power and benevolence of the gods," *Shakespeare's Mouldy Tales,* 157; 185-186.

the sheep-shearing festival, the play heads for an uneasy resolution that will not successfully

redress the numerous woes that have crept in throughout.

At the onset of the last act, the Sicilian lords urge Leontes to stop wallowing in

mournful apathy (V, i. 1-6). Leontes refuses to relent, asserting that

> Whilst I remember
> Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
> My blemishes in them, and so still think of
> The wrong I did myself, which was so much,
> That heirless it hath made my kingdom and
> Destroyed the sweet's companion that e'er man
> Bred his hopes out of (V, i. 6-12).

The obstinacy with which Leontes seeks to relive the blemish of his guilt acts as a conduit

through which melancholy infuses the play's conclusion. In refusing to alter his irrational

behaviour, Leontes replicates his earlier dramatic stance, being castigated by his entourage for

an unyielding stubbornness. The main difference in the latter scene is that Leontes' refusal to

forego his grief leads to penitence rather than disaster. The memory of Hermione that Leontes

seeks to preserve is as much a shrine to her virtue as it is a cognitive and emotional cross that

he must bear. Paulina, who possesses "the memory of Hermione" (V, i. 50) and holds the key

to Leontes' salvation, sustains this behaviour as part of elaborate machinations intended to

reveal that Hermione is still alive. The conditions she imposes on the king's putative

remarrying illustrate her careful manipulation of the situation:

> Give me the office
> To choose you a queen. She shall not be so young
> As was your former, but she shall be such
> As, walked your first queen's ghost, it should take joy
> To see her in your arms (V, i. 77-81).

Paulina's *mise-en-scène*, along with the subsequent arrivals of Perdita, Florizel, and Polixenes,

offer Leontes successive redemptive opportunities that the play ultimately frustrates. While

these entrances carry with them the potential for catharsis, they also reignite the original

emotional crisis, now exacerbated by a sixteen-year interval that has taken a tremendous toll

on the concerned parties. Paulina, Perdita, and Florizel become the triangular simulacrum of

the prior crisis that devastated Leontes, Hermione, and Polixenes. Upon learning of Florizel's

arrival, Leontes declares:

> Prithee, no more, cease. Thou knows't
> He dies to me again when talked of. Sure,
> When I shall see this gentleman, thy speeches
> Will bring me to consider that which may
> Unfurnish me of reason (V, i. 119-123).

Leontes' weariness upon seeing Florizel again pre-emptively attests to the emotional *coup de*

grâce that the reunion with Hermione will bear him. Yet, the play rejects each of these

potential inceptions (Perdita, Polixenes, Florizel), deferring to a more complex emotional

release that never fully concretizes itself. Given this pattern, it is not surprising that the

reunion of Leontes and Perdita transpires offstage, being narrated in the following scene by

three witnesses. While *Pericles* granted nearly equal dramatic weight to the reunions with wife

and daughter, the encounter depicted here resides in the liminality of in-between, within a

dramatic and emotional crevice that affords very little redemption for its agents. This situation

intimates that the resolution of the tragic crisis at the core of *The Winter's Tale*'s reaches a

rupture point and becomes somewhat unstageable. The scene (or non-scene) does not address

the sorrow that has developed from Leontes and Perdita's fragmented—even inexistent—

relationship. It incorporates its emotional poignancy into the later reunion with Hermione. In

this sense, the scene improves on its counterpart in *Pericles*, foregoing the encounter between

two characters who have never met in favour of two that possess a shared emotional history.

The scene also reiterates the inherent breakdown of language that accompanies the play's

crises. Much in the way that words failed Leontes as he fell into a jealous frenzy, language

collapses as he reconnects with his daughter; the play stages a retelling of the events rather

than their actual linguistic content, once again, sacrificing dramatic precision for emotional

forcefulness. This notion is epitomized by the third gentleman's assertion that their reunion

proved "a sight which / Was to be seen [and] cannot be spoken of" (V, ii. 43-44).

The layered narrative structure thus situates the bulk of the emotional payoff squarely

on the reunion with Hermione, whose statue is mentioned near the end of the scene, being

described as "so near to Hermione … / That they say one would speak to her and stand in /

Hope of answer" (V, ii. 101-103). On a more general level, the scene allows for the swift

binding of a series of dramatic loose ends that impede the marital reunion. The reunion with

Perdita is in fact one of several that take place at this time. The gentlemen relate how Leontes

is reacquainted with Camillo and Perdita; mention that Antigonus' letters, shedding light on

his demise, were recovered; and, finally, describe the tearful reunion of Leontes and

Polixenes. Moreover, the consecutive entrances of the three gentlemen, each contributing a

portion of this retelling, is reminiscent of folk takes and fables, a genre from which the play

draws considerable inspiration.[552] As Philip Edwards remarks, *The Winter's Tale*, much like

George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*, is concerned with the notion of incredulity, "especially

[in] the moment between narration and performance."[553] In each work, Edwards explains,

"seeing is believing, and *only* seeing is believing. Those passages of the story which are not

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[552] Mary Ellen Lamb discusses *The Winter's Tale*'s seeming low parentage, akin to romance but, even further, to folklore and oral recitations of children's tales. "Virtual Audiences and Virtual Authors: *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, and *Old Wives' Tale*," *Staging Early Modern Romance: Prose Fiction, Dramatic Romance, and Shakespeare*, eds. Mary Ellen Lamb and Valerie Wayne, New York Routledge, 2009, 122-144, especially 126-132.
[553] Edwards, 79.

privileged with performance are relegated to the status of old wives tales."[554] By not

transpiring onstage, the reunion with Perdita transfers its emotional poignancy to the scene in

which Hermione is brought back to life.

In the final scene, Paulina continues to meticulously prepare Leontes—physically,

emotionally, and morally—for his eventual contrition. Leontes' shame at the sight of

Hermione's statue (V, iii. 32-43), combined with Perdita's devotion of filial gratitude,[555] set

the stage for the masterful reveal. Paulina rebukes several attempts by both father and

daughter to touch the statue, before finally offering to make the statue move through magic

(V, iii. 98-109). Even then, she segments Hermione's reanimation, commanding her to move,

to touch Leontes, and finally to speak. This breaking down of Hermione's awakening delays

the expected reunion with Leontes, creating a temporal gap between the moment she begins to

revive and the one where she finally embraces him. This process dilutes the emotional impact

of her return to life. Hermione speaks but briefly, beckoning the gods to

> Look down
> And from your sacred vials pour your graces
> Upon my daughter's head!—Tell me, mine own,
> Where hast thou been preserved? Where lived? How found
> Thy father's court? For thou shalt hear that I,
> Knowing Paulina that the oracle
> Gave hope thou wast in being, have preserved
> Myself to see the issue (V, iii. 122-129).

Hermione is concerned predominantly with her daughter Perdita. Her speech highlights an

important omission. Though she "hangs about his neck" (V, iii, 113) upon stepping down from

her pedestal, Hermione's failure to address Leontes, other than a tangential mention of his

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[554] Edwards, 89.

[555] The words Perdita utters to her mother's statue, "Dear Queen, *that ended when I but began*, / Give me that hand of yours to kiss (V, iii. 46-47, emphasis mine)," are also reminiscent of the link the nurse Lychorida establishes between Marina and her recently departed mother in *Pericles* (III, i. 20).

court, casts doubts as to the blissfulness of their reunion. Much like Pericles and Thaisa's encounter, this silence infers that the trauma that befell them earlier on, whose magnitude was exacerbated by sixteen years of intense mourning, cannot be alleviated in the immediacy that this scene affords. Similarly, when Leontes finally speaks, he addresses nearly everyone *but* Hermione, betrothing Paulina to Camillo, pardoning Florizel and blessing his nuptials to Perdita, and urging everyone to retire to more suitable quarters so as to properly unpack all that has been revealed so suddenly:

> Good Paulina,
> Lead us from hence, where we may leisurely
> Each one demand and answer to his part
> Performed in this wide gap of time since first
> We were dissevered. Hastily lead away (V, iii. 153-157).

