

# Hamlet

## Act II



## Primary Documents

(Madness and Melancholy)

1 *Helleborus niger verus.*  
The true blacke Hellebor.



## Blacke Hellebore

This plant hath thicke and fat leaves of a deep green colour, the upper part whereof is somewhat bluntly nicked or toothed, having sundry divisions or cuts, in some leaves many, in others fewer. It beareth Rose-fashioned floures upon slender stems, growing immediately out of the ground an handful high, sometimes very white, and oftentimes mixed with a little shew of purple: which being vaded, there succeed small husks full of blacke seeds.

A purgation of Hellebor for man and furious men, for melancholy, dull and heavie persons, and briefly for all those that are troubled with blacke choler, and molested with melancholy...

It was first found by Melampus, who was first thought to purge therewith Pretus his mad daughters, and to restore them to health. Dioscorides writeth, that this man was a shepheard: others a Soothsayer. In high Dutch it is called Christs herbe, and that because it floureth about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From John Gerard's *Gerard's Herball – Or, General Historie of Plantes.* (1597)

## Sweet Fruit

Robert Burton attributes melancholy to the eating of “all manner of fruits, as subject to putrifaction, yet tolerable at some times, *after* meales, at second course, they keepe downe vapors, and have their use. Sweet fruits are best [cure] , as sweet cherries, plummes, sweet apples; peare-maines, and pippins...ripe grapes are good, & raysins of the Sun, muske-millions well corrected, and sparingly used. Figges are allowed, and almonds blanched...Pomegranates, Lemons, Oranges are tolerated if they be not too sharpe.<sup>1</sup>

From Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholie.* Partition 1, section 2, member 1, subsection 1: “Diet Rectified in Substance.”

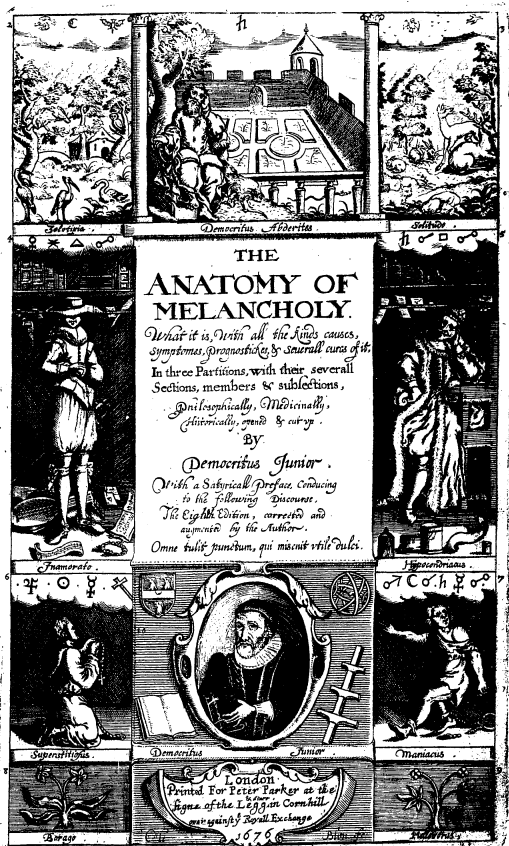
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<sup>1</sup> Qtd. in Palter 692

Melancholy and Madness  
 Burton's *Anatomy*

*"Melancholy is a disease which brings about imbalance, and this imbalance affects its environment"*  
 (Sedlaur 34)

Burton or Democritus Junior, published *Anatomy* in 1621, two years before Shakespeare's First Folio. The text is divided into four sections, which cover the causes and cures of melancholy as well as two types: love and religious.



