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# Hamlet's Melancholic Imagination

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents an interpretation of Hamlet's psychological condition through the prism of early modern ideas about the melancholic imagination. It begins with an account of what Shakespeare took from one of his principal sources, Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, on the subject of 'Amleth's' melancholy (part I). It proceeds with a summary of the relationship between melancholy and the imagination in ancient and early modern medicine, and its reception in Shakespeare's England (part II). It then turns to the role of the imagination in *Hamlet* (parts III and IV). It suggests that Shakespeare used the relationship between melancholy and imagination to create, in the world of the play, a melancholic 'imaginary reality', where Hamlet's 'diseased' imagination is an unsettling and corrupting force not only in his own mind and body, but also in the wider environment of Elsinore.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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That Hamlet suffers from melancholy has never been in doubt. The prince himself is aware of his 'weakness' and 'melancholy' (2.2.597), and Claudius perceives 'melancholy' brooding in his soul (3.1.166–67).<sup>1</sup> The well-known classical tropes of the condition – sad and gloomy thoughts, self-hatred, pensiveness, distraction, vacillation, impetuosity – are scattered throughout the play in the words and actions of the prince, even whilst he suggests that he has 'that within which passes show' (1.2.85), and actively misleads those who are trying to identify the nature of his disturbance and its elusive cause (2.2.48–58, 2.2.145–150; 3.1.1–27; 3.2.317–35). For many generations of audiences and readers, Hamlet's distinctively melancholic introspections, especially in the soliloquies expressing the unsettled and darkly inflected motions of his mind, have appeared to be integral to his character.<sup>2</sup> In modern criticism, Hamlet's melancholy has sometimes been used to provide solutions to the puzzles of the play, such as his irresolution and failure to act, a trend that

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<sup>1</sup>In-text references are to the Arden 2 edition: Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins.

<sup>2</sup>See, for instance, Bucknill, *Mad Folk of Shakespeare*, 48–143; Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10, 432; Somerville, *Madness in Shakespearean Tragedy*, 39; Scott, *Shakespeare's Melancholics*, 73–107.

was given further impetus by the publication in 1964 of the monumental study of pre-modern melancholy by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Hamlet's melancholy has been discussed in 'humoral' readings and passed through the medium of affect theory, incorporating material from modern cognitive neuroscience, psychology and psychoanalysis as well as early modern medicine and philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Here, I offer a contribution to the more strictly historicist commentary on this subject, and propose an interpretation of the prince's melancholic malaise as predominantly imaginative.<sup>5</sup> I begin with an account of what Shakespeare took from one of his principal sources, Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques*, on the subject of 'Amleth's' melancholy (part I). I proceed with a summary of the relationship between melancholy and the imagination in early modern medical works, and its reception in Shakespeare's England (part II). I then turn to the role of the melancholic imagination in *Hamlet* (parts III and IV). My suggestion is that Shakespeare used the relationship between melancholy and imagination to create, in the world of the play, a melancholic 'imaginary reality', where Hamlet's 'diseased' imagination is an unsettling and corrupting force not only in his own mind and body, but also in the wider environment of Elsinore.

## I.

The story of Hamlet's melancholy begins not with Shakespeare, but with the French historian, poet and translator François de Belleforest, whose fifth volume of the popular *Histoires tragiques* was first published in 1572 and reissued seven times by 1601. Belleforest's version of 'Amleth', based on a tale recorded in the *Gesta Danorum* by the medieval chronicler Saxo Grammaticus, has a princely protagonist with an adulterous mother and an uncle who murders his father, and is widely regarded as a major source for *Hamlet*.<sup>6</sup> We must assume that Shakespeare read about 'Amleth' in French, since the English translation was not available until 1608, but Shakespeare would have likely known Belleforest's collections from the English translations of Geoffrey Fenton (1566) and William Painter (1566–75). More importantly, the parallels – for example, Amleth's feigning of insanity to deliver uncomfortable truths to his antagonists – are too strong and numerous to be coincidental.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 127, 138–45; Babb, *Elizabethan Malady*, 107–9; Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, 235; Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, 77–112; Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art*, 208–42. Qualified views are expressed in Wilson, *What Happens in 'Hamlet'*, 237–8; Dodsworth, *Hamlet Closely Observed*, 85–9.

<sup>4</sup>See Paster, *Humoring the Body*, 25–60 and Trevor, *Poetics of Melancholy*, 28, 63–86; Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage*, 120–54; Cutrofello, *All for Nothing*, 15–41.

<sup>5</sup>Amongst the more recent studies, see Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, 56, 196, 215, 392, 396; Anglin, "'Something in me Dangerous'". Bernard, *Shakespearean Melancholy*, is confined to the comedies. On Hamlet's imagination, see Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, 78–9, 105–6; Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 142–49.

<sup>6</sup>Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, vol. 7, 10–15; Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books*, 29–33; Drakakis, *Shakespeare's Resources*, 71–81, 188–202.

<sup>7</sup>Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*, vol. 7, 13–15; Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books*, 31. I am disregarding the lost *Ur-Hamlet* as a potential source because nearly everything we know about it is speculative.

I am interested here in a specific connection between *Hamlet* and Belleforest's tale. In the latter, at a banquet laid on by the king of England, Amleth refuses to eat or drink. He has hidden knowledge about the food and wine, revealed to be contaminated by human remains and iron rust, and about the lowly social origins and scandalous behaviour of his royal hosts.<sup>8</sup> Belleforest digresses on the source of Amleth's revelations. 'In those days', he recalls, 'the northern countries ... lived in obedience to Satan', and were full of enchanters and gentlemen with occult knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Amleth was one of these, having been 'instructed in that science, in which the evil spirit exploits men, and informs the prince (as he can) of things that have taken place'.<sup>10</sup> This is the occasion of Belleforest's reference to the prince's 'melancholy':