While these parting words can be interpreted as another instance of speechless wonder, much like the one the gentleman previously reported, it proves far more jarring in its undercutting of the heightened expectations that this final recuperative scene commands. As I have suggested, the final act makes a hasty summary of several plot elements, so as to move on to the reunion of Leontes and Hermione, placing a considerable greater emotional investment on their salutary encounter. Yet, by refusing to stage a dialogue between the two characters, the play reverts to its earlier mode of linguistic unintelligibility, subverting its potential for closure. This emphasis sets up what ultimately amounts to a self-defeating premise, where the reformation of the family cannot alleviate the woes that have occurred throughout. In its final moments, the play hesitates to fully reject its tragic antecedents. The lack of a satisfying resolution underscores the remaining discordant elements.

What transcends the play's conclusion can be best described as a haunting melancholic tone. There is no indication that Leontes and Hermione will indeed overcome the sixteen-year

gulf that separated them, nor does the play grant any assurance that Leontes' jealousy will no longer rear its head. Moreover, the play has claimed *actual* victims in Antigonus and Mamilius, who are replaced seemingly by Camillo and Florizel in the final promise of an upcoming celebration. Their demise, directly tied to Leontes' deleterious actions, cast an additional shadow over the uneasy conclusion. In this relegation of unity and precision, *The Winter's Tale* leaves an indelible emotional impression that achieves its dramatic aim nonetheless, echoing David Grene's assertion that "however one may judge the play most truly … one knows firmly and immediately that it is entirely successful in producing its effect."[556] The forceful conflation of tragic and comic elements transforms melancholy into an immaterial longing. Its presence offers a perception of time that proves both eschatological in its failure to sooth the sorrows of past trauma, and esoteric in its intimation of unknown potentiality.

The melancholic *tableau* that concludes the play, encapsulates the evolution of comic melancholy within Shakespearean drama. In the words of Barton, *The Winter's Tale* "admits something that Shakespeare's Elizabethan comedies have tried to deny: happy endings are a fiction. A fiction, but not a fairy-tale."[557] This assertion, in a way, proves to be a quintessential aspect of Shakespearean comic melancholy, late or otherwise. This sense of disillusionment is present in other late plays, yet never again is this type of melancholy as effervescent. Even more so than in *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale* embodies the nostalgic impression that "revels now are ended" (IV, i. 148). It represents the prime dramatic example of melancholy's permutation across Shakespeare's comic canon. Melancholy's spectral presence lingers on in

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[556] David Grene, *Reality and the Heroic Pattern: Late Plays of Ibsen, Shakespeare, and Sophocles*, Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1967, 67.
[557] Barton, "Leontes and the Spider: Language and Speaker in Shakespeare's Last Plays," 180.

spite of the miraculous reunion that transpires on stage, serving a wistful reminder of the limits of its dramatic agency. Melancholy proves crucial to one more late play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, whose collaborative effort with John Fletcher concludes Shakespeare's career. There, the melancholic afterthoughts discussed in this chapter come to be challenged by a parallel treatment of melancholy that signals the passing of the dramatic torch, as it were, between Shakespeare, Fletcher, and their respective tragicomic styles.

Coda: Shakespeare, Fletcher, and the Melancholic Swan Song

As a conclusion, I want to briefly examine *The Two Noble Kinsmen* in terms of its dual

exploration of melancholy stemming from the collaboration between Shakespeare and John

Fletcher.[558] In doing so, I echo Walter Cohen's assertion that the play, along with *Cardenio*

and *Henry VIII*—each co-authored with Fletcher—represents "a second movement within

Shakespeare romance, [offering] a darker view of violence and death than the previous

romances."[559] More specifically, I identify *The Two Noble Kinsmen* as Shakespeare's ultimate

dramatic treatment of comic melancholy, where the wistfulness that characterized the late

plays reaches it full dramatic potential. Additionally, this Shakespearean sense of melancholy

is contrasted with a different one, found in the portion of the play attributed to Fletcher, who

was to become the lead playwright for The King's Men following Shakespeare's retirement.

Fletcher's development of melancholy, as alluded to in the introduction, can be characterized

by a reinscription in humourality that bespeaks an increased reliance on medical prognosis.

This treatment of melancholy contrasts the one Shakespeare develops in *The Two Noble*

Kinsmen. I suggest that the play bears witness to the changing of the guard, as it were,

between the Shakespearean dramatization of melancholy and the one propounded by Fletcher,

which was to become the norm within subsequent seventeenth-century tragicomic works

written by the likes of John Ford and Philip Massinger.

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[558] The play's dual authorship does not reveal itself as much of a contentious issue as it did in *Pericles*. As Brian Vickers notes, the play's initial appearance in the Stationer's Register on the 8th of April, 1643, indicates both Shakespeare and Fletcher as authors. The quarto edition, published by John Waterson in the same year, similarly refers to both playwrights as the "Worthies of their time," on its title page, 402. Vickers refers to E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon, 1930, 1: 528.
[559] Walter Cohen, "Shakespearean Romance," *The Norton Shakespeare: Romances and Poems*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd ed., 4 vols., New York: Norton: 2008, 103-117, 116.

My reading of the play is thus predicated on the generally-accepted critical division of dramatic labour that usually identifies Shakespeare's hand in the central plot of the duelling kinsmen, Arcite and Palamon, while attributing the subplot of the lovesick Jailer's Daughter to Fletcher.[560] On a broader level, the parallel plotlines echo the play's more general conflation of mirthful and melancholic matters. Yet, while each structure hinges on a tragicomic dovetailing, Fletcher's contribution, I contend, can also be understood as the comic foil to Shakespeare's embittered story of eroding friendship. The affliction, diagnosis, and eventual cure of the Jailer's Daughter's lovesickness transpires under more comical overtones, while the spectral wistfulness that emanates from Shakespeare's final exploration of melancholy effectively severs its ties with the comic genre. To return to Cohen's earlier affirmation, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* marks a definite shift in Shakespeare's treatment of melancholy, as the late motif of staging forceful emotional crises that cannot be successfully alleviated by the dramatic resolution reaches its breaking point. The play multiplies departures from the tragicomedies explored in the previous chapter, through its casting aside of parental ties in favour of heterosexual competition and the absence of a lengthy temporal gap spanning several years so as to heighten the emotional impact. This proves especially significant given the play's condensation of the extensive time frame found in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* (c.1400), its most important source text.[561] Most substantial among these differences, however,

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[560] Vickers 407. Vickers notes that the dividing scheme that Henry Webber provided in his edition of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher (1783-1818) has been recognized for the better parts of two centuries (with a few modifications in certain cases. It goes as follows: Act 1: Shakespeare; Act 2: Fletcher; Act 3, i-ii: Shakespeare, iii-vi: Fletcher; Act 4, i-ii: Fletcher, iii-iv: Shakespeare; Act 5, i; iii-iv: Shakespeare, Ii Fletcher, Henry Webber, "Observations on the Participation of Shakespeare in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher*, ed. Henry Webber, 14 vols., Edinburg, 1812, 13: 151-169, 169. My analysis remains largely at the level of the play's duelling plotlines and their contrasting tonal arcs.