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. (2.2.627-633)

Generally thus much we may conclude of all melancholy almost. That it is most pleasur~t at first... a most delightful humor, to walk alone & meditate, & frame a thousand phantastical Imaginations vnto the~selues. They are never better pleased the~ when~ they are so doing, they are in Paradise for the time, & cannot wel endure to be inter|rupt... He may thus continue peradventure many yeares, by reason of a strong temperature, or some mixture of busines, which may divert his cogitations: but at the last... his phantasy is crased, and now habituated to such toyes, cannot but work still like a fat, the Sceane alters vpon a sudden, and Feare and Sorrow supplant those

pleasing thoughts, suspition and discontent, and perpetuall anxiety succeed in their places, so by little and little ... melancholy that ferall fiend is drawne on...she was not so delitious at first, as now she is bitter and harsh. A canker'd soule macerated with cares and discontents...impatience precipitates them into vnspeakable miseries. They cannot indure company, light, vnfit for action, and the like. Their bodies are leane and dried vp, withered, vgly, look harsh, very dull, and their soules tormented, as they are more or lesse intang|led, as the humor hath bin intended, or according to the con|tinuance of time they haue bin troubled. (251-252)

Burton, Robert. *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Printed by Iohn Lichfield and Iames Short, for Henry Cripps, Anno Dom. 1621. EEBO. STC (2nd ed.) / 4159, copy from British Library.

The Picture of an English Antick, with a List of his ridiculous Habits, and apish Gestures.

*Maids, where are your hearts become? Look you what here is!*



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1 His hat in fashion like a close-stoole pan.<br/>                 2 Set on the top of his noddle like a cox-combe.<br/>                 3 Banded with a calves tail, and a bunch of riband.<br/>                 4 A feather in his hat, hanging downe like a Fox taile.<br/>                 5 Long haire, with ribands tied in it.<br/>                 6 His face spotted.<br/>                 7 His beard on the upper lip compassing his mouth.<br/>                 8 His chin thrust out, singing as he goes.<br/>                 9 his band lapping over before.<br/>                 10 Great bandstrings with a ring tied.<br/>                 11 A long-waisted dubblet unbuttoned half way.<br/>                 12 Little skirts.<br/>                 13 His sleeves unbuttoned.<br/>                 14 In one hand a stick, playing with it, in the other his cloke hanging.</p> | <p>15 His breeches unhooked, ready to drop off.<br/>                 16 His shirt hanging out.<br/>                 17 His codpeece open, tied at the top with a great bunch of riband.<br/>                 18 His belt about his hips.<br/>                 19 His sword swapping betweene his legs like a Monkeys taile.<br/>                 20 Many dozens of points at knees.<br/>                 21 Above the points of either side two bunches of riband of severall colours.<br/>                 22 Boot-hose tops, tied about the middle of the calfe, as long as a paire of shirt sleeves, double at the ends like a ruffe band.<br/>                 23 The tops of his boots very large, turned down as low as his spurs.<br/>                 24 A great paire of spurres, gingling like a Morrice-dancer.<br/>                 25 The feet of his boots 2 inches too long.<br/>                 26 Two hornes at each end of his foot, straddling as he goes.</p> |
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*Number: 12. 1646.*

# *Anatomy of Abuses (1583)*

## **From Book One**

### **I.S, in commendation of the Author, and his booke.**

The state of these vnhappie daies,  
alas lament we may:  
Sith that the same so fraughted are,  
with wickednes ech way.

O England deere, my natiue soile,  
I sorie am for thee:  
For that thou wilt not leaue thy sinne,  
and eke repentant bee.

But day by day, from naught to worse,  
thou daily dost proceed:  
Both temporalitie and clergie they,  
to worke sinne haue decreed.

Hast thou forgot there is a God,  
that wickednesse doth hate:  
And who will one day punish it,  
in ech degree and state?

And dost thou not remember well,  
the dangers manifold:  
Wherein of late thou stoodest (alas)  
more than can well be told?



And hast tbou also cleane forgot,  
and out of mind let fall:  
How that the goodnes of thy God,  
deliuerd thee from all.

Praise him therefore with hart and  
voice,  
shew not thy selfe vnkinde,  
And let not these his mercies great,  
fall out of gratefull minde.

His iudgements great are towards thee,  
his mercies are much more:  
And all to allure thee from thy sinne,  
his name be praisd therefore.

Let either thone, or thother then,  
mooue thee to leaue thy sinne:  
Then God to powre his blessings store,  
vpon thee shall not linne.