I am not concerned here with discussing the gift of divination in man, and whether this prince, by the great force of melancholy [*la vehemence de la melancholie*], had received these impressions, divining that which no-one else had ever professed, as with the philosophers who treat of judicial astrology, attributing the force of such foretelling to those who are influenced by Saturn, often speaking of things which, when such fury finishes, those who have expressed them cannot understand. And this is why Plato says that many seers, poets and soothsayers, after the exertion, and the impetuosity of their fury cools itself down, hardly understand what they have written; although in treating of these things during their rapture, they discourse so well about what they reveal, that the inventors and practitioners of the arts they lay out praise their speech and subtle disputation. And I do not care to bring up what many believe, that a soul completely turned to reason becomes the home and habitation of intermediate demons, by which means it grasps the secret knowledge of natural and human things; and much less do I take account of the rulers of the world supposed by the magicians, by means of whom they boast of effecting marvels. Although it would be miraculous for Amleth to prophesy what would turn out to be exceedingly true, if (as I have told you) the devil does not have perfect knowledge of past affairs ...<sup>11</sup>

What is 'la vehemence de la melancholie' possibly experienced by Amleth? It is not just a passing emotion or mood, and without any pathological symptoms, it is unlikely to be the melancholic disease. Instead, the references to Saturn, divination, demonic forces and the 'philosophers who treat of judicial astrology' are indications that Belleforest is referring to Marsilio Ficino's influential account of the melancholic complexion, the healthy temperament in which black bile predominates. According to Ficino, when the (naturally cold and dry) black bile of complexionate melancholics is moderately heated and tempered by blood and yellow bile, Saturn draws their souls into contemplation of 'the highest matters', and stirs them up into a divine 'fury'. In this 'genial' condition – that is, of melancholic 'genius' or 'spirit' – they become, as Ficino wrote in the

<sup>8</sup>Belleforest, *Le Cinquiesme Livre*, 241–2, 250–2. Translations from early modern sources are mine unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>9</sup>Belleforest, *Le Cinquiesme Livre*, 242–3.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 243.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 243–4.

*De vita libri tres* (1489), ‘both neighbour to the divine and instrument of the divine’, and are ‘filled from above with divine influences and oracles’ that enable them to ‘contrive things uncommon and unheard of, and predict the future’.<sup>12</sup> Belleforest’s debt to Ficino in this passage goes further, encompassing his description of a ‘soul completely turned to reason’ by demons, and his reference to prophets and poets who fail to understand their own words but are praised by the inventors of those arts, an idea taken from Ficino’s introduction to Plato’s *Ion*.<sup>13</sup> However, Belleforest elides celestial inspiration, divine *furor* and diabolical magic. To use astral and demonic forces to obtain occult knowledge, he suggests, is to traffic in the ‘illicit and damnable arts’ of the devil. Having established that Amleth’s divinatory powers were Satanic ‘follies’, he resumes the story.<sup>14</sup>

This is Belleforest’s only mention of ‘melancholie’ in his tale, and its connection with the lugubrious melancholy of Hamlet is not straightforward. Belleforest’s prince may or may not have been a ‘genial’ melancholic, but this has no bearing on the prince’s mental disposition elsewhere in the narrative, where the main characteristics of Amleth are his distinctly non-melancholic prudence, boldness and constancy.<sup>15</sup> It is misleading to argue, then, that in referring to ‘melancholie’ Belleforest was updating the qualities of ‘stoliditas’ and ‘inertia’ found in Saxo, or even to say, without qualification, that Amleth was ‘a melancholic’.<sup>16</sup> One of my claims is that in making Hamlet melancholic, Shakespeare was doing more than following Belleforest. But I also want to use Amleth’s supernaturally inspired ‘melancholie’ to refocus our view of Renaissance melancholy, in a way that recasts the role of Hamlet’s psychological disposition in the play. What Belleforest tapped into, I propose, was a nexus of ideas, exploited by Shakespeare in his characterisation of Hamlet, about the powers of the melancholic imagination.

## II.

The close association between melancholy and imagination was long-established. Early modern physicians, referring to their ancient Greek counterparts, commonly identified the disease of melancholy as a kind of madness in which imagination was the primarily ‘affected part’.<sup>17</sup> In this condition, black bile

<sup>12</sup>Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 118–23, translation modified. See Klibansky, Panofsky and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*; Brann, *Debate over the Origin of Genius*.

<sup>13</sup>Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 364–9; Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. 4, 154–69; Ficino, *Commentaries on Plato*, 202–3. A sidenote in the 1572 and 1576 editions of the *Cinquiesme Livre* misattributes the passage to ‘Platon en son Ion’.

<sup>14</sup>Belleforest, *Le Cinquiesme Livre*, 246–7.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 260; see also 210, 241, 260.

<sup>16</sup>Stabler, ‘Melancholy, Ambition, and Revenge’, 208; Babb, *Elizabethan Malady*, 109 n. 25; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds, Thompson and Taylor, 107.

<sup>17</sup>Fernel, *Medicina*, 496–7; Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 172–4. Some sources distinguish ‘imagination’ (*imaginatio*) from ‘fantasy’ (*phantasia*), but these powers are frequently conflated; see Giglioli, ‘The Matter of the Imagination’.

emitted vapours that arose to the brain and corrupted or ‘depraved’ the imagination, which produced gloomy and terrifying mental pictures (or ‘phantasms’), in turn provoking fear, sadness, disturbing thoughts, hallucinations and delusions.<sup>18</sup> The imagination was also involved in wider philosophical discussions of melancholy. According to Aristotle, melancholics lacked the self-control required for rational deliberation because they were ‘prone to follow their imagination’, being especially receptive to external sense-impressions and affected by the phantasms which proliferated chaotically in their minds.<sup>19</sup> For later thinkers who viewed the imagination as the gateway to higher influences, this receptivity raised the question of whether melancholics could predict the future, either in dreams or in inspired ‘fury’.<sup>20</sup> In Ficino’s account, when the soul received prophetic knowledge from astral, demonic or heavenly forces, the melancholic could become ‘a participant in the celestial mysteries and in providence divine’.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, for Ficino and others who considered the power of the imagination to work transitively on the souls and bodies of others – manifested in phenomena like telepathy, the ‘evil eye’, fascination and the projection of phantasmic visions – psychically and emotionally turbulent melancholics, born under ‘the malign aspect of Saturn’, were also potentially dangerous.<sup>22</sup> The darkest side of melancholy, however, was manifested when the demonic entities that infiltrated the soul were malevolent. These, as the Lutheran physician and demonologist Johann Weyer explained, were drawn into the body by black bile as *balneum diaboli*, exploiting ‘weakness of mind and body’ to ‘bind the thoughts’ and conjure deceptive phantasms and terrifying diabolical apparitions in the imagination.<sup>23</sup>

