



Faculty of Arts and Philosophy

Caroline Van Thienen

# The Use of Madness in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*

*A Study of Disorder as Dramatised in the Shakespearean Plays*

Masterthesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
“Master in de taal- en letterkunde  
Engels”

2014

Supervisor     Dr. Lisa Walters  
                      Department English Literature



# Acknowledgements

This thesis signifies the completion of an important phase of my life: in a month I will be graduating and leave Ghent University behind me. This is the perfect occasion to thank some people who supported me when I was writing this thesis and during my education in general.

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor, dr. Lisa Walters. She helped me getting through the difficult moments by motivating me with her own passion for the topic. Her feedback was always useful and constructive and she was at all times ready to answer my questions.

All the professors and teachers in general deserve a mention here as well. They transferred their passion onto me and the other students with their enthusiasm during classes, and I want to thank them for that.

I also want to thank my parents, for supporting me throughout my whole education and always being there for me. I want to thank especially my mother, for proof-reading all of my papers, and for being the one to always give me that extra push when I needed it.

The last people I want to thank are my boyfriend and fellow students, for always being there for me and listening on and on to my complaints.

Caroline Van Thienen

May 2014



# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Renaissance Theories on Madness and Melancholy</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 Humoral Theory and Melancholy	8
1.2 Regendering Madness	14
1.3 Madness and Religious Superstition	21
1.4 Madness and Ferrand's "love melancholy"	28
<b>Chapter 2      Madness in Shakespeare's <i>Macbeth</i></b>	<b>37</b>
2.1 Natural or Supernatural: Lady Macbeth versus the Witches	38
2.2 Macbeth's Madness	60
2.3 The Function of Madness and Disorder in <i>Macbeth</i> and Society	64
<b>Chapter 3      Renaissance Theories on Madness and Melancholy</b>	<b>68</b>
3.1 Olivia's and Orsino's Lovesickness	69
3.2 Malvolio's Imposed Madness	77
3.3 The Function of Madness and Disorder in <i>Twelfth Night</i> and Society	83
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>92</b>

(26 856 words)

# Introduction

*Madness:*

*“Imprudence, delusion, or (wild) foolishness resembling insanity; an instance of this”*

*“Insanity; mental illness or impairment, esp. of a severe kind”*

(Oxford English Dictionary “madness”, def. 1 and 2)<sup>1</sup>

Madness is one of the recurring themes in Shakespeare’s plays, used in both his comedies such as *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and in his tragedies like *Macbeth*, *King Lear* or *Hamlet*. Madness in the revenge tragedies has been widely discussed by critics such as Hallett, Chakravorty, and Percy<sup>2</sup>, whereas the topic is far less popular with respect to the comedies, with some exceptions such as the work of Daalder and Neely.<sup>3</sup> The use of madness in both of the genres is rarely compared, but in my opinion it is rather interesting to look at how madness is presented differently in Shakespeare’s tragedies and comedies, since each genre has his own limitations and conventions. Looking at the use of madness in both of these genres could help us with

---

<sup>1</sup> Both these definitions of madness would have been correct in the 16th and 17th century.

<sup>2</sup> In their works *The Revenger’s Madness*, *The Idea of Revenge in Shakespeare*, and *The Theme of Revenge in Elizabethan Tragedy* respectively.

<sup>3</sup> Daalder discusses madness in *Twelfth Night* in his work “Perspectives of Madness in *Twelfth Night*” and Neely analyses the comedies *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* in her work *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*.

researching what the function of disorder is in the plays and broaden the perspective to a wider social and cultural context.

It is important to discuss first the term “madness”, since it will be the central idea of this work. The word “madness” was not really “the dominant term for mental disorder in the early modern period” (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 3). The word did exist and the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites sources as early as the fourteenth century,<sup>4</sup> but it was often used figuratively “and [could] include almost any excessive expression of emotion” or “extreme forms of mental distress” (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 3).<sup>5</sup> I will use the word madness in this work, because it is for a modern audience the most familiar term, but words like “distracted” and “melancholic” were more popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The terms used in early modern England emphasised that the patients were not in a fixed or incurable state, but suffered from a temporary condition. The word “insanity” – a term later used in the eighteenth century – for instance, did stress the permanence of the disease. The temporary nature of this disease is also illustrated by the “many other overlapping adjectives that label[ed] disordered states [like] “lovesick,” “troubled-in-mind,” “idle-headed,” “melancholic,” “lunatic,” “frenzied,” “mad” [and] “distract” (or “distracted” or “distracted”)” (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 3).