[561] *The Two Noble Kinsmen* follows Chaucer's story very closely in everything but the Jailer's Daughter's subplot. Yet, as Lois Potter writes, the play possess a convoluted source history, being "a Jacobean dramatization of a

is the fact that in its closing moments, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* undertakes no significant

effort at redemption, other than a dying wish for reconciliation, a restrictive dramatic gesture

that fails to emancipate the play from the crisis it has fostered. Indeed, the climactic embrace

of death and its acrimonious aftertaste cannot be overlooked. Such a finale, I suggest, marks

the swan song for the comic vein of melancholy developed in Shakespearean comedy.

The prologue extols the virtues of collaboration as a means of introducing notions of

honour, friendship and marriage that form the crux of the play's thematic scheme:[562]

> New plays and maidenheads are near akin:
> Much followeth both, for both much money gi'en,
> If they stand sound and well. And a good play,
> Whose modest scenes blush on his marriage day
> And shake to lose his honour, is like her
> That after holy tie and first night's stir
> Yet still is Modesty, and still retains
> More of the maid, to sight, than husband's pains.
> We pray our play may be so, for I am sure
> It has a noble breeder and a pure,
> A learnèd, and a poet never went
> More famous yet 'twixt Po and silver Trent (1-12).

Inherent in this yoking together of theatre and maidenhood is the concept of unification, a

conflation of seemingly oppositional elements to produce a harmonious creation. As critics

such as Donald Hedrick argue, the prologue proves symptomatic of the overall metatheatrical

awareness of collaboration and competition that the tragicomedy displays.[563] The passage

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medieval English tale based on an Italian version of a Latin epic about one of the oldest and most tragic Greek legends," Introduction, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997, 1-130, 1.

[562] In doing so, the play also acknowledges the Chaucerian influence as well as its own collaborative structure.

[563] Hedrick examines the subject of collaboration by placing it at the forefront of the play's concerns, hypothesizing that *The Two Noble Kinsmen*'s dramatic endgame was to be collaborative. "What if dual authorship does not merely produce the show," he asks early on, "but constitutes the show? The scholarship on this question has provided important insights while evading their force—that the play presents its differences as spectacle. I propose that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is less significant as a collaboration on spectacle than it is as a spectacle of collaboration," "'Be Rough with Me': The Collaborative Arenas of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *Shakespeare, Fletcher, and The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Charles H. Frey, Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1989, 45-77, 47.

stands as a pre-emptive iteration of the doubling pattern that governs most of the play, be it in its dual authorship, it the multiple nuptials it alludes to or, more specifically, in the ongoing contrast of mirth and melancholy that pervades the play.

The first scene offers a concise example of this generic permutation, as the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta are delayed by the arrival of three grieving queens asking Theseus to avenge their husbands by waging war on Thebes and its cruel leader, Creon.[564] The queens' pleas abound with paradoxical expressions that emphasize the play's ongoing fascination with thematic contradictions. The second queen's appeal to Hippolyta to imagine Theseus slain on the battlefield, "showing the sun his teeth, grinning at the moon" (I, i. 100) in order to communicate her own grief illustrates such a conflation, as does the third queen's subsequent assertion that "my petition was, / Set down in ice, which by hot grief uncandied / Melts into drops" (I, i. 106-108). This inherent sense of contradiction reverberates in Theseus' consenting to delay the completion of his nuptial celebrations and wage war on Thebes, an action that subserviates marital concerns to military action. In essence, beyond what Lois Potter identifies as "a pattern of disrupted rituals that continues through the play,"[565] the first scene underscores the impinging of disquieting anxieties upon otherwise joyous practices. From its onset, the play showcases a near-constant undercutting of celebratory rituals by graver concerns. "We come unseasonably;" the second queen mentions, "but when could grief / Cull forth, as

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[564] Michael Bristol establishes a parallel between this scene and the one which opens *Hamlet*, centering on the dramatic super impression of nuptial and funeral practices that characterises them both. "The double ritual objectifies the complexity and the danger of temporal succession," he writes, "every change in the social structure requires an elaborate reallocation of wealth and authority," "*The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *Shakespeare, Fletcher, and The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Ed. Charles H. Frey, Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1989, 78-98, 87. Note also the parallel with the beginning of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (where Theseus and Hippolyta's nuptial celebrations are delayed as well), which furthers the late plays' reiteration of earlier comedic premises.
[565] Potter, 1. This pattern is reproduced throughout the play, such as when the kinsmen arm each other before their fights in the wood (III, vi, 50-130), or during the lengthy and very elaborate preparations before their final duel (V, i). The ritualistic nature of these events is underscored throughout the play.

unpanged judgement can, fitt'st time / For best solicitation?" (I, i. 167-169). Likewise, Hippolyta's plea to her husband to "prorogue this business we are going about, and hang / Your shield afore your heart" (I, i. 196-197) suggests this connective process.[566] Theseus' successful defeat of Creon a few scenes later allows for the burial of the slain kings, and effectively concludes the dramatic participation of the three queens, who "convent naught else but woes," (I, v. 10). It does not, however, pursue the spirit of festivity that hovered over the first scene. Instead of staging the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta, the play shifts its focus towards the titular kinsmen, Arcite and Palamon, who embody the central tonal paradox that operates in the play.

In the wake of the tragic implications of the first scene, the first exchange between the kinsmen (I, ii.) echoes a familiar comic trope in depicting their growing resentment towards the world they inhabit.[567] They immediately express a desire to escape the corruption and vileness of their native Thebes before they "sully our gloss of youth," Arcite cautions, "and here to keep in abstinence we shame / As in incontinence" (I, ii. 5-7).[568] Though they prove critical of their uncle Creon, the kinsmen nevertheless vow to follow him into the inevitable battle against Theseus' armies. Their sense of duty complicates the play by situating its protagonists in opposition to Theseus, whose honourable decision to fight for the grieving queens had been depicted in a favourable light. Creon, though he never appears on stage, becomes the *de facto* enemy, and the two factions pitted against one another in this first act are

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[566] The scene also offers an interesting reversal from Portia's advice to Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice* to "first go with me to church, and call me a wife" (III, ii. 302)," before assisting Antonio in his trial, indicating once again that, in this later play, heterosexual coupling has been superseded from its prevailing dramatic status.

[567] This initial discontent is akin to the ones professed by Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors*, Orlando and Rosalind at onset of *As You Like It*, or even Portia near the beginning of *The Merchant of Venice*.

[568] This desire to escape an undesirable initial predicament echoes the opening of several Shakespearean comedies, such as *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice*, or *Twelfth Night*.

joined in opposition to his vice and malice. These consecutive military justifications relativize

notions of goodness and evil from the onset, further suggesting a conflation of oppositional

elements. The act of war ironically satisfies the kinsmen's desire to escape, since they will be

captured by Theseus' armies and subsequently brought to Athens.

In what is undoubtedly a testament to the difficult balance of mirthful and melancholic

undertones the play seeks to achieve, the battle transpires offstage, its content reported through

various characters. Chief among them is Theseus, who marvels at the military prowess of

Arcite and Palamon. His account stresses their astonishing unison on the battlefield:

> I saw them in the war,
> Like to a pair of lions, smeared with prey,
> Make lanes in troops aghast. I fixed my note
> Constantly on them, for they were a mark
> Worth a god's view (I, iv. 17-21).