Descriptions of the destructive and extraordinary powers of the melancholic imagination circulated widely in later sixteenth-century England. Black bile and its vapours, we read in a variety of vernacular medical works, generate ‘fearfull fancies’, ‘monstrous fictions’, ‘absurde cogitations’, ‘fantasticall imaginations’, and ‘blacke formes and strange visions’ in the mind, which ‘may be seene with the eye, notwithstanding that they be within’.<sup>24</sup> Inhabiting a deluded and self-deceptive inner world, melancholics suffered ‘plaine contrarieties of conceit and perturbation’, and were compelled by ‘the motions of their foolish imaginations’, rather than rational deliberation, to make bad choices.<sup>25</sup> Physicians tended to treat theories of melancholic genius and

<sup>18</sup>Galen, *On Diseases and Symptoms*, 191, 264; Galen, *On the Affected Parts* 93–4, 153, 166–7.

<sup>19</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 416–17; Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 310–11.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 362–63; Aristotle, *Problems, Volume II*, 276–7, 286–7; Averroes, *Epitome of Parva naturalia*, 50–1; Avicenna, *De anima*, IV.2, quoted in Hasse, *Avicenna’s ‘De anima’*, 158.

<sup>21</sup>Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. 4, 120–5, 148–51, 162–5, 168–9.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 4, 110–15, 192–5; Pomponazzi, *De Incantationibus*, 244–7, 254–8.

<sup>23</sup>Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, 228–9; 229–33.

<sup>24</sup>Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, 100, 102; Lemnius, *The touchstone of complexions*, 138v 141v, 143r; Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 87, 91–2. See also Barrough, *The method of phisicke*, 35; Walkington, *Optick glasse*, 69r–72v.

<sup>25</sup>Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, 109; Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 87, 94, referring to *Nicomachean Ethics* 1150b25–28.

transitive imagination, however, in a circumspect or sceptical manner. When tempered by other humours, black bile might be a physiological cause of ‘excelente good witts and sharpe judgements’, and be a ‘great helpe ... to contemplation’, but its more extraordinary effects, that ‘stirreth men up to plaie the Philosophers, Poets, ... to prophesie’ and ‘thinck them selves inspired with the holie Ghost’, were delusional, and such that ‘may’ only ‘seeme to containe ... some divine parts’.<sup>26</sup> The influence of ‘the grimme and surlye’ Saturn was more earthly than inspirational; according to the scholar Thomas Walkington, as ‘the most disastrous and malignant planet of all’, it was more likely to make melancholics ‘brocher[s] of dangerous matchiavellisme’ – or, in the words of the physician John Harvey, ‘meere Theoristes, and phantastes, onely delighted in themselves, and offended with all the worlde besides’.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, while the great ‘force and efficacy’ of the imagination upon the body of the melancholic was indisputable, the medical doctors side-stepped questions about its transitive powers.<sup>28</sup> The possibility remained, as Francis Bacon would suggest, that the imagination could transmit effects by means of subtle spirits, like ‘the Contagion that passeth from bodie to bodie’.<sup>29</sup> But Arabic teachings that it could ‘worke miracles, pearce the heavens, commaunde the elements, lay plaine the huge mountaines, and make mountaines of the plaine ground’ were left to the natural philosophers.<sup>30</sup>

Few doubted, however, that the melancholic imagination could be subject to preternatural or supernatural interference. Attracted by black bile, Satan could ‘insinuate himself’ into the mind and induce vices such as ‘envy, emulation, bitterness, hatred, spight, sorcery, fraude, subtlety, deceipte, treason, sorow, heaviness, desperation, [and] distrust’, leading ‘to a lamentable and shamefull end’.<sup>31</sup> The Devil and his ‘evill angels’ delighted in ‘bending’ the melancholic’s emotional predisposition ‘to feare, doubt & distrust’, and corrupting their ‘conceit’ to induce delusions, and provoking them ‘to foretell & forge very strange things in their imaginations’.<sup>32</sup> Yet melancholics were also prone to ‘perswade themselves that the Divell assayleth their minde’, an erroneous self-perception that actually derived from ‘the constitution of the bodie’ or ‘some violent passion’.<sup>33</sup> This ambiguity in the role of the imagination was incorporated in theological discussions of apparitions, where it was conceded that what a person ‘imagine[s] they see or heare’ might derive from

<sup>26</sup>Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, 149r; Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 85–6, 98; Barrough, *The Method of Phisicke*, 35; Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, 199–200. See also Juan Huarte, *Examen de Ingenios*, 44–5, 48; 59; 85.

<sup>27</sup>Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, 146; Walkington, *Optick Glasse*, 68; Harvey, *A Discursive Probleme*, 5–6, 32, 34–5.

<sup>28</sup>Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, 40r, 93r.

<sup>29</sup>Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 105. See also Roger Bacon, *The Mirror of Alchimy*, 61–2.

<sup>30</sup>Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 75–6.

<sup>31</sup>Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions*, 22r–v, 23v, 153r.

<sup>32</sup>Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, 192, 205, 222; Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 100.

<sup>33</sup>Lemnius, *The Sanctuarie of Salvation*, 208; Du Laurens, *A Discourse*, 100. See also Deacon and Walker, *Dialogicall Discourses* 159–61.