Read ouer then this little booke,  
and that with single eie:  
And thou the state of this our age,  
as in a glasse shalt see.

Be warnd therefore, thy life amend,  
while thou hast time and space:  
That in the end in heauen blisse,  
thou maist haue thy solace.

*Thine in the Lord. I.S*

**On Dancing** DAuncing, as it is vsed (or rather abused) in these daies, is an introductio~ to whor|dom, a preparatiue to wantonnes, a pro|uocatiue to vncleanes, & an introite to al kind of lewdenes,

**On Bear Baiting** These Hethnicall exercyses vpon the Sa|bath day, which y<sup>e</sup> Lord hath co~secrat to holy vses, for the glory of his Name, and our spirituall comfort, are not in any respect tolle|rable, or to be suffered. For, is not the baiting of a Bear, besides that it is a [...]thie, stinking·and lothsome game, a daungerous, & perilous exercyse? wherein a man is in daunger of his life euery minut of an houre: which thing though it weare not so, yet what exercyse is this meet for any Christia~? what christe~ heart ca~ take pleasure to sée one poore beast to rent, teare, and kill another, and all for his foolish pleasure?

**On Singing** ...if you wold haue your sonne, softe, womannish, vncleane, smoth mouthed, affected to bawdrie, scurrilitie, filthie rimes and vnsemely talking: brifly, if you wold haue him, as it were transnated into a woman or worse, and inclyned to all kind of whordome and abhomination, let him to dauncing school, and to learn musicke, and than shall you not faile of your purpose. And if you would haue your daughter whorish, bawdie, and vncleane, and a filthie speaker, and such like, bring her up in musick and dauncing, and my life for youres, you haue won the goale. (sig. D5-D5v)

## **From Book Two**

**To the Right HONORABLE, and his singular good Lord Phillip Earle of Arundell, Phillip Stubbs wisheth all prosperitie in this life, with increase of honour, and eternall felicitie in the heauenlie hierarchie by Iesus Christ.**

**H**Auing made the first part of the Anatomie of abuses (Right ho|norable, and my verie good Lord) and dedicated the same to your good Lordship, I thought I should then haue taken mine for euer-needing to write anie more of this argument againe. But seeing the diuell our ancient aduersarie in the fulnesse of his malice hath since spued out his poison· and powred out his filthie dregs of infinit corruptions, blemishes, and abuses (al which to comprehend in number) were amongst vs of late daies more than euer were heard of before. I was compelled for the health of their soules, and benefit of my countrey, to take in hand afresh this new tractation, intituled *The display of Corruptions*, wherein are laid open diuers and sundrie abuses, corruptions, and blemishes crept as well into one sort of men as into another.

Stubbes, Phillip. *The Anatomy of Abuses*. 1583, EEBO. STC (2nd ed.) 23380.5, Copy from British

*Library.*

*A Juniper Lecture, With the description of all sorts of women, good, and bad: From the modest to the maddest, from the most Civil, to the scold Rampant, their praise and dispraise compendiously related. The Second Impression, with many new Additions. J O[kes] for W. Ley, 1639 (STC 23766)*

**To the Reader.**

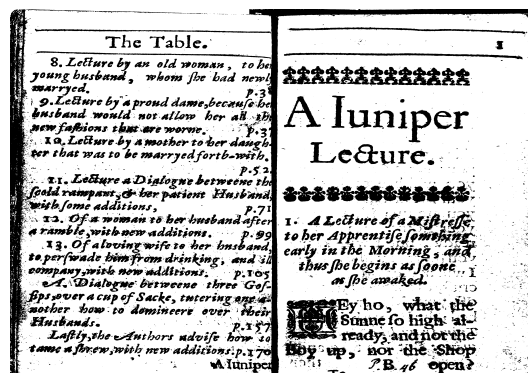
I Sing the praise and dis|praise of that Sex  
That gives men cause of comfort, or to vex:  
His joy or care, his blessing or his curse.  
His weale, his woe, his Saint, or Divell, or worse.  
You vertuous worthy wo|men (few that be)  
I know you'le be so good to pardon me;  
And yet what pardon need I crave of them,  
Whom I will not offend, nor yet condemne.