The comment bespeaks the formidable bond of amity that unites the two cousins, echoing the

romantic trope of heroic symmetry that resonates strongly with the play's source text as

well.[569] Yet, it also introduces what has proven to be a widespread point of critical contention

in the play; namely, the overwhelming reciprocity of the two characters. The effort to

differentiate them critically has moved from early dismissals of their interchangeability as a

flaw in Fletcher's writing, to the position that their indistinguishableness is characteristic of

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[569] Cooper denotes a symmetrical structure within the romance genre through which "the heroes may effectively be doubles of each other," 58. She lists Arcite and Palamon among her examples of such a phenomenon, suggesting that "romances that intercut their narratives with recounted stories from the past, or with visions and their interpretations, those interpellations serve as analogous reflections of the main events," 59. Cooper later writes that Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* "offers both parallelism of character … and mirror symmetry of plotting, the latter largely absent from its source, but it uses those symmetry to provide a grim irony in the different endings—violence, death, marriage—met by its near-identical heroes. This is the work of Chaucer's that Shakespeare (with Fletcher) adapted most closely for the stage, as *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the tight ironies of its plotting seem likely to have been one of its attractions. The dramatization of longer romances made it especially important to solve the management of episodic structure, and it was often done through the kind of organic unity privilege of parallelism and symmetry," 64.

the play as a whole, and is to be understood as a conscious dramatic effect.[570] As Bristol notes,

readings that deplore such mutuality

> evidently assume that allocation of individuality would somehow make the play strong, or more aesthetically satisfying. However, any attempt to differentiate between Arcite and Palamon would be to deny what I take to be the essential narrative and dramatic premise, namely, that the two cousins are exact sociological twins and that this exact social duplication is logically necessary to the depiction of social violence.[571]

I would mostly agree with this assertion. Certainly, the play is purposely frugal in the details it

supplies so as to clearly differentiate the two kinsmen. Moreover, their interchangeability

proves an integral part of their dramatic function. Yet, I suggest that a distinction can be made

in reading the kinsmen as a synecdochic personification of the paradoxical dovetailing of

mirth and melancholy within the play. Their divergence, initially latent, emerges once their

duelling infatuations with Emilia develop. The growing animosity they cultivate towards one

another in the wake of romantic competition thrusts each of them on conflicting sides of the

generic divide, linking Palamon to melancholy while casting Arcite in a more comic light.

Such an association is crucial to the play's eventual foregoing of comedy in favour of the more

solemn wistfulness that characterizes its final moments.

As Theseus' captives, the kinsmen become as a token of the military conflict that

momentarily halted the wedding celebrations. More importantly, it is within the disintegration

of their relationship following their imprisonment that Shakespeare's exploration of

melancholy culminates. Much is made initially of their valour and devotion to one another. At

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[570] Philip J. Finkelpearl addresses both critical stances in writing that "critics have attacked Fletcher for failing to differentiate the protagonists, but that is the point. Adherence to the code makes the two cousins nearly interchangeable automatons, and one may discern a deeper implication in their actions," "Two Distincts, Division None: Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* of 1613," in *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, eds. R. B. Parker and S. P. Zitner, Newark: U of Delaware P, 1996, 184-199, 191.
[571] Bristol, "*The Two Noble Kinsmen*," 88-89.

the beginning of the second act, the Jailer's Daughter praises their exceptional make-up and seemingly indistinguishable characters. Her exchange with her father presents Arcite and Palamon as remaining united in the face of perpetual captivity. To her father's request to "look / Tenderly to the two prisoners," (II, i. 21-22), the daughter replies:

> I do think they have patience to make
> Any adversity ashamed. The prison itself is proud
> Of 'em and they have all the world in their chamber.
> …
> It seems to me they have no more
> Sense of their captivity than I of ruling Athens. They
> Eat well, look merily, discourse of many things, but
> Nothing of their own restraint and disaters. Yet some
> Times a divided sigh, martyred, as 'twere i'th' deliverance,
> Will break from one of them, when the other presently
> Gives it so sweet a rebuke that I could
> Wish myself a sigh to be so chid, or at least a sigher to
> Be comforted (II, i. 26-28; 40-48).

Thus, the kinsmen not only appear to be "a pair of absolute men," as the Jailer puts it (II, i. 29), but to complete each other as they hold the world in their prison cell. As the Daughter mentions, they take turns countering one another's woes[572] and although this commendable sense of unison comes apart as their competing romantic desires develop, the kinsmen initially prove defiantly joyful in the face of perpetual imprisonment. They declare themselves "strong enough to laugh at misery" (II, ii. 2), and their early anxieties concerning the seclusion they find themselves in are rapidly transformed into a validation of their mutual devotion, as when Arcite declares that

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[572] Though it is not made explicit in the scene, it would appear that the Daughter is already infatuated with Palamon. Though much has been made of the kinsmen's similarities, she provides the first distinction between them, correcting her father's misidentification of Palamon as Arcite: "No, sir, no, that's Palamon. Arcite / Is the lower of the twain; you may perceive a part of / Him" (II, i. 53-55). There is also an interesting echo of Miranda's comment in *The Tempest*, "O brave new world / That has such people in 't" (V, i. 185-186), and the Daughter's reply to her father that "it is holiday to look on them. Lord, the diff'rence of men!" (II, i. 59). The latter comment could also suggest a budding infatuation on her part.

> Here being thus together,
> We are an endless mine to one another.
> We are one another's wife, ever begetting
> New births of love; we are father, friends, acquaintance,
> We are in one another, families;
> I am your heir, and you are mine. This place
> Is our inheritance; no hard oppressor
> Dare take this from us. Here, with a little patience,
> We shall live long and loving. No surfeit seek us;
> The hand of war hurts us none here, nor the seas
> Swallow their youth. We are at liberty (II, ii. 78-88).

Arcite promotes the substitution of heterosexual bonds with an all-encompassing sense of unison that defies logic and bears the brunt of their emotional torments;[573] in prison, he suggests, the kinsmen find freedom from an otherwise hostile society. Inherent in their enthusiastic resignation is the idea that their sequestration will actually shield them from the bitterness and grind of temporal progression. This position is reflective of the sentiment found earlier in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* (especially), where the unrelenting passage of time brings about pangs of melancholy. The portrait Arcite depicts thus conceives of their prison as offering protection from such phenomena and, consequently, from the melancholy that can potentially stem from it.

The tremendous sense of mutual devotion expressed here also tempts the fates—much like *The Winter's Tale*'s opening scene—by suggesting that their kinship can withstand any distemper:

> PALAMON. Is there a record of any two that loved
> Better than we do, Arcite?

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[573] Masten, for example, reads *The Two Noble Kinsmen* within a larger consideration of what he terms the "context of collaborative homoerotic," that characterizes early modern drama, 37. In her introduction to the play, Lois Potter touches on the notion that "the play not only makes single-sex friendship more attractive than love but represents it nostalgically, as an edenic state that is never adequately replaced by married love," 100. Potter refers to E. M. Waith, "Shakespeare and Fletcher on love and marriage," *SSt* 18 (1986): 235-250, and Philip Edwards, "On the design of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," *Review of English Literature* 5 (1964): 89-105, in elaborating this idea.