‘melancholie, madnesse, weaknesse of the senses, feare, or ... some other perturbation’.<sup>34</sup> Irrespective of whether apparitions were the product of faulty sense-perception or real angels, devils or spirits of the dead, they were unquestionably images of immaterial entities perceived in the mind. Whilst Pierre Le Loyer distinguished between true ‘specters’ and the ‘false Imaginations’ (or ‘Phantosmes’) of the fearful and melancholic, the former were defined as ‘Imagination[s] of a substance without a Bodie the which presenteth it selfe sensibly unto men’ – in scholastic terminology, images of an ‘incorporeal substance’ that was immaterial but physically perceptible.<sup>35</sup>

The psychological disturbances of melancholy, then, consisted not just of destructive emotions, provoked by phantasms that were literally darkened by the humour, but of a series of interconnected effects, centred on the imagination, that mediated the physical, preternatural and supernatural domains, muddying the boundaries between the real and the unreal. Melancholics were suspended in an unsettling and indeterminate ‘imaginary reality’.

### III.

For Shakespeare, as for his contemporaries, the imagination has the potential to dominate the mind and affect the body.<sup>36</sup> Its main role is to generate ‘forms’ or ‘shapes’ in the mind, which are either mimetic representations or fictional constructions, and are closely connected – and sometimes equivalent – to vivid ‘conceits’ or ‘thoughts’.<sup>37</sup> Such ‘imaginings’ are often connected to unsettling emotions, and can have overwhelming force, occasionally through preternatural or supernatural phenomena like demonic interference or prophecy – although these are sometimes ironically presented.<sup>38</sup> In *Hamlet*, as I now want to suggest, these aspects of the imagination are inflected with the complexities attendant to the prince’s melancholy, rendering the space of the drama as an ‘imaginary reality’, in which the perceptions, emotions and mental images of the other characters are disturbed by the prince’s melancholic mind.

Imaginative disturbance is present on the stage from the start. On the battlements, in the dark and ‘bitter cold’ of the night, Barnardo and Marcellus, and then Horatio, talk fearfully of the troubling apparition and its effects on their imaginings. Marcellus reports Horatio’s sceptical opinion of the ‘dreaded sight’ that ‘tis but our fantasy’ (1.1.26–28), that is, a single but collectively shared imaginary delusion. Barnardo’s report introduces a celestial dimension

<sup>34</sup>Lavater, *Of Ghostes and Spirites*, 9, 11.

<sup>35</sup>Le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters*, 1v–4r, 99v–100r, 104r–v, 131v–134v. The scholastic doctrine is summarised in Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, 89–102, 178–80.

<sup>36</sup>*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 5.1.2–22; *The Tempest*, 3.1.56 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 1026, 1233); cf. Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, 142. For discussion, see Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*.

<sup>37</sup>*The Rape of Lucrece*, 701–2 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 70); cf. Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*, 140.

<sup>38</sup>*Henry IV, Part 2*, 1.3.31–3; *Twelfth Night*, 2.5.41–2; *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.3.208–11; *Venus and Adonis*, 661–72; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 5.1.4–9; *The Tempest*, 2.1.208–9 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 57, 518, 994, 1026, 1229, 1349).



to the Ghost, connecting its appearance with an astral event in the northern region containing the pole-star (1.1.39–41) – probably an allusion to the supernova of 1572, which had been interpreted as a sign of impending ‘dissensions, wars, and violent death’, triggered by the corruption of the air and inflammation of people’s humours.<sup>39</sup> The ‘new star’ also had another malign association, however, since the northern region was commonly thought to be inhabited by evil demons.<sup>40</sup>

The reappearance of the Ghost, one might think, would test Horatio’s view that it is a hallucination, an unequivocally false imagination, to destruction. However, the series of interconnected beliefs about psychological disturbance, imagination and celestial and demonic influences that underlie the unsettled reactions from the assembled company suggest a more complicated picture, in which the boundary between the real and the imaginary is blurred in the minds of the witnesses. Horatio, now struck with ‘fear and wonder’, can only ‘tremble and look pale’, and Barnardo asks him ‘[i]s not this something more than fantasy[?]’ (1.1.56–7). Horatio now accepts the reality of the apparition (1.1.59–61). But its resemblance to ‘our last King’ in full armour stirs his memory of the killing of old Fortinbras, which lies behind the intimation that the apparition is a portent, in accordance with its appearance at the time of the blazing star, that ‘bodes some strange eruption to our state’ (1.1.72, 83). For him, however, what has ‘appear’d’ to them is an ‘image’; for Barnardo, it is a ‘figure’ (1.1.59–61, 84, 112; cf. 1.2.199) – both terms describing an imaginary embodied shape. This status is underlined when Horatio calls it a ‘mote ... to trouble the mind’s eye’ (1.1.115), a disturbance of the imagination, even as it presages a future calamity and prompts him to recall the supernatural ‘harbingers’ of the death of Caesar (1.1.115–127).<sup>41</sup> Horatio’s response to the Ghost’s latest return indicates his persisting uncertainty: ‘Stay, illusion’ (1.1.130), he commands, granting it the ability to occupy and move in physical space, and receive an aural sense-perception, whilst identifying it as an unreal, deceptive image. Nevertheless, he is sure that it is, as he says later, a ‘marvel’ (1.2.194), a preternatural entity breaching the boundary between the heavenly and the mundane, perceptible through its effect on the imagination. In Le Loyer’s terms, the Ghost is a spectral ‘Imagination of a substance without a Bodie’, causing psychological disturbance but also bringing divine foreknowledge of the fate of Denmark (1.1.135–37).

<sup>39</sup>Olson, Olson and Doescher, ‘The Stars of Hamlet’, cited in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds Thompson and Taylor, 151; Gosselin de Vire, *La declaration d’un comete*, sig. Aiiiir–v, quote at Aiiiv: ‘dissentions, querelles, guerres & mort violent’. See Pumfrey, ‘Your Astronomers and Ours Differ Exceedingly’.

<sup>40</sup>Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 316–17; *Platonic Theology*, vol. 3, 116–19. The claim is extended to northern countries, including Scandinavia, in Bodin, *De le demonomanie des sorciers*, 120, cited in Scot, *The discoverie of witchcraft*, 94, and James I, *Daemonologie*, 69.