The many different words that are used to name madness already indicate the varying nature of this disease. This may have to do with the variety of influences of medical works, ranging from Greek and Latin sources to contemporary science. The Renaissance was the period in which the older Greek and Latin works were rediscovered. Early modern people were interested again in the Ancient period and started translating these works into the vernacular languages to make them available for a more expansive audience, as well as

---

<sup>4</sup> For instance in the early version of the *The Wycliffite Bible* (circa 1384).

<sup>5</sup> I will refer to the *Oxford English Dictionary* from now on as *OED*.

reading them in the original languages. Together with the works, also the wisdom and medical knowledge of previous times was passed on. This was especially seen in Galen's theory about the four humours, which will be discussed in detail in this work. The Renaissance was also a time of rebirth (as the name itself says), renovation, and the development of new scientific and medical instruments and theories. Part of these new theories were the whole array of medical works about madness, such as Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), Jorden's *Suffocation of the Mother* (1603), Bright's *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), and the originally written in French, but in 1640 translated to English, *Erotomania* by Ferrand. All of these works will be used in the following discussion, since they were quite important for Renaissance theories about madness. In the Ancient period and in the Middle Ages "madness was often seen as a [...] God-inflicted condition – as possession, sin, punishment, and sometimes disease, which confirmed the inseparability of the human and the transcendent" (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 47). However, new theories arose in the early modern period, which were, according to Neely, founded on "cultural debates" about possession witchcraft and exorcism (*Distracted Subjects* 47), and gave a new point of view on these supernatural forces. They separated "human madness from the similar-appearing conditions caused by sin and guilt, demonic and divine possession, bewitchment, or fraud" (*Distracted Subjects* 47). The contrast these new theories provided were seen in the works mentioned above: both Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and Jorden's *Suffocation of the Mother* represented the difference between witchcraft and bewitchment on the one hand, and hysteria or natural madness on the other hand. Bright provided in his *Treatise of Melancholie* the natural, melancholic, counterpart to spiritual madness, which was caused by sin or guilt. Ferrand expanded the other theories in his *Erotomania*, focusing on one specific kind of melancholy, namely lovesickness, but also mentioning hysteria in his work.



Although there were new theories of madness, there were still older theories as well, which only served to confuse the everyday people in early modern England. Neely argues that presenting the theories on the stage could help with that problem:

The public stage assist[ed] the culture in [...] finding alternative explanations by showing them what madness look[ed] like and contrasting it to similar conditions. By representing both madness and the process of reading madness, plays [taught] audiences how to identify and respond to it. [...] The period's audiences participate[d] with onstage watchers in distinguishing madness from sanity and from its look-alikes (*Distracted Subjects* 49).

Contrasting different kinds of madness on the stage is also what Shakespeare did in the two plays that will be discussed in this work: *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare tried to establish the difference between natural and supernatural madness, between hysteria and witchcraft, between melancholy and possession, between human and demonic evil and malevolence. He did this by dramatising all of these different kinds of madness in the characters of the witches, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, without really showing his own opinion on the matter, but rather letting the audiences decide how they wanted to perceive the madness presented on the stage. In *Twelfth Night* the madness is used in a more comical way, but still portrayed the difference between real or false demonic possession in Malvolio's character and critiqued on the act of exorcism by presenting it as comical on the stage. Another kind of madness which was dramatised in *Twelfth Night* was Ferrand's love melancholy, presented in the characters of Orsino and Olivia, and showing how this lovesickness could disorder their households. Also Neely discusses these new portrayals of madness on the stage when she says that "conditions such as lovesickness took on changed gender associations [...] [and] the practices of confinement were reinvented in the theater" (*Distracted Subjects* 2). We can see this in *Twelfth Night* where the "changed gender associations" of lovesickness refer to the fact that both Orsino and Olivia suffer from lovesickness, each in his or her own way. The confinement of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is an

example of how confinement was “reinvented in the theater”. Neely further explains that “the discourses on madness flourished because they were useful in reconceptualising the boundaries between natural and supernatural, masculinity and femininity, body and mind, feigned and actual distraction” (*Distracted Subjects* 2).