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ARCITE.                                    Sure there cannot.
PALAMON. I do not think it possible our friendship
         Should ever leave us.
ARCITE.                      Till our death it cannot  (II, ii. 112-115).[574]
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Their proclamations pre-emptively attest to the fragility of their bond. The kinsmen's

relationship rapidly collapses upon Emilia's arrival (II, ii. 116), during an exchange that

proves comical in its rhythm yet tragic in its long-ranging implications:

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PALAMON. I saw her first.
ARCITE. That's nothing.
PALAMON. But it shall be.
ARCITE. I saw her too.
PALAMON. Yes, but you must not love her.
ARCITE. I will not as you do, to worship her
        As she is heavenly and a blessèd goddess.
        I love her as a woman, to enjoy her:
        So both may love.
PALAMON. You shall not love at all!
ARCITE. Not love at all? Who shall deny me?  (II, ii. 168-173).
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Professions of devotion and self-sufficiency are cast aside once the mere potential for

romantic coupling is introduced. The quickness with which Arcite and Palamon are consumed

by their infatuation and abandon their previously rational characters seems inexorably

Fletcherian. It recalls similar totalizing affectations in *The Humourous Lieutenant*, *The

Woman-Hater*, or *A Wife for a Month*. On some level, their infatuation resembles that of the

Jailer's Daughter for Palamon, since only a glimpse of Emilia sufficed to trigger their

passions. The divide that this condition engenders between them, however, frames their

dramatic functions squarely within the late Shakespearean representation of melancholy

examined in this chapter. Though critics have ascribed distinctive passions to each kinsman in

arguing for their individualities, it is more useful to conceive of their divergence in terms of an

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[574] Note the enjambment of lines, which stresses how the kinsmen complete each other throughout the play. This pattern repeats itself in the kinsmen's dialogue throughout the play.

inherently tragi-comic conflation. From this juncture, Arcite's participation in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* follows comic underpinnings, while Palamon navigates a more tragic course of action. Their interplay proves more nuanced than this last statement suggests, however. As I will discuss, their opposition dovetails with the larger exploration of paradoxical conflations in the play. Their eventual combat in the final act serves as an ultimate point of convergence for both taxonomies. The remainder of the second act solidifies this generic distinction as a banished Arcite, envious of Palamon since the latter will be able to see Emilia again, decides to remain in Athens and compete in games of athleticism (in disguise) in hopes of impressing Theseus and winning Emilia's hand (II, iii. 86-94). The premise stresses Arcite's affinities to the comic genre by relying on some its salient conventions (disguise and physical prowess) as dramatic resolves. Arcite's win and betrothal of Emilia rapidly confirms this idea. The fortuitous resolution, however, is undermined by Palamon, whose escape from prison releases the bitterness of frustrated romantic schemas into the play.

Their imprisonment also prompts the play's subplot, in which the Jailer's Daughter becomes enamoured of Palamon. In doing so, it offsets the kinsmen's quarrel, countering the comic melancholy Shakespeare meticulously sets up in the play's first act with a Fletcherian alternative. Much has been written in terms of the peculiar participation of the Jailer's Daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. She stands as clear addition to Chaucer's story, which contains no such figure.[575] Despite her infatuation for Palamon, her involvement, on the

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[575] Interestingly, in Chaucer's version, Arcite, upon being released from prison, suffers from love melancholy. After listing a slew of symptoms, the narrator remarks that "and in is geere for al the world he ferde / Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye / Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye, / Engendred of humour melancolik / Bifroen, in his celle fantastik / and shortly, turn was al up so doun / Bothe habit and eek disposicioun / Of hym, this woful lovere daun Arcite," Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, Boston: Houghton, 1987, 1371-1379.

whole, evolves tangentially from the main plot[576] and discussions of the character generally

oscillate from an argument for her purely comedic function,[577] to an understanding of the

character, as Lyne puts it, as "marooned in her darkly comic subplot but herself a rather tragic

figure who barely sees her love."[578] Her characterization diverges from the types of

melancholy discussed throughout this dissertation, specifically those operating in late

Shakespearean plays. While this divergence may result from Fletcher's authorship, her

melancholy, grounded in the symptoms of unrequited love, finds an echo in that of Leontes

and Pericles, whose overwhelming grief contrasts the less tangible sources of melancholy that

develop throughout their respective plays. Beyond this connection, however, her affect

beckons a return to a sense of humourality that exceeds the one found in Shakespearean

comedy. Her melancholy is not only described in humoural terms, its *dramatization* itself is

predicated on humourality. The subplot hinges on medical and scientific doctrines concerned

with diagnosing and curing her. The character thus embody what William Kerwin describes as

a Jacobean theatre's creation of a "new cultural value placed on production—as opposed to

just transmission—of scientific knowledge [and] a different attitude toward performance,

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[576] Julie Sanders contends that, unlike its Chaucerian source text which transpires across many years, the play's "compression of time contributes to the audience unease nurtured by tragicomedy. Unease of this nature," she adds, "colors the mood at the end of the play; several critics have remarked how precarious the sense of closure is in *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*" Sanders argues specifically that the Jailer's Daughter subplot seems to possess an altogether different time line that the main plot involving the kinsmen, "Mixed Messages: The Aesthetics of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works: Volume IV: The Poems, The Problem Comedies, The Late* Plays, eds. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, 445-451, 450-451.

[577] The character seems to have gained its tragic edge in more modern productions. Interviewed about playing her at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Imogen Stubbs remarked that the character proved "infinitely more interesting than Ophelia [and] a terribly credible character for us, now," Ronnie Mulryne, *This Golden Round: The Royal Shakespeare Company at the Swan*, Stratford-upon-Avon: Mulryne and Shrewing, 1989, 110.

[578] Lyne 102. See Susan Green, "'A mad woman? We are made, boys!,'" *Shakespeare, Fletcher, and The Two Noble Kinsmen.* Ed. Charles H. Frey, Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1989, 121-132 for a discussion of the character in terms of gender specifically,; see also Elena Bonelli, "The Elizabethan Ma(Lady): Lovesickness and the Medicalization of Desire in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Textus* 6 (1993): 48-56, for an examination of the Jailer's Daughter Subplot as it relates to medical and psychological notions of erotic desires.

opening up the possibility of a brave new world of artistic independence."[579] The Jailer's

Daughter can be understood as representational of this dramatic shift. Her lovesickness,

despite its putative tragic undertones, sparks much of the actual comedy that develops within

The Two Noble Kinsmen, marking another departure from previous comic exploration of such

matters.

Following her initial praise of the kinsmen (II, i), the Jailer's Daughter reappears on

stage later in the second act, now hopelessly in love with Palamon. Once again, proper

dramatic justification yields to powerful emotional impact. It is in this scene that the break

between Shakespearean and Fletcherian depictions of melancholy truly emerges. The

Daughter immediately relates her condition to female humourality. "Out upon't / What pushes

are we wenches driven to," she exclaims, "When fifteen once has found us! (II, iv. 5-7).[580] Her

infatuation worsens throughout the speech, until her imagining of Palamon grows obsessive:

> Then, I loved him,
> Extremely loved him, infinitely loved him,
> And yet he had a cousin, fair as he too,
> But in my heart was Palamon, and there,
> Lord, what coil he keeps! (II, iv. 14-18).

Utterances such as this one exemplify what Neely describes of as the rise of a subcategory of

melancholy concerned specifically with women, born out of the "dynamic interactions

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[579] Kerwin, 170-171.

[580] Pasterns explains that "in its complex reaction to the physical environment, the body of humoural theory was thought to change from day to day, moment to moment, as it took in, concocted and released elemental humours," *The Body Embarrassed*, 167. This notion proved particularly true as it pertained to the female once body once it developed reproductive capabilities, a tenet, Paster writes, which could "reinforce a conventional construction of the female body as dangerously open and the female imagination as dangerously impressionable," 181. Likewise, as she contents in *Humoring the Body*, the Jailer's Daughter's remarks could also be alluding to the dramatic device representative of "the nature of the affective and bodily changes imagined to occur when young female protagonists are aroused, through the workings of desire, to their ostensible biological (and patriarchal) destiny as wives and mothers," 105.

between women sufferers and creative doctors."[581] This effective "culturing [of] new diseases," she contends, hinged on the convergence of several factors, namely, "a slot in existing medical taxonomy; cultural polarities that elicit it; observability; and the release offered to sufferers," the convergence of which rendered the creation of female melancholy possible.[582] Though depictions of female melancholy pervade early modern drama before *The Two Noble Kinsmen*—one simply has to refer back to the any of the previous chapters for Shakespearean examples of the notion—never before is the condition dealt with such attention and consideration for its intricacies. After the Jailer's Daughter allows Palamon to escape from prison, she never interacts with him again. The focus of her following scenes revolves exclusively on the progression, diagnosis, and eventual treatment of her melancholy. She grows progressively incoherent, her lovesick infatuation with Palamon morphing into hysteria as she proclaims to "love him beyond love and beyond reason, / Or wit, or safety. I have made him know it; / I care not, I am desperate" (II, vi. 11-13). Overtaken by her condition, she wanders through the woods, uttering nonsensicalities, eventually envisioning an imaginary wreck at sea:

> Yonder's the sea and there's a ship; how't tumbles!
> And there's a rock lies watching under water.
> Now, now, it beats upon it; now, now now,
> There's a leak sprung, a sound one. How they cry! (III, iv. 5-8).[583]

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[581] "Changes in medical theory," Neely notes, "grow out of the urgent scrutiny of women's distraction in the light of pressing needs to reassess supernaturally caused ailments as natural diseases," 69.