<sup>41</sup>Pace the editorial comment in Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins, 191, the ‘mind’s eye’ is another term for the imagination in Shakespeare’s *oeuvre*: see *Sonnets*, 27.4–10 and 113.1 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 22, 36).

With the entrance of Hamlet in the second scene, the fearful imagination is supplemented with its sorrowful counterpart. Brooding on his father's demise, the melancholic, shade-loving prince protests that he is 'too much in the sun', and has downcast eyes with 'veiled lids' (1.2.67, 70). Hamlet's exchange with Gertrude confirms his melancholic sorrow, signalled by his 'inky cloak', 'windy suspiration of forc'd breath', 'fruitful river in the eye' and 'dejected haviour of the visage'.<sup>42</sup> It also modulates the theme of the unreliability of sense-images, which he now attaches to himself. 'I know not "seems"', he says, claiming that neither these conventional external signs, nor 'all forms, moods, shapes of grief' – that is, imaginative representations of the emotion – can 'denote' him 'truly'. What is truly 'within' him, he says, is ineffable and 'passes show' (1.2.76–86); but it is still powerful, and as Hamlet's inner disquiet is rendered into speech in his first soliloquy, this is expressed in the language of appearances and mental pictures: 'How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable/Seem to me all the uses of this world!/Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden/That grows to seed ...'. As his reflection gravitates towards his immediate grievance, his mind is filled with painful mental pictures of a union in 'incestuous sheets' ('Must I remember? ... Let me not think on't'), and he interprets them as pre-saging future misfortune (1.2.129–58).

Hamlet's thoughts become ever more tightly bound up with his distinctly melancholic 'imagination's'. When he meets Horatio, he interprets his friend's presence resentfully, as being occasioned by his mother's wedding rather than his father's funeral, and his mind generates more macabre and bitter images – '[t]he funeral bak'd meats' which '[d]id coldly furnish forth the marriage tables', and an encounter with his 'dearest foe in heaven' (1.2.176–83). With his melancholic imagination preoccupied with such dark thoughts, it experiences a sudden and striking irruption that mirrors his friend's psychic disturbance: 'My father–methinks I see my father– ... In my mind's eye, Horatio' (1.2.183–5). Hamlet's phantasm is then associated, although not quite identified, with the ghostly image seen by Horatio, as 'a figure like your father' (1.2.199; cf. 1.2.210). However, it also resembles the prince with a countenance that is 'very pale' and 'more in sorrow than in anger' (1.2.231–2), all of which supports his conviction that the Ghost is a sign that '[a]ll is not well' (1.2.255).<sup>43</sup> For Hamlet, it presages the arising of '[f]oul deeds ... to men's eyes' (1.2.255–8), an ominous intimation about collective imaginative disturbance that is later amplified by Laertes when he warns his sister of the danger posed to her by the prince: '[c]ontagious blastments are most imminent' (1.3.42; cf. 5.1.244).

<sup>42</sup>On the associations of Hamlet's melancholic appearance with racialised black violence see Ian Smith, *Black Shakespeare*, 117–55, esp. 141–5.

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Plutarch, *The lives of the noble Grecians and Romaines*, 1072, and *Julius Caesar* 2.1.65 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 431).

The prince's melancholic imagination is aroused again in Act 1 Scene 4, when the King's offstage revelry and Danish custom, deplorable 'to [his] mind', provoke him to meditate dismally on how virtue is corrupted by vicious habit (1.4.14–38). In the midst of these thoughts, the Ghost returns. In Hamlet's perception, and that of his companions, the terrifying armour-clad image is now evidently beyond the confines of his mind's eye, but despite the resemblance to his father, none of the company directly or simply identify the figure as old Hamlet. The spectre is called 'it' not 'he', and so not a person (1.4.38, 58, 61–2, 63). Although the prince decides to 'call thee Hamlet/King, father, royal Dane', this is belied by his uncertainty about whether he is addressing 'a spirit of health or goblin damned', or whether it has 'wicked' or 'charitable' purpose in implanting disturbing 'thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls'. He may be convinced that he is being 'call'd' by his 'fate', but he does not know whether it is by means of celestial or infernal influence (1.4.40–45, 81–4).

Hamlet's bewilderment is shared by his companions. Horatio observes that he 'waxes desperate with imagination', a formula which suggests the deluded fantasy of a madman. But his exchange with Marcellus also points to the imagination's association with hidden knowledge, asking '[t]o what issue will this come?', receiving the doom-laden reply 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark', and linking this perception with the realm of the divine ('Heaven will direct it') (1.4.87–91). The prince's doubt endures. At the close of Act 2, he voices the worry, which lurks behind the ambiguous status of a revenge that, to his mind, is '[p]rompted ... by heaven and hell':

The spirit that I have seen  
 May be a devil, and the devil hath power  
 T'assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps,  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
 As he is very potent with such spirits,  
 Abuses me to damn me. (2.2.594–99)

We might expect that Hamlet's concern that he has been diabolically infected with 'imagination ... as foul/As Vulcan's stithy' (3.2.80–84; cf. 3.4.76–7) would be dispelled by Claudius's reaction to the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago*. If he now believes the Ghost, however, he is not self-assured. Shortly afterwards, he tells Rosencrantz that his own speech is not 'wholesome' because his 'wit's diseased' (3.2.311–14), and the return of 'the very witching time of night' prompts his mind to revisit the imagination of 'hell itself' exhaling '[c]ontagion to this world' (3.2.378–80).