**The Author's Advice on how to tame a shrew.**

IF you perceive her to in|crease her language, bee sure you give her not a word, good nor bad, but rather seeme to slight her, by doing some action or other, as singing, dancing, whistling, or clapping thy hands on thy sides; for this will make her vexe extreemely, because you give her not word for word: And be sure you doe not offer to goe away, but walke still before her, or in her hearing; for if you doe thinke to avoyd her clamour by going a|broad, you are deceived; for then you doe but give her breath, and so she will have a Bill os Revivall a|gainst you when you come in againe, and so by that meanes will have another fling at your Jacket...



I wish you to buy a Drum into your house, and locke it up in some private roome or Study, that shee may not come at it, and when she doth begin to talke aloft, doe then begin to beate a loud, which shee hearing, will presently be amazed, hearing a louder voyce than her owne, and make her forbear scolding any more for that time.



The other two, slight air and purging fire,  
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;  
The first my thought, the other my desire,  
These present-absent with swift motion slide.  
For when these quicker elements are gone  
In tender embassy of love to thee,  
My life, being made of four, with two alone  
Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;<sup>2</sup>  
Until life's composition be recured  
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,  
Who even but now come back again, assured  
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:  
This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,  
I send them back again and straight grow sad.

Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 45." 1609. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, Arden Shakespeare, 2010, pp. 45.

"On My First Son"

Ben Jonson 1616

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy;  
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy;  
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,  
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.  
O could I lose all father now! For why  
Will man lament the state he should envy,  
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,  
And, if no other misery, yet age?  
Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, "Here doth lie  
Ben Jonson his best piece of Poetry."  
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such  
As what he loves may never like too much.

Jonson, Ben. "On My First Son." 1616. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, pp.1430.

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<sup>2</sup> The speaker is feeling oppressed with melancholy, a severe medical condition caused by black humour, having been left with the two elements of earth and water when his friend left.



## *To the Virtuous Reader*

Often have I heard, that it is the property of some women, not only to emulate the virtues and perfections of the rest, but also by all their powers of ill speaking, to eclipse the brightness of their deserved fame: now contrary to their custom, which men I hope unjustly lay to their charge. I have written this small volume, or little book, for the general use of all virtuous ladies and gentlewomen of this kingdom; and in commendation of some particular persons of our own sex, such as for the most part, are so well known to myself and others, that I dare undertake Fame dares not to call any better. And this have I done, to make known to the world, that all women deserve not to be blamed though some forgetting they are women themselves, and in danger to be condemned by the words of their own mouths, fall into so great an error, as to speak unadvisedly against the rest of their sex; which if it be true, I am persuaded they can show their own imperfection in nothing more: and therefore could wish (for their own ease, modesties, and credit) they would refer

such points of folly, to be practiced by evil-disposed men, who forgetting they were born of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world, and a final end of them all, do like vipers deface the wombs wherein they were bred, only to give way and utterance to their want of discretion and goodness...

Therefore we are not to regard any imputations, that they undeservedly lay upon us, no otherwise than to make use of them to our own benefits, as spur to virtue, making us fly all occasions that may color their unjust speeches to pass current. Especially considering that they have tempted even the patience of God himself, who gave power to wise and virtuous women, to bring down their pride and arrogancy...

Many other examples I could allege of divers faithful and virtuous women, who have in all ages not only been confessors but also endured most cruel martyrdom for their faith in Jesus Christ.

*Eve's Apology in Defense of Women*<sup>3</sup>

...But surely Adam cannot be excused;  
Her fault though great, yet he was most to blame;  
What weakness offered, strength might have refused,  
Being lord of all, the greater was his shame.  
Although the serpent's craft had her abused,  
God's holy word ought all his actions frame,  
For he was lord and king of all the earth,  
Before poor Eve had either life or breath...

And then to lay the fault on Patience' back,  
That we (poor women) must endure it all.  
We know right well he did discretion lack,  
Being not persuaded thereunto all.  
If Eve did err, it was for knowledge sake;  
The fruit being fair persuaded him to fall:  
No subtle serpent's falsehood did betray him;  
If he would eat it, who had power to stay him?