Carol Neely is one of the few critics who focused in her work on madness on both Shakespeare’s comedies and his tragedies. Building upon Neely’s work *Distracted Subjects*,<sup>6</sup> I think that it is interesting to compare the genres, since it gives us a better understanding of how the use of madness can cause a different result both within each play, but also in a broader cultural and social context, depending on the genre in which it appears. In general, comedies focused more on women and their domestic households, as is seen in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *Twelfth Night*. The disorder that is caused by madness had usually a comical effect, but the order was restored at the end by marriage. We will see that most of these characteristics apply to *Twelfth Night* as well, where Orsino’s and Olivia’s lovesickness and Malvolio’s fake madness disturb the order in the domestic households.<sup>7</sup> The tragedy, however, had entirely different characteristics. They often presented a story about powerful men, rulers and kings (such as King Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth) and their politics, whereas women were usually less important in these plays. The disorder in a tragedy was more related to ruling and politics, and if it was restored at the end of the play, this happened mostly by death of the disordered characters, or not at all. In *Macbeth* the disorder comes in first instance in the form of the witches and their witchcraft, with which they influence Macbeth’s fate. Later on in the play, however, also Lady Macbeth’s and Macbeth’s madness cause disorder in this tragedy. I will show in this work how

---

<sup>6</sup> From now on, I will only mention the title of Neely’s work if I am not talking about *Distracted Subjects*, but about her essay “Documents in Madness”.

<sup>7</sup> In *Twelfth Night*, the disorder is also caused by the gender confusion, but this will not be discussed in this work.

Shakespeare dramatises all different kinds of madness in his plays and how they function in the whole of the play. To end the analysis of both *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, I will discuss how madness is used in the particular genre of the play, and what the function in the wider social and cultural context could have been.

In order to investigate the meaning of madness in both *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, this work will begin with discussing the new theories about madness that originated in the Renaissance. To be able to contextualise madness, I will begin with the oldest and most prevalent theory of medicine that was still popular in the early modern period: Galen's theory of the four humours. This theory is essential for knowing how early modern people viewed medicine, and will provide the basis for the explanation of melancholic madness, which is caused by one of the four humours. In the following chapter, the regendering of madness will be discussed. Previously madwomen were considered witches, but once the new theories on madness were established, they were no longer only applied to men, but to women as well. It was believed that women who were convicted of witchcraft before, could now suffer from the same madness as men did: madness was regendered to include women. The chapter after that will talk about the link between madness and religious superstition. Witchcraft and demonic possession on the one hand, and madness on the other hand had a lot of symptoms in common. In Chapter 1 the differences and parallels between possession or bewitchment and natural madness will be explained in detail. The last section of the general overview of madness will be based on Ferrand's *Erotomania*, discussing lovesickness. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will show how all of these different kinds of madness are presented in *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, respectively. The discussion of these plays will especially focus on the boundaries between natural and supernatural madness in *Macbeth*, and on those between real or false madness, demonic possession, and on lovesickness in general in *Twelfth Night*. At the end of each discussion, I will focus on how madness was used within the plays and if it had a

special function in *Macbeth* or *Twelfth Night*. In that same part, it will also be discussed how the plays interacted with their cultural environment, and what use the representation of madness had with respect to society.

# Chapter 1:

## Renaissance Theories on Madness and Melancholy

### 1.1 Humoral Theory and Melancholy

*“I have neither the scholar’s melancholy, which is emulation; nor the musician’s, which is fantastical; nor the courtier’s, which is proud; nor the soldier’s, which is ambitious; nor the lawyer’s, which is politic; nor the lady’s, which is nice; nor the lover’s, which is all these, but it is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.”*

*William Shakespeare, As You Like It (4.1.8-14)<sup>8</sup>*

As is discussed in the introduction, the word “madness” was used in the early modern period, together with a whole array of synonyms to point out (minor) differences between the varying kinds of madness. The term “melancholy” was in the sixteenth century a commonly used synonym for “madness”, so it is important to discuss humoral theory, in which melancholy was one of the four humours. Humoral medicine was the prevailing type of medicine from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. This type of medicine was believed to be invented by Hippocrates around 500 BC and written down in early Greek manuscripts (Jackson 487). Early modern people, however, were more familiar with the translation and

---

<sup>8</sup> All of the excerpts at the beginning of chapters come from Shakespeare, William. *The RSC Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Ed. Jonathan Bate, and Eric Rasmussen. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

adaption by the Greek-Roman physician Galen from the second century AD. His edition was transmitted “through Arabic medicine in the Middle Ages, and then into Italy during the twelfth-century medical renaissance” (Neely 71), where it was translated into Latin again and then into vernacular languages. Although the Renaissance was a period of invention and new scientific discoveries, Thiher argues that “it is important to understand that [...] most advances in medicine were basically adjustments of the traditional Galenic model” (50).