There is, then, no simple choice, or even unresolved ambiguity, between a 'real' Ghost that is the soul of old Hamlet temporarily released from purgatory,

and a ‘false’ figment of the prince’s melancholic mind.<sup>44</sup> For Hamlet and the other protagonists in the course of the drama the Ghost is by turns, and sometimes simultaneously, a phantasm, the wandering soul of his father, a diabolical illusion and a celestial portent. These are parts of a shifting imaginary reality, perceived and experienced variously by different characters, traversing the space between the world of appearances apprehended by the senses and the domains that lie above nature, of demons, angels and God. On the stage, the unsettling effect is redoubled. The Ghost appears as an ‘immaterial substance’ that is simultaneously spectral – usually conveyed in the modern era by lighting and makeup – but also physical, personated by the body of the actor clad in armour (or, in Q1, ‘in his night-gown’).<sup>45</sup> Sometimes, after the influential depiction in *The Exorcist* (1973) of demonic ventriloquism – literally ‘belly-talking’ emitted by evil spirits – the Ghost is located within Hamlet’s own body, explicitly puncturing the boundary between the corporeal and the immaterial.<sup>46</sup> In Richard Eyre’s production at the Royal Court in London (1980), Jonathan Pryce delivered the Ghost’s speech as if vomiting it up from his stomach, a performance famously charged with personal emotion after his own father’s death. In the 2019 version directed by Johan Simons at the Schauspielhaus Bochum, Sandra Hüller achieved a similar effect by dropping the pitch of her voice, speaking Old Hamlet’s lines at speed and with lurching physical motions.

Such portrayals of the violent disturbance of the prince’s mind convey the internally self-destructive character of his imagination, and also its capacity to project external effects. In the fourth soliloquy, where the psychological tension generated by Hamlet’s inaction is expressed as a ruminative pathology, ‘the pale cast of thought’ envelops the mind in itself, and ‘sicklie[s] o’er’ the ‘native hue’ of his ‘resolution’ to act in accordance with the requirement of vengeance (3.1.84–5). The tension is only released, and resolve achieved, when he is able to align his imaginings with his notion of filial duty, so that his ‘thoughts be bloody or nothing worth’ (4.4.66). And through its ‘contagious blastments’, the imagination wreaks effects outside the mind.<sup>47</sup> Ophelia reports having seen Hamlet as diabolically and melancholically spectral, ‘[p]ale as his shirt ... with a look piteous in purport/As if he had been loosed out of hell’ (2.1.78–80), suggesting that his encounter with the Ghost has changed him physically as well as psychologically. In the graveyard, the mental picture of Yorick from the prince’s childhood is so viscerally ‘abhorred’ in his imagination that his ‘gorge rises at it’ (5.1.178–82).

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<sup>44</sup>See Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*; Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge*; Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory*.

<sup>45</sup>On the significance of the armour, see Foakes, “‘Armed at Point Exactly’”; on the night-gown, see Lesser, *Hamlet After Q1*, 114–56.

<sup>46</sup>See Weyer, *De praestigiis daemonum*, 182–6, on demonic ventriloquism.

<sup>47</sup>On this theme, see Daniel, *The Melancholy Assemblage*, 149–50; Phillips, “‘Eyes Without Feeling, Feeling Without Sight’”, 184–91.

The internal and external workings of Hamlet's imagination are presented at their most powerfully unstable, deceptive and ruinous in his interactions with Ophelia and Gertrude. The fourth soliloquy, delivered in Ophelia's presence, ends when her 'orisons' prompt memories of 'all [his] sins' (3.1.88–9) and then his infamously brutal turn against her. In the midst of his tirade, he unleashes a burst of eviscerating self-criticism that reveals its origin – Ophelia thinks his 'noble mind' has been o'erthrown' and '[b]lasted with ecstasy' (3.1.152, 162) – and is accompanied with a list of faults exceeding the capacity even of his own melancholic mind: 'very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in' (3.1.122–27). As for Gertrude, Hamlet intends to 'speak daggers to her' (3.2.387) – an apposite formula for speech that will convey harmful imaginative 'forms' and present the queen with 'a glass/Where you may see the inmost part of you' (3.4.18–19). After his impetuous killing of Polonius, he substitutes the message of the Ghost with his own 'foul' and misogynistic imaginations, and accuses her unfairly of killing his father.<sup>48</sup> He continues by conjuring a picture of the celestial domain itself afflicted by melancholy at Gertrude's betrayal ('Heaven's face ... With tristful visage ... thought-sick at the act') (3.4.47–51); and exhibits the portraits of his father and uncle – which he tellingly describes as 'counterfeit presentments' – as contrasting visual exemplars of godlike 'grace' and 'mildewed' disease.<sup>49</sup> He forces the images into the mind of his mother ('Look here ... See what a grace ... Look you now ... Have you eyes ... have you eyes?') (3.4.51–65); and redirects his former anxiety about his own diabolical deception towards her ('What devil was't ... ?') (3.4.76–7).

The Ghost's reappearance, as if prompted by Hamlet's invective, is ostensibly to rekindle his 'almost blunted purpose' (3.4.111). It also dramatically contrasts the prince's fearful reaction with Gertrude's perplexed inability to perceive the spectral image at all, emphasising her interpretation of Hamlet's behaviour as a sign of 'the heat and flames of [his] distemper' (3.4.123).<sup>50</sup> The Ghost's comment on the queen, that '[c]onceit in weakest bodies strongest works' (3.4.112), is deeply ironic given her son's earlier admission of his own 'weakness and ... melancholy' (2.2.536), and she tries to turn the tables by describing the 'bodiless creation' as 'the very coinage' of Hamlet's deluded 'brain' in 'ecstasy'

<sup>48</sup>As Edwards remarks (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Edwards, 175), the fact that Gertrude is unruffled by the performance of *The Murder of Gonzago* suggests her innocence, reinforced in Q1 when she swears 'by heaven/I never knew of this most horrid murder' (11.85–6).

<sup>49</sup>Jenkins notes that the use of the noun 'counterfeit' to refer to a portrait was common (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins, 321, n. 54), but the adjectival form suggests a false or disingenuous representation. The legal connotation of 'presentment' (*OED* s.v. 'presentment', 2.a., 2.b.) would also be appropriate. On Shakespeare's use of legal rhetoric see Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare*.