Not Eve, whose fault was only too much love,  
Which made her give this present to her dear,  
That what she tasted he likewise might prove,  
Whereby his knowledge might become more clear;  
He never sought her weakness to reprove  
With those sharp words which he of God did hear;  
Yet men will boast of knowledge, which he took  
From Eve's fair hand, as from a learned book.

If any evil did in her remain,  
Being made of him, he was the ground of all.  
If one of many worlds could lay a stain  
Upon our sex, and work so great a fall  
To wretched man by Satan's subtle train,  
What will so foul a fault amongst you all?  
Her weakness did the serpent's words obey,  
But you in malice God's dear Son betray...

Lanyer, Amelia. "Eve's Apology in Defense of Women." 1611. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Eds. Stephen Greenblatt et al. W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, 1317-1318.

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<sup>3</sup> Eve is not the speaker in the above excerpted poem. Instead, the narrator defends Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden and on behalf of all women. She does so by addressing Pontius Pilate, the Roman who authorized the killing of Jesus Christ. Pilate and Adam represent all men.

## “William Shakespeare and the Representation of Female Madness”

Maria Isabel Barbudo

...The case study of Ophelia in *Hamlet* seemed particularly useful as an account of hysteria or mental breakdown in adolescence, a period of sexual instability, which the Victorians regarded as risky for women's mental health. The President of the Medico-Psychological Association is quoted as having remarked, in 1859: “Ophelia is the very type of a class of cases by no means uncommon. Every mental physician of moderate experience must have seen many Ophelias...”

In *Madness and Civilization*, Michel Foucault would later mention the case of a 17-year-old girl taken to an asylum in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where she was treated with all the severity deemed appropriate to her “haughtiness.” By means of the rigorous methods she was exposed to, she ended by making a frank confession that “she had suffered a loss of reason as the result of a forbidden romantic attachment, naming the person who had been its object” (Rabinow 161).

This confirms the fact that the association of madness with femininity existed prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was in the Victorian era that women were more likely to be incarcerated in asylums, and “mad women” came to dominate representations of madness, with a hint of sexuality that Sigmund Freud would explore and analyze in its relation to the unconscious. This is certainly why, in the film version of *Hamlet* directed by Kenneth Branagh in 1996, which seems to transpose the action of the play to the historical and cultural background of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mad Ophelia is seen in a straightjacket, and under violent jets of cold water...

I would like to argue that in the play *Hamlet*, it is not female but male madness that is represented as being histrionic and as a synonym for violent action, physical or mental, whereas female madness, as seen in

Ophelia, is conveyed through “silence and poetry”...

In Freud's interpretation, then, hysteria, related to repressed sexuality, seems to affect both characters, Hamlet and Ophelia. To this approach we may add the analysis of Hamlet's tragic flaw, generally attributed to his melancholic incapacity for physical action. But this must not obliterate the fact that it is Hamlet's mental action, as expressed in numerous dialogues and soliloquies, which draws our attention almost all the time...

This lively verbalization of his perplexing emotions, in long and frequent speeches with a rational and even philosophical turn, makes a stark contrast with the popular songs and the few symbolic words spoken by Ophelia in her state of insanity... which is, in itself, a signal of irrationality.

In her most famous speech, it is by naming flowers and their symbolic meanings that she is able to address the other characters, as if the silence beginning to hang over her mind can only allow for a discourse that, even though in prose, has a deeply poetic substance – a sort of discourse seen by her own brother as “a document in madness” (4.5.176)...

Hamlet incarnates this same dialogue between reason and madness, still possible in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whereas Ophelia is a pre-figuration of the future silencing that classical internment would impose on insanity. Being still a character in a Renaissance play, Ophelia is not sent to an asylum, but she is repeatedly advised by Hamlet to go to a convent... Confinement and silence seem, in fact, to be the only solution for this female character, who eventually finds her own way to the supreme silence of death by committing suicide.

*Creative Dialogues: Narrative and Medicine.* (2015): Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 150-155.