The Galenic model or humoral theory states that the body digested food and transformed this into bones, muscle and blood. The excess of food that could not be digested by the body, was developed into the humours (Stelmack 257). The body contained four of these primary humours: blood (*sanguis*), phlegm (*flegma*), (yellow) bile (*chole*) and black bile (*melanchole*) (Stelmack 262). They “were associated with the heart, brain, liver and spleen, respectively” (Jackson 487). According to Ayoub, these four humours needed to be in balance in order to have a strong and healthy body, whereas “unnatural excess of any of these humours was believed to cause illness” (332). If someone became ill, it was believed that the humours that became visible showed from which kind of illness the patient was suffering. The yellow colour of vomit, for example, showed that the yellow bile was forced out of the body. Stelmack explains that “excess of this humour was thought to cause jaundice and other straw-coloured inflammations of the skin” (257). Just like yellow bile, each of the other fluids were linked with certain symptoms and diseases.

On top of that, the humours “were understood in terms of a general cosmological theory in which fire, earth, air and water were the four basic elements of all things” (Stelmack 262), and they were linked to the element’s “abstract qualities” (Jackson 487). These abstract qualities were coldness, wetness, heat and dryness (Stelmack 262), and it was believed that the balance of these qualities constituted someone’s temperament: being sanguine, pleghmatic, choleric or melancholic (Jackson 487). The link between the four elements, their

qualities and the four humours is depicted in figure 1, while figure 2 pictures the typical characteristics of the four temperaments.

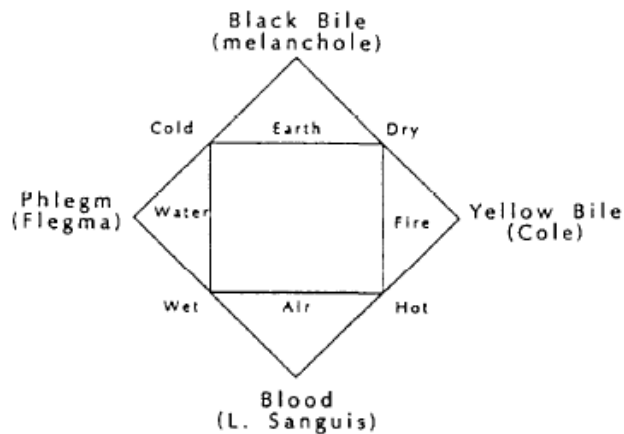


Figure 1<sup>9</sup>

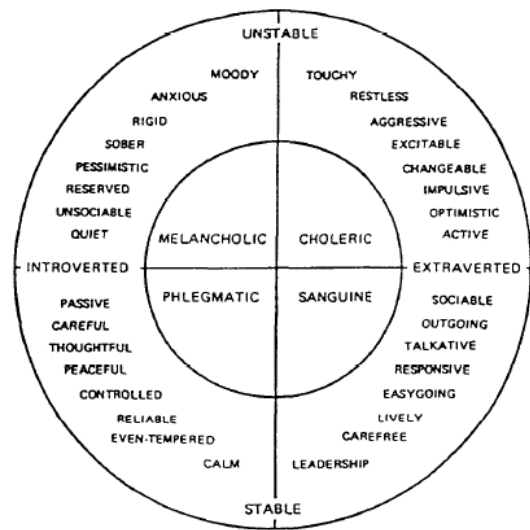


Figure 2<sup>10</sup>

Stelmack explains that Galen believed fluids could influence a person’s temperament, since “for [him], psychological characteristics were expressions of bodily processes and as such they were influenced by the particular blend or balance of the four humours” (262). The four elements were linked with the four stages in a human life; “childhood, youth, prime and old age” (Stelmack 258). Stelmack formulates the link between the humours, the elements and their qualities, and the stages of life as follows:

Blood was a manifestation of air, having the qualities warm and moist, and predominant in childhood and during the springtime. Yellow bile was a manifestation of fire, having the qualities warm and dry, and predominant in youth and during the summertime. Black bile was a manifestation of earth, having the qualities cold and dry, and predominant in prime of life and during the autumn. Phlegm was a manifestation of water, having the qualities of cold and moist, and predominant in old age and during the winter season (258).