<sup>50</sup>Contemporary sources (Lavater, *Of ghosts and spirits*, 88–9; Scot, *Discoverie of witchcraft*, 535; James I, *Daemonologie*, 60) have sometimes been cited to rule out a 'subjective apparition', or to present Gertrude's non-perception of the Ghost as unremarkable (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins, 519–20; Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, 397).

(3.4.135–36). However, although Gertrude has been uniquely untroubled by the spectral aspect of her son's imaginary reality, the 'daggers' of his melancholic conceits work their effects on her 'mind's eye'. 'Thou turn'st my very eyes into my soul', she laments, '[a]nd there I see such black and grieved spots/As will leave there their tinct' (3.4.87–9).<sup>51</sup> Hamlet will not be diverted from his mother's supposed 'trespass', or from 'the ulcerous place' inside her with 'rank corruption mining all within', and with her 'heart in twain' she yields to his persuasions (3.4.143–154). Through the force of his expressive imagination, compelling Gertrude's 'mind's eye' to generate images of 'black and grieved spots' that stain her soul, the melancholic 'contagion' has passed from Hamlet to his mother.<sup>52</sup>

#### IV.

It has long been recognised that Hamlet's bouts of introspection, sometimes said to express an emergently 'modern' form of self-consciousness, are connected to his melancholic persona, even if their centrality to the drama is contested.<sup>53</sup> And it is true that a propensity to contemplation and aversion to action, along with other melancholic characteristics and symptoms such as misanthropy, anxiety and guilt, are exhibited by the prince – at least up to the point when he has resolved that his mind will contain only 'bloody' thoughts (4.4.65–6).<sup>54</sup> Yet there are other ways in which the prince's 'imagination' are involved in his self-perception and the construction and effects of the drama. The most explicit and suggestively reflexive of these relate to his forays into theatrical acting and his activity as a poet, the imaginative profession par excellence.<sup>55</sup> As ever, Hamlet's engagement with these roles is inflected with melancholic sentiment. He arrives claiming that he 'know[s] not "seems"', but is later drawn to the capacity of actors to inhabit an imaginary reality of their own choice, reflecting on how a player 'in a fiction, in a dream of passion', can 'force his soul so to his own conceit', even to the extent that this 'conceit' seems to be 'suing/With forms' all his actions. Hamlet uses this ability to castigate his own 'pigeon-liver'd' lack of 'gall', being wrapped up in his own melancholic mind '[l]ike John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause', to focus his mind on revenge: 'About, my brains' (2.2.545–84). The method he chooses for advancing his cause is imaginative contrivance, 'forc[ing] his soul' to the conceit of insanity, adopting an 'antic disposition' and becoming 'mad in craft' in order to deceive his putative enemies (1.5.170, 3.4.186; cf. 3.1.8).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup>I follow the Arden 3 editors here, giving 'grieved' rather than Jenkins's 'grained' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, eds Thompson and Taylor, 342).

<sup>52</sup>This is explicit in Anon., *Der Bestrafte Brudermord*, 32.

<sup>53</sup>As in Newell, *The Soliloquies in Hamlet*. For a critique, see De Grazia, 'Hamlet before Its Time'.

<sup>54</sup>See Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 112–15; Bright, *Treatise of Melancholie*, 200.

<sup>55</sup>For discussion see Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, 343–460.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. *The Rape of Lucrece*, 1813; *Henry V*, 2.4.37–8 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 81, 557). On Hamlet's role-playing, see Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy*, 80–110.

By the third Act, Hamlet's imaginative involution has become deeper, and its reach wider, with his staging of the 'play within the play'. He now sees himself as playwright, modern 'director' and poetic theorist, supplying his actors with lines for a speech that he has written himself, and giving notes on their performance (2.2.534–6; 3.2.1–14). Retitling *The Murder of Gonzago* as *The Mousetrap* reframes it as a dramatization of his personal melancholic suspicion, theatrically 'prompted' by the need for revenge (2.2.580). The effect intended, he explains, is to work through poetic imitation on the imaginations of the audience: so that they see, in the 'mirror', the player King as an image of old Hamlet, the player Queen as an image of Gertrude, and the poisoner as an image of Claudius; more particularly, so that Claudius sees an image of himself in the poisoner; and so that Hamlet sees Claudius seeing this image of himself (cf. 3.3.367–73).

How does this metatheatrical activity relate to the workings of Hamlet's mind? Certainly his distrust of appearances, imaginative play-acting and the reflexive dynamics of the 'play within a play' encourage speculation about the reliability of his self-understanding. And in striking contrast with some of his later readers, Shakespeare's audiences were primed to be sceptical of Hamlet's self-knowledge. The 'wiser sort' knew that although melancholics were drawn to contemplation, the knowledge attained even by those who were inspired – Belleforest's Platonically frenzied 'diviners' and 'poets' – did not pertain to themselves, but to heavenly mysteries.<sup>57</sup> In fact, as the physicians had observed, melancholics were 'more prone to fall into [the] pitte' of anxiety, self-recrimination, and despair.<sup>58</sup> Their perceptions were distorted, darkened and 'diseased', and as such, they were radically out of step with others: 'to me what is this quintessence of dust?' (2.2.274, my emphasis).<sup>59</sup> As a melancholic stuck in his imaginary reality, Hamlet remains largely a mystery to himself. His introspection devolves into self-recrimination, and is redirected into an alienated lamentation of the shortcomings of humankind in general – 'man delights not me' (2.2.295–309; cf. 4.4.32–39). As Claudius perceives (2.2.7–10), after his melancholic 'transformation' Hamlet lacks the capacity for classical self-knowledge, constituted by a rational understanding of what he shares with the rest of humanity, of his duties to them and to God, and of his proper place in the divinely ordered cosmos. He is unable to cultivate and achieve moral and spiritual virtue.<sup>60</sup>

The same can be said of the prince's conception of himself as the recipient or agent of supernatural influences. He expresses awareness of his potentially malign melancholic power ('have I in me something dangerous') (5.1.255),

<sup>57</sup>Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, 112–15; cf. Plato, *Ion* 534B. For the reception of *Hamlet* by the 'wiser sort', see Harvey, *Marginalia*, 232.