[582] Neely 70. The factors listed represent the four vectors in Ian Hacking's ecological niche of madness, *Mad Travelers: Reflections on the Reality of Transient Mental Illnesses*, Charlottesville (VA): UP of Virginia, 1998. 81. Neely reads the character of Jailer's Daughter under these terms, arguing for her "Englishness" vis-à-vis the overly classical influences found throughout the rest of the play, 83.

[583] In arguing for a reconsideration of Shakespearean romance from both "the familiar topos of shipwreck and the broad framework of ecological thinking," Steve Mentz links the actual shipwreck in *The Winter's Tale* to the imaginary one the Jailer's Daughter conjures up. According to him the fact that "her storm is entirely artificial emphasizes her marginal social position, from which only literary structures are available to her," "Shipwreck and Ecology: Toward a Structural Theory of Shakespeare and Romance," *The Shakespeare International Yearbook* 8. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, 165-182, 174. One could also draw a parallel between the monosyllabic

The vision dislocates her from the imaginary shipwreck; she beholds it at a distance (rather than envisioning herself in its grasp), suggesting that her affliction differs somewhat from other melancholic characters who link their sorrows to maritime imagery. Conversely, this proves a far cry from Shakespeare's melancholic characters, female or otherwise, who question and justify their ailments more than categorically yield to them. Moreover, the character's affliction, far from impeding dramatic progression, leads to some of the play's most entertaining scenes. In the midst of her delirious wanderings, she encounters a boys' playing company, led by the schoolmaster Gerald, who eagerly incorporate her fits of lunacy into the impromptu performance of a morris dance for Theseus and his entourage (III, v).[584] The morris dance situates her within the comical context of the play's lower-rank characters. The scene, which offers a respite from the turmoil surrounding the kinsmen, reaffirms the disconnectedness that exists between the story of Jailer's Daughter and the play's primary dramatic focus.

The rest of the Daughter's participation revolves specifically around the medical dimensions of her lovesickness. Concerned for her health after her wooer rescues her from drowning (IV, i. 52-65), her father consults a physician. Asked about her general state, the father describes her as being

> Continually in a harmless distemper,
> Sleeps little; altogether without appetite, save often
> Drinking; dreaming of another world, and a better;
> And, what broken piece of matter soe'er she's about,

---

repetitions of her speech ("now") and Leontes' iterations of 'nothing' when he succumbs to his jealousy. Both speeches can be understood as signifying a linguistic breakdown under the weight of an overwhelming melancholy.

[584] The whole performance, in its content and reception, is akin to the ones found *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Love's Labor's Lost*, where lower-born characters prove the target of ridicule while entertaining members of the ruling class.

The name 'Palamon' lards it, that she farces ev'ry
Business withal, fits it to every question (IV, iii. 3-8).

The symptoms listed here, a lack of sleep and appetite, hallucinations, an obsession with

Palamon, all purport lovesickness.[585] Upon observing her, the Doctor recasts her condition

within its explicit melancholic context. "How she continues this fancy! 'Tis not an engrafted /

Madness," he informs the Jailer, "but a most thick and profound / Melancholy" (IV, iii. 49-

51). The prognosis, with its allusions to thickness and depth, channels a return to humourality

typical of Fletcher's depictions of melancholy.[586] As he subsequently explains to the Wooer,

the Jailer's Daughter's infatuation with Palamon has wreaked havoc on her physical balance:

That intemp'rate surfeit of her eye hath distempered
The other senses. They may return and
Settle again to execute their preordained faculties, but
They are now in a most extravagant vagary (IV, iii. 71-74).

The assessment is inherently humoural. According to him, lovesickness has penetrated the

Daughter's body through the eye and upset her body, depriving organs and senses of their

'faculties.'[587] Yet, the characterization he supplies differs from previous explorations of

humourous characters such as Jonson's. Unlike in humour plays, the recommended corrective

is no longer found in elaborate and punitive social schemes but, rather, relies on sound

diagnostics and scientific treatments.

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[585] See Ferrand, 228-231.

[586] As detailed in the introduction, this process repeats itself continually in Fletcher's work when dealing with melancholy or humours more generally. See plays such as *The Humourous Lieutenant* or *A Wife for Month* for examples.

[587] It was a tenet of classical medicine that the eyes were potential sites of infection (as a gateway to the brain and other organs). This view was particularly prevalent in discussions of lovesickness. In his treatise on the subject, Ferrand comments that "just as this disease slips into the entrails of the body through the eyes, so the eyes are our first testimonial of its presence," 269. See also Wells, 40-44.

This shift denotes the growing importance that the medical practitioner figure holds within such dramatic constructs.[588] The cure that the Doctor suggests carries a certain degree of Galenic *mise en scène*, since he believes that her symptoms can be alleviated by feigning an indulgence to her lovesick fantasies, thus fulfilling her irrational craving. "It is falsehood she is in, which is, / With falsehood to be combatted" (IV, iii. 95-96), he proclaims before instructing the Wooer to feign being Palamon so as to satisfy the Daughter's longing. Sexual consummation is thus introduced as the ultimate curative agent. "Please her appetite," he orders the Wooer to do, "and do it home; it cures her, *ipso facto*, / The melancholy humour that infects her" (V, ii. 37-39). The Doctor's prescription of sexual intercourse as a remedy for her romantic infatuation finds obvious root in early modern theories of lovesickness. As Beecher and Ciavolella, explain, "erotic melancholy began in the instinctual quest for sexual gratification. In that sense, the melancholy imagination is the mental counterpart to an incessant craving for coitus in order to release the tension created by the sexual drives."[589] The idea evokes the return towards physicality (and baser, more comical behaviours) that the melancholy of the Jailer's Daughter represents.[590] Moreover, the Doctor's proposed cure is concomitant with the prevailing distinction in the period between what Ferrand terms "licit and elicit lovemaking."[591] In other words, lovesickness did not translate into a sexual license. The cure through sexual intercourse was recommended only within the context of marriage.

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[588] This reiterates Kerwin's notion that the drama of the seventeenth century frames the figure of the doctor as a "physician-persuading" and a "playwright-directing," 173. Though Kerwin's analysis deals specifically with John Ford's *The Lover's Melancholy*, the concepts he interprets certainly apply to Fletcher's contribution in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*."

[589] Beecher and Ciavolella, 142.

[590] The treatment recalls Kerwin's notion medical remedies as "three-dimensional, requiring changes in body, mind, and social arrangements," 173.

[591] Ferrand, 334. "No physician," Ferrand writes, "would refuse to someone suffering from erotic mania or melancholy the enjoyment of the object of desire in marriage in accordance with both divine and human law," 334.