<sup>9</sup> Robert M. Stelmack, and Anastasios Stalikas, “Galen and the Humour Theory of Temperament,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 12.3 (1991): 258. Web, 11 April 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Robert M. Stelmack, and Anastasios Stalikas, “Galen and the Humour Theory of Temperament,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 12.3 (1991): 256. Web, 11 April 2014.)

Although each bodily fluid was thought to be predominant in a certain part of life, every individual contained the four fluids, differently combined, in his or her body. The “unique natural combination of these humours” (Jackson 487) needed to be balanced for the body to be healthy. Since this balance was different for each person, a doctor first needed to determine the healthy balance for a person before he could diagnose a disease by assessing which fluid was imbalanced (Jackson 487). Stelmack explains the Galenic belief that “the mixture of the four qualities in the body could be best assessed by examining the skin” (259). The skin is, after all, somewhere in between hard and dry body structures like bones and nails, and soft and moist body structures like fat, blood and the brain. Because the palm of the hand “has a relatively balanced amount of the warm, cold, dry and moist”, Galen said it was the best place to examine the skin and to predict the “human temperament” or notice a change (Stelmack 259).

According to Galen, the black bile (or melanchole) was of the four humours the most important one to cause changes in character. Patients suffering from a disturbance in their melanchole were traditionally very frightened, showed signs of depression (Stelmack 260), and suffered from delusions and hallucinations (MacDonald 153). In 1586, Timothie Bright contended in his treatise about melancholy that the black bile “yeeldeth up to the braine certaine vapors, whereby the understanding [wa]s obscured” (2). Because of its colour, the humour darkened and obscured the thoughts as a result of which people were more fearful, sad and delusional. When the black bile moved itself towards the lower body, another kind of melancholy was created: what Ferrand calls “Hypocondriacall Melancholy “ (26), a form of melancholy which will be discussed in more detail further on in Chapter 1. Because there was a general consensus that the humour melanchole caused these symptoms, the patients were called melancholics, and the disease was called melancholy or melancholia (Stelmack 260). Bright talks about the different terms in his definition of melancholy, saying that:



It shall be necessarie to lay forth diverse maners of takinge the name of melancholie, and whereto the name being one, is applied diverslie. It signifieth in all, either a certayne fearefull disposition of the mind altered from reason, or else an humour of the body (Bright 1).

He explains in this quote that the term “melancholy” was both used to name the disease, which caused fear because the mind was “altered from reason”, and for the melancholic humour in the body.

As Bright mentions in the quote, “a certayne fearfull disposition of the mind” was one of the main symptoms of melancholy. This fearfulness was often caused by delusions which made people unnecessarily anxious. MacDonald mentions that there is a “logical connection between delusions and pathological emotions” (157), both being typical symptoms of melancholy. Being afraid of something is very normal in certain situations, and it is only when someone was afraid in common situations that a problem arose. Melancholics suffered from delusions and may have thought that they found themselves in danger, whereas this was not the case. This caused fearfulness (the “pathological emotion” in MacDonald’s quote) in the most common situations, so fear was only “viewed as [a] symptom of mental disease [...] when [it was] aroused without any credible cause or when [it] far exceeded the intensity of feeling appropriate to the situation” (MacDonald 157). The same reasoning applies to the sadness or depression often found in melancholics. MacDonald argued that their sadness could have “legitimate occasions in the death of loved ones” (159), but because of their delusions it was possible that they just imagined something to be sad about. If there was a real reason to be depressed, it was only considered melancholy when the person was depressed very intensely or for a very long time (MacDonald 159).

Because of their sadness, fear and depression, melancholics “los[t] the capacity to take pleasure from activities they had previously delighted in” (MacDonald 160) or did not enjoy the company of others anymore. Michel Foucault states about this last effect of melancholy

that the patients wanted the isolation and “love[d] solitude and [avoided] company [as] this ma[de] them more attached to the object of their delirium [...] whatever it may be” (118), instead of having to feign interest in something else. This isolation made melancholy a disease rather ‘popular’ in the higher classes. They were the only people with the time and money to be able to withdraw from the public and spend time in isolation. On top of that, melancholy was often associated with the popular poets and their master pieces (a tradition that became even more important with the Romantics), and with melancholic heroes in stories, with the result that the disease was kind of prestigious (MacDonald 151). Burton gives in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* another reason for the recurring melancholy which appeared in aristocratic patients:

And this is the true cause that so many great men, ladies and gentlewomen labour of this disease in country and city; for idleness is an appendix to nobility; they count it as a disgrace to work [...] and thence their bodies become full of gross humours [...] their minds disquieted, dull, heavy, etc.; care, jealousy, fear of some diseases, sullen fits, weeping fits, seize too familiarly upon them (qtd. in MacDonald 151).