<sup>58</sup>Bright, *Treatise of Melancholie*, 20.

<sup>59</sup>Cf. *Julius Caesar*, 5.3.67–9; *King Lear*, 4.6.276 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 448, 781). On Hamlet's self-delusions, see Tilmouth, *Passion's Triumph*, 75–113.

<sup>60</sup>On these themes, see Soellner, *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*, 172–94; Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness*, 33–9.

believes he is a special instrument of divine providence, and hints repeatedly that he has the divinatory capacity of the melancholic imagination. He follows the Ghost because he thinks his ‘fate cries out’ in it (1.4.82), and when he receives the previously hidden knowledge of the murder from the spectral ‘vision’ (1.5.143), he connects it to a previously unexpressed intimation of Claudius’s guilt: ‘O my prophetic soul! My uncle!’ (1.5.41).<sup>61</sup> Thereafter he interprets the secret message about past events communicated to him by the ‘perturbed spirit’ (1.5.190) as both a sublime instruction that must be preserved in his mind (1.5.103–4), and as a supernatural indication of earthly corruption (1.5.196). His sense of being an instrument of divine purpose gradually supplants melancholic prevarication. He accepts that he must become the ‘scourge and minister’ of heavenly powers (3.4.175–77), even harnessing, in his ‘mind’s eye’, the power of angelic divination to discern Claudius’s hidden ‘purposes’ in sending him to England: ‘I see a cherub that sees them’ (4.3.51).

Some contemporaries might have taken these claims, at face-value, as features of divinely inspired melancholy. Others would have viewed them as overblown or ridiculous, and it is hard not to see this aspect of Hamlet’s self-conception as ironized to some degree. Rather than attributing his anxious sleeplessness on the ship to England to his melancholy, or simply to the disturbances that have preceded the trip, for Hamlet it brings to mind the ‘divinity that shapes our ends’ (5.2.4–11). When he explains to Horatio that he had been able to reseal the letter to the English king because he had brought his father’s signet with him, he is convinced that ‘even in that was heaven ordinant’ (5.2.49–53). Expressing a Calvinistic view of the ‘special providence’ manifested ‘in the fall of a sparrow’, he thinks that God will shape his future no matter how it turns out (5.2.215–16). If by this stage it has become possible to detect tragicomic pomposity, or at least self-delusion, in Hamlet’s descriptions of himself as a vehicle of the divine, this is surely reinforced in his dying speech: ‘I do prophesy th’ election lights/On Fortinbras’ (5.2.360–61). Given that the arrival of Fortinbras has already been announced, and that the ground is littered with corpses, this was hardly inspired prophecy.

## V.

Tracing the passage from Belleforest’s Amleth to Hamlet does not solve the mysteries of the play, and in some cases it simply displaces them (what is the cause of Hamlet’s melancholy? Is he simply of melancholic disposition, or is he suffering from the full-blown disease?). But it does help to refocus our attention on aspects

<sup>61</sup>For Jenkins this refers to Hamlet’s divination ‘not of the murder ... but of his uncle’s true nature’, because he sees Hamlet as expressing surprise at the revelation that his father has been murdered at 1.5.26 (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed Jenkins, 218, n. 41). It is far from clear, however, that Q2’s ‘Murther.’ (or F1’s ‘Murther?’), does express surprise, rather than a more complicated reaction (following Q2) to having a prior intimation confirmed, or (following F1) a temporary combination of shock and confusion (Shakespeare, *The Entolded Hamlets*, 34–5).



of the transformation effected by Shakespeare in his characterisation, and to clarify his use of certain source materials. Belleforest had posed the question of the prince's melancholy in passing, and Shakespeare answered it in full, developing a brief speculation about the possibility of his supernatural inspiration into a complex and many-sided portrayal of melancholic malaise, particularly through the workings of the pathological imagination both inside and outside the mind. My suggestion has been that this is illustrated by reading the play through contemporary medical and natural-philosophical sources, and their English reception. There is no evidence here, however, that Shakespeare drew upon a specific source other than Belleforest, medical or otherwise, for his exploration of Hamlet's condition, since as we have seen, these ideas about melancholy and the imagination were in wide circulation in many works.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, we can see that by exploiting conceptions of the aggravated and corrupted imagination, and the power of that faculty to mediate between the natural, preternatural and supernatural domains, Shakespeare used the imaginary melancholic reality of Hamlet to dramatize his central character's internal turmoil and its external effects. From this critical perspective, the play is the tragic counterpart of others that stage the transformative effects of the imagination, most notably *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, working through the suspension of disbelief to bind the audience to the characters within the world of appearances created by the poetic imagination.<sup>63</sup> But if we regard Hamlet as being trapped within his own world of appearances, destructively and even ridiculously deluded about himself and the other characters in the drama, we are not sharing in his melancholy, but viewing it from the distance provided by tragic irony. So perhaps Hamlet's deepest affinity is really with Jacques, whose alienated mockery also expresses the deeply melancholic imagination of 'th'infected world' as the domain of empty appearances.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>See O'Sullivan, 'Hamlet and Dr. Timothy Bright'; Wilson, *What Happens in 'Hamlet'*, 309–20; Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, 120–1; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Jenkins, 106–8. The comment in Babb, *Elizabethan Malady*, 107 n. 20, seems right.

<sup>63</sup>See Hackett, *The Elizabethan Mind*, 252–7; Giglioni, 'Fantasy Islands'; Ghose, 'Hamlet and Tragic Emotion', 24–5, 32–5. For an analysis of dramatic representation in terms of Aristotelian hylomorphism, see West, *Common Understandings*, 152–3.

<sup>64</sup>As *You Like It*, 2.7.60, 2.7.140–67 (Shakespeare, *Complete Works*, 172, 173); Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy*, 112–20. I am very grateful to Anna Brownsted, Helen Hackett, Quentin Skinner, Peter Stacey and three anonymous readers for their comments. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Gavin Burns (1975–2022).

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