The scheme the Doctor devises with the aid of the wooer suits this idea since it offers the Daughter a potential husband, so as to legitimize the sexual encounter.[592]

It should be noted that the Jailer's Daughter is never cured of her ailment *during* the play. The Doctor exits the stage with a promise to her father that "within these three or four days / I'll make her right again" (V, ii. 105-106). What this omission suggests is that, as far as the play is concerned, the delineation of her condition supersedes its treatment. As Neely puts it, the Doctor's plan "leads to a remedy that dramatizes at length the folklore cures of the medical tradition."[593] Melancholy is an accessory to the comic plot, a catalyst that allows a physician character to brilliantly dispel it. The dramatic tapering off of the Jailer's Daughter's story, in effect, points to the divergence at play between her melancholy and the one developing within the central plot. The Jailer's Daughter, much like the other nameless characters associated with her story,[594] has fulfilled her comedic function, and can properly exit the play, while the kinsmen have yet to resolve their dispute over Emilia. This idea furthers the divide between Fletcher's characterization of melancholy here and its Shakespearean counterpart.

The third act initiates a series of confrontations between the kinsmen that culminates in their ritualized confrontation in the final act. Their exchanges oscillate between harsh and casual interactions that bespeak the tragicomic nature of their relationship. The kinsmen trade insults, reminisce about past sexual conquests, and eventually prepare to duel out in the woods

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[592] The play also introduces the wooer early on (II, i.), before the Daughter falls ill, so as to legitimise their eventual union.

[593] "By means of the dramatization of the Jailer's Daughter's madness and its cure," Neely adds, "women's delusions are now situated in their bodies and the 'benefits of marriage' establish as therapy," 86-87.

[594] It is a noteworthy anomaly that all of the characters involved in the curing of the Jailer's Daughter do not possess proper names. This could be indicative of their lower-rank within the play's social structure, or of the subservience of such details to the melancholy that afflicts her character.

in a truly comical scene predicated on exaggerated chivalric rites (III, vi). The casual tone of

the repartee they engage in while arming each other, bordering on mundane, recalls the comic

rhythm that infused their previous discourse upon seeing Emilia:

> PALAMON. Then, as I am an honest man, and love
>   With all the justice of affection,
>   I'll pay thee soundly. [*He choose one suit of armor*.]
>   This I'll take.
> ARCITE. [*indicating the other suit*.]:   That's mine then.
>   I'll arm you first.
> PALAMON.   Do. Pray thee tell me, cousin,
>   Where got'st thou this good armor?
> ARCITE. [*arming Palamon.*]   'Tis the Duke's
>   And to say true, I stole it. Do I pinch you?
> PALAMON. No.
> ARCITE.   Ist' not too heavy?
> PALAMON.   I have worn lighter,
>   But I shall make it serve.
> ARCITE.   I'll buckle't close.
> PALAMON. By any means.
> ARCITE.   You care not for a grand guard? (III, vi. 50-58).

The battle is ultimately prevented by the arrival of Theseus, who decides to settle their dispute

once and for all by pitting them against one another in a chivalric duel to be held in months'

time. The winner will claim Emilia as his wife, while the loser will be executed.[595] The stage

is thus set for a gloomy conclusion that will fully sever the play from its comic

underpinnings.[596]

A sentiment of inescapability, so common to Shakespearean iterations of melancholy,

pervades the final act, being most clearly expressed in Palamon's remark that "the glass is

running now that cannot finish / Till one of us expire" (V, i. 18-19). In a tripartite dramatic

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[595] This scene provides a reiteration of the first act, where Theseus' military mindset is altered by the pleas of various (mostly female) characters.

[596] In another departure from Chaucer's text, the kinsmen are given a month to return home and bring back three knights for the eventual tourney. This is a stark condensation of time and numbers, as the Chaucer's knights are granted almost a year to bring back a hundred knights each (1845-1869). This eschewing of a lengthy temporal frame furthers the emotional divide between the play and previous Shakespearean romances.

structure, Arcite, Palamon, and Emilia prepare themselves for the upcoming battle, delivering consecutive devotional speeches that reiterate each of their stakes in the matter. Arcite, the more sanguine of the two kinsmen, channels the dynamism and prowess of Mars, asking to receive "the hearts of lions and / The breath of tigers, yea the fierceness too, / Yea, the speed also" (V, i. 39-41). Palamon's pleas to Venus underline his propensity for melancholy, as his devotions praise the goddess's capacity to subdue the passions of men and her power to

> Call the fiercest tyrant from his rage
> And weep unto a girl; that hast the might,
> Even with an eye-glance to choke the Mars' drum
> And turn th'alarm to whispers (V, i. 78-81).

This call for a subservience to Venus, and her ability to "induce / Stale gravity to dance!" (V, i. 84-85), foreshadows the tragic implications of their battle. Awaiting the fight and weighing the dual marital possibilities she faces, Emilia prays to Diana that whoever would prove the best husband emerges victorious. In doing so, she provides the most succinct distinction of the kinsmen the play offers:

> Arcite is gently visaged, yet his eye
> Is like an engine bent, or a sharp weapon
> In a soft sheath; mercy and manly courage
> Are bedfellows in his visage. Palamon
> Has a most menacing aspect; his brow
> Is graved, and seems to bury what it frowns on,
> Yet sometime 'tis not so, but alters to
> The quality of his thoughts. Long time his eye
> Will dwell upon his object. Melancholy
> Becomes him nobly; So does Arcite's mirth;
> But Palamon's sadness is a kind of mirth,
> So mingled as if mirth did make him sad
> And sadness merry. Those darker humours that
> Stick misbecominly on others, on him
> Live in fair dwelling (V, iii. 41-55).

The assessment comes shockingly late in a play that has alerted its audience as to the kinsmen's seemingly undistinguishable characters throughout its course. On one level, it

stresses the division that operates between them. According to Emilia, Arcite possesses both handsome and heroic attributes, being compared to a sharp sword in a soft sheath. Palamon's countenance appears more threatening and her comment that his brow "seems to bury what it frowns own," eerily foreshadows Arcite's imminent death. Concurrently, the passage also reiterates their affective contrast, as Emilia remarks that each of them nobly conveys mirth or melancholy. Her description attests not so much to the kinsmen's initial state of being as it does to the condition their ongoing competition has placed them in. More importantly, the latter part of her speech, which also betrays her interest in Palamon, also alludes to their embodiment of antithetical forces. Arcite and Palamon are presented as exhibiting a commendable balance of melancholy and mirth that effectively mingles each affect; the kinsmen embody mirthful sadness and sorrowful mirth.[597]

Perhaps the clearest distinction between the melancholy that affects the Jailer's Daughter and the one emoted by the kinsmen resides in this conception of it as a necessary cyclical counterweight to mirth that may not necessitate eradication after all. Emilia's final comment that darker humours live in 'fair dwelling' within them also attests to the irremediable imbalance that the death of Arcite will eventually cause. Though the idea of consecutive devotions to deities is taken from Chaucer's text (1881-2482), the play avoids the notion of divine will that supersedes the actual battle in *The Knight's Tale*. In Chaucer's version, Mars and Venus are distraught by the fact that they cannot both fulfil their devotees' pledges. It is Saturn, whose association to melancholy cannot be overlooked here,[598] that promises to uphold both of their desires (2443-2452). In doing so, the story removes any agency from the participants' hands, the outcome seemingly having already been decided.

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[597] This is reinforced in editions of the play, such as Potter's, that substitute "him" for "they" in line fifty-four.
[598] Klibansky et al., 116-119.