According to Burton’s explanation, nobles were more susceptible to the disease of melancholy because they did not have to labour during the day, and as such had nothing to divert their thoughts. As a result their thoughts started to wander and the humours in their bodies could get out of balance, causing melancholy.

As previously mentioned, melancholy was in the early modern period a synonym for madness, together with terms like “troubled-in-mind” and “distracted”. However, each of these synonyms had its own focus, melancholy was rather focusing on the sombre mood of the person, while others emphasised the violence of the patient or his or her suicidal tendencies. Robert Burton discussed all of the symptoms of madness in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, saying that “the tower of Babel never yielded such confusion of tongues as the chaos of melancholy doth variety of symptoms” (qtd. in MacDonald 112). He protected

himself from critics, though, by saying that these symptoms were never seen all together in one person: “Not that they are all to be found in one man, for that were to paint a monster or a chimera, not a man; but some in one, some in another, and that successively or at several times” (qtd. in MacDonald 112). He, as many contemporaries, considered melancholy a general term for madness with a whole array of varying symptoms, although other authors, like his contemporary Napier<sup>11</sup>, considered melancholy as one kind of madness, while troubled-in-mind was another category. I will take an intermediate position in this debate: following Napier’s view, different kinds of madness will be discussed in what follows. Most of these, however, can still be linked to melancholy, as Burton suggested in his work.

## 1.2 Regendering Madness

*O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!  
Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow:  
Thy element’s below!*  
*William Shakespeare, King Lear (2.2.233-35)*

Many authors, like Foucault in his *Madness and Civilization* and Thiher in his *Revels in Madness*, consider the Renaissance as a period with few new medical inventions to explain madness. Although they might be right, since medicine still used Galen’s theory in the early modern period, there also arose some new trends in the Renaissance theories about madness, for instance the introduction of women to madness. The witch trials became very popular and “the irrational achieved a demonical status that it had never had before” (Thiher 50). The popularity of witch trials created a new focus on women and their madness, whereas before

---

<sup>11</sup> Richard Napier was “a seventeenth-century astological physician” (MacDonald 13) who took notes of his medical practices. He was the main source for MacDonald’s book *Mystical Bedlam*.

especially men were thought to be the sufferers of this disease. Neely considers the belief in witchcraft as one of the “two cultural polarities [...] that encourage[d] the formulation of women’s melancholy” (70). The first cultural polarity was that between the traditional belief in witchcraft and possession on the one hand, and the scepticism that started to rise about this on the other hand. The second polarity was that between the wife as a subordinate person in a marriage or the newly emerged “view on marriage” as a bond between two equals (Neely 70). Because women were seen as equal to men, and because scepticism about witchcraft originated, new theories about mad woman could arise.

The trend of diagnosing women’s madness can be seen in the works of some authors of that period. Ferrand included in his *Erotomania* (1640) several examples of lovesickness in women (see 1.4. for more about this work) and Robert Burton added a new chapter in the third edition of his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1628): “Symptomes of Maides, Nunnes, and Widowes Melancholy” (Neely 70). There are two important works to indicate that there was indeed a change in this period: Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) and Edward Jorden’s *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called Suffocation of the Mother* (1603). These two innovative works provided theories on women’s madness as an alternative to those women being previously accused of witchcraft, which will be explained in more detail in this chapter. Reginald Scot was not a doctor, but a justice. In his career he often came across women who were accused of being witches or women who said themselves that they were witches. In his treatise he tried to proof that witchcraft did not exist, saying that people claimed too much “upon witches”, which was actually “the hand and correction of God” (Scot 1). He said that “what seem[ed] like witchcraft [wa]s usually the result of delusion, fraud, or false accusations” (Neely 78). Before his treatise, the problem of the sceptics of witchcraft was that they could never explain why there were self-professed witches. This was the main argument for the witch-hunters that witchcraft did exist. Scot solved this problem by representing these

women as melancholic patients who suffered “like traditional male melancholics, from diseased imaginations” (Neely 78). He regendered the melancholy from men to women, laying the foundation of the disease for women in their reproductive organs, and not in the spleen, like that was the case for men. Although he was not the first to discuss “uterine reproductive disorders” (Neely 78), they were never before linked to melancholy like Scot did. According to Neely, Scot “extend[ed] traditional ‘histories’ [...] to accomplish the aim of his treatise” (78). These “histories” talked about men who thought they were ghosts, kings or other imaginary things, “traditional cases of delusions of grandeur” (Neely 79). Scot applied these to women, saying that they were like the delusional men, thinking that they were witches when they actually were not. He described in Book 1, Chapter 3 of his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* this kind of women:

One sort of such as are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkels; pore, sullen, superstitious, and papists; or such as knowe no religion. [...] They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them” (Scot 7).

Scot described here the image of a witch as we still know it today: old, poor, wrinkled, ugly etc., but these are also the symptoms of a melancholic patient. Timothie Bright explained in his *Treatise of Melancholy* that older people (Scot’s “old” and “wrinkled”) are more susceptible to the disease, because they cannot restore the natural composition of their four humours as easily as young people can (121). On top of that, the melancholic patient is “cold and drie [...] which causeth hollownes of eye” (Bright 113-14) and melancholy makes “the body white” (Bright 129), symptoms which Scot respectively referred to as “bleare-eied” and “pale”. However, as mentioned above, Scot did not think the melancholy of women derived from the same source as that of men, namely the spleen, but said the cause of their melancholy lay in the uterus. Since Scot was not a doctor, this was not explained in detail in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, but two decades later, the phenomenon was discussed

elaborately in Jorden's treatise *Suffocation of the Mother*. Jorden also emphasised the fact that witchcraft often got confused with the disease he called "suffocation of the mother" (sig.5r), but was also known under the name of "Passio Hysterica, Suffocation, Prefocatio, and Strangulatus uteri" (sig. 5r). He said that the symptoms were so "terrible to beholde" and of such nature that they could not easily be ascribed to natural causes. This made even the best physicians confuse the disease with witchcraft, so that it was not surprising that common people usually ascribed "these accidents either to diabolicall possession, to witchcraft, or to the immediate finger of the Almighty" (Jorden sig. 2r). Starting with Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, however, Neely discusses that those "supernatural explanations of distracted subjects [were gradually replaced] with medical ones" (6). She explains that "since most of those accused of witchcraft or found bewitched or possessed were women", the original views on melancholy and madness had "to be recategorized to include women" (6) She called this process "the regendering of madness" (6). In a sense it is strange that women were excluded from this in the first place, since they were considered the weaker sex and as such were deemed more susceptible to all kinds of diseases. Jorden even said that whatever "strange accident may appeare in any of the principall functions of mans bodie," (sig. 1v) it was even stronger in a woman's body. The origins of the suffocation of the mother lay in the uterus ("mother" was another term for the uterus), but because this organ was linked to the brain, heart and liver through the veins and arteries it could easily be as terrible as a man's disease, or even worse. According to Jorden, the uterus is such a delicate organ that "whatsoever humor in other partes may cause extraordinarie affects, by reason of the abundance or corruption of it, this part will affoord the like in as plentifull a manner, and in as high a degree of corruption" (sig. 1v). This quote shows that Jorden's view on the suffocation of the mother still included the link to the humoral theory, just like Scot who applied the symptoms of male melancholy sufferers to women.

Although a disturbance in the natural composition of the humours could cause the suffocation of the mother, according to Jorden, this was not the main cause of the disease. The disorder of the humours could create “most terrible accidents” (Jorden sig. 20r), but “they [we]re not so deadly as those which proceede[d] from the corruption of nature” (Jorden sig. 20r). The disease could be prevented by having sexual activities so the womb stayed active and humours could not accumulate in the organ (Jorden sig. 22v). In light of this explanation, the “corruption of nature” meant either that women who were married ignored their sexual needs and denied their husbands, or that unmarried women (widows or maidens) felt those sexual needs too strong and developed the disease in this way. This was seen in married women, who had no visible problems with their humours, but were still affected by this disease because they suppressed their “ordinary evacuation” (Jorden sig. 20r), meaning that they did not want to have sexual activities with their husband. Also widows who had their humours in balance, suffered from the suffocation of the mother and felt “decay in those faculties” (Jorden sig. 20v). Jorden concluded that “maidens and widowes [we]re most subject thereunto” (sig. 22v), because they could not fulfill the needs they felt. Jorden is in his theories supported by Ferrand and his work *Erotomania*. In this work on love melancholy, Ferrand spent Chapter XII on the question if “furor uterinus” (94), another term for the suffocation of the mother, was also a form of love melancholy. He concluded that young girls “when they now begin to be ready for Marriage” (Ferrand 95) were the most susceptible to this disease. The only cure for this was an immediate marriage, otherwise they could get so mad that they would kill themselves (Ferrand 97). Although furor uterinus or the suffocation of the mother seem to have little in common with melancholy as it is discussed in the previous chapter, Ferrand linked both of the diseases by explaining their name. He explained that fury, the term used in furor uterinus, and madness were synonyms. The words madness and melancholy were often used to describe the same things. This results from the fact that the