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Though the conclusion is identical, there is no trace of divine intervention in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The focus remains on the two cousins and the affective contrast they embody. The battle transpires offstage (V, iii. 67-95) as servants inform Emilia of its developments and, after a back and forth in which each kinsman is thought to be at an advantage, Arcite eventually triumphs, sealing Palamon's fate. In its final complication of the dramatic trajectory, the expected outcome for each kinsman, marriage for Arcite and death for Palamon, is reversed in a sudden twist of fate; Arcite dies following a fall off his horse and Palamon is awarded Emilia's hand. The union of Emilia and Palamon thus nullifies the outcome of the tournament and provides one last instance reflective of the kinsmen' interchangeability. Despite an *in extremis* reconciliation, the final scenes offer no attempt at redemption, such as the ones put forth in *Pericles* or *The Winter's Tale*. Arcite's demise extirpates much if not all of the rejoicing from the promise of marital celebrations that closes out the play. The pledge to honour friendship in the wake of a tragic downfall rings hollow given the suddenness with which the kinsmen forsook similar professions early on.

Funeral rites delay nuptials one, as was the case for Theseus and Hippolyta earlier on, and the play thus comes full circle. Theseus' closing speech encompasses this precarious conflation once more:

> A day or two
> Let us look sadly, and give grace unto
> The funeral of Arcite, in whose end
> The visages of bridegrooms we'll put on
> And smile with Palamon—for whom an hour,
> But one hour since, I was as dearly sorry
> As glad of Arcite, and am now as glad
> As for him sorry. Oh, you heavenly charmers,
> What things you make for us! For what we lack
> We laugh, for what we have are sorry, still
> Are children in some kind. Let us be thankful
> For that which is, and with you leave dispute

>That are above our question. Let's go off
>And bear us like the time (V, iv. 124-137).

The speech reiterates a conflation of the kinsmen in tragicomic terms; bridegrooms will succeed funeral rites much like laughter overtakes the sorrowful memory of Arcite's passing. It is in this suggestion that Athens will be expected to mourn before turning towards celebrations, that the play's melancholic aftermath lingers on, if only because the audience will not be privy to the eventual merriment. Neither Arcite's burial nor Palamon's wedding will transpire on stage, but the fact that the former must be performed first tilts the tonal axis away from its festive extremity. This represents another departure from the Chaucerian source text, where several years go by in-between Arcite's tragic demise and the eventual marriage of Palamon and Emelye (3067-3074).[599] Within such a perplexing conclusion, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* recall both *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* in the impressionistic melancholic response it elicits.

Within this framework, it is significant that Shakespeare's career culminates with his participation in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.[600] As far as its engagement with melancholy is concerned, the concept seemingly reaches a tipping point, both in terms of the emotional response it triggers and the dramatic insubstantiality with which it operates. The play foregoes any attempt at reconciliation, no matter how uneasy, and rejects the placating effect that a lengthy temporal gap might exert. The suddenness of the play's ending makes for a melancholic swan song to Shakespeare's career. This final play transcends the generic

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[599] Though Palamon and Emelye are said to be grieving Arcite for several years, the ending of The Knight's Tale is decidedly more joyous than its early modern adaption. The narrator declares that "For now is Palamon in alle wele, / Lyvynge in blisse, in richesses, and in heele / And Emelye him loveth so tendrely, / And he hire serveth her so gentilly, / That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene / Of jalousie or any oother teene," 3101-3106.

[600] Though the dating of *Henry VIII* and the lost play *Cardenio* could potentially negate this claim from a historical standpoint, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* remains the last (known) play in which Shakespeare participated that relies on comic melancholy in an ongoing contrast of mirthful and tragic elements.

dovetailing that has characterised the bulk of his dramatic canon while deferring to Fletcher's newly-fashioned concept of melancholy and its increasingly medicalized treatment of humourality. Coupled with the melancholic *tableaux* offered in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, completes the development of comic melancholy in Shakespearean drama that began with *The Comedy of Errors*; whereas two brothers found themselves in Ephesus, two kinsmen lose one another in Athens.

The premise that melancholy lends itself to a totalizing reading of Shakespearean comedy that begins in *The Comedy of Errors* and ends with *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is as critically tantalizing as it is erroneous. It would be naïve to suggest that Shakespeare consciously reworks melancholy throughout his career, finally achieving a dramatic intent in his last collaborative effort. Both biographical and chronological quagmires negate such a claim. Yet, as this dissertation has demonstrated, melancholy permeates comic plays time and again, from early farces, through mature romantic comedies, to the late plays that conclude Shakespeare's career. Much like its status within early modern England, melancholy almost effortlessly infiltrates comedic texts from a multiplicity of angles, complicating and complementing dramatic structures. In essence, the presence of melancholy in these plays is figurative of an ongoing effort in Shakespearean drama towards a genuine and mitigated representation of emotions. Comic melancholy grays the stark contrast between the brightness of merriment and the darkness of sorrow.

The richness and exceptionality of Shakespeare's representation of comic melancholy cannot conceal the fact that such a dramatic scope seemingly loses out to the seventeenth-century tragicomic vogue of Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, and the like. Their dramatic output testifies to the ongoing popularity of humoural depictions within inherently medical

considerations. Such a focus is lacking throughout Shakespearean comedy, which increasingly turns toward a wistful sense of melancholy that frustrates the very genre it haunts. Nevertheless, the intricacy of Shakespeare's comic melancholy is worth underscoring. The intangible sense of sadness conveyed in these plays finds an echo, in a sense, within the psychoanalytic fashioning of "melancholia," blurring the lines between affect, psyche, and emotion. Varied titles such as Anne Cheng's *The Melancholy of Race*, Peter Schwenger's *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, or Eric Wilson's *The Melancholy Android: On the Psychology of Sacred Machines* suggest that the concept remains highly malleable and resonates strongly within literary, philosophical, and sociological spheres of research.[601] The implications of such critical efforts lie well beyond the scope of this dissertation but the potency of Shakespeare's comic melancholy and its indelible effects on the transformation of his comic style endure, granting previously unnoticed critical gateways into problematic dramatic features.

Charlie Chaplin famously said that life was a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot. Melancholy operates in a similar fashion in Shakespearean comedy. Taken individually, each play appears problematic in developing such extensive characterizations of melancholy. At a distance, within the comic canon as a whole, they appear much less incongruous and much more in synch with genuine emotional responses; melancholy is part of life, of comedy, and of human experience. In the end, Shakespeare's comic melancholy can perhaps offer us what Simon Critchley's deems "mirthless laughter," which represents

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[601] Anne Anlin, Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001; Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006; Eric G. Wilson, *The Melancholy Android: On the Psychology of Sacred Machines*, Albany: State U of New York P, 2006.

> the essence of humour. This is the *risus pursus*, the highest laugh, the laugh that laughs at the laugh, but laugh at that which is unhappy … this smile does not bring unhappiness, but rather elevation and liberation, the lucidity of consolation. This is why, melancholy animals that we are, human beings are also the most cheerful. We smile and find ourselves ridiculous. Our wretchedness is our greatness.[602]

Much like mirthless laughter, Shakespearean melancholy invites us to laugh without mirth, to find ourselves ridiculous by finding characters who insist on being melancholy in a comedy ridiculous. There exists a bit of us in Viola, in Antonio, in Feste, in Leontes, and so on; their melancholy brings about our own "lucidity of consolation." I have begun this dissertation by discussing the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew* and its idea that a comedy might exert health benefits for one whose blood was congealed with too much sadness. As I conclude, it is important to keep in mind Sly's answer to the counterfeit doctor's recommendation: "Marry, I will let them play it" (II, 133). My reading of Shakespearean comedy brought attention to the emotionally charged underpinnings that complicates each play's engagement with melancholy. Yet, these works remain, in the end, comedies. Though they may elicit strong, contradictory emotions, they eventually release us from their spell. All they ask if that we play along a little while, and be reminded that, much like the old jester impervious to wind and rain, melancholy "does walk about the orb like the / Sun; it shines everywhere" (III, i. 38-39).

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[602] Critchley, 111.

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