Greek and Latin word “mania” was used by Hippocrates and Galen for both madness and melancholy and also translated in both ways (Ferrand 98).

Next to the causes of suffocation of the mother, Jorden also discussed extensively all of the symptoms that the disease could cause. One of the most distinct symptoms was the one that Scot used in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* to defend women that were accused of being witches: delusions and imaginations. The womb had a connection to the other parts of the body, including the brain. As a result, the disease that affected the womb was believed to also affect the brain, and Jorden said that “very often there happeneth an alienation of the minde in this disease” (sig. 13v). The patients were depraved from their “internall sence” and they imagined or thought to remember things that never happened or were exaggerated in their imagination (Jorden sig. 13r). Bright also described this as both a symptom and cause of the more traditional melancholy, as is discussed in the chapter above. Jorden went a step further in saying that the patients of suffocation of the mother were sometimes so delusional that they would act “furious and raging deprived of their right iudgement and rest” (sig. 13v). The last word of Jorden’s quote shows another symptom: wakefulness or insomnia. Because the patients’ fantasies and dreams were so vivid, they often would “walke, talke, laugh, [and] crye” (Jorden sig. 13v) during their sleep, which made them not well-rested when they woke up. However, the opposite of this could happen as well: the influence of the womb on the heart could make the pulse slow down. In some cases the pulse even died completely and the patient was seemingly dead for a time ranging from a couple of hours to weeks (Jorden sig. 9r).

The next symptom is, according to Jorden, a defect of the “externall sensitive function” (sig. 13v). This external function gave to each of the senses their purpose: it made the eyes able to see, the ear to hear etc. He said that suffocation of the mother often depraved its patients especially from “the feeling facultie” (sig. 13v); they were either numb in some parts



of their body, or felt on the contrary pain or other things where there was nothing, which links it to their delusions. Together with the loss of the senses, the disease could also make the patient lose the control of his or her body. Jorden said they could not “abstaine from motions and gestures, casting their aremes and legges to and fro, up and downe, dancing [...] and in diverse maners forming their motions” (sig. 14v-15r). Also with this symptom the opposite could happen: some of the patients could not move their body in any way and were locked in a certain position. This could give them a strange position, sometimes completely bowed forwards or backwards, whereas other times just particular parts of the body were unmovable, such as the face or the limbs “as in crampes” (Jorden sig. 14v). The last of the symptoms Jorden mentioned is the one that gave its name to the illness: suffocation. Some of the patients had difficulties with breathing and choked on their food or drinks, if they were able to swallow it at all (sig. 15v).

Like is previously mentioned in this chapter, the suffocation of the mother was often confused with witchcraft, since “the satanic female and the hysterical mother existed on a close continuum” (Levin 22). This is not surprising as we can link some of the symptoms mentioned above to witchcraft as well. A first parallel between witches and hysterical patients is the people who were most easily affected. In both categories it were mostly young girls or older spinsters and widows: all women who were not married and as such were “relatively free from patriarchal controls” (Levin 30). This lack of patriarchal authority made these women more susceptible to “inappropriate behaviors and expressions of sexual desire” (Levin 30). The delusions and fantasies was another thing they had in common. Scot defended women who said to be witches by saying that they imagined all of their powers and the results of their curses, just like hysteric women suffered from hallucinations. People could be a little bit scared of the secluded women who thought they were witches, so they often kept distance, which made the women at their turn more convinced that they were witches. The deformity of

the body was another symptom that linked the patients of suffocation of the mother to the witches. The image of a witch we have today is still one of an old, deformed woman with her body bowed forwards and cramped hands and fingers. All these abnormalities were symptoms of the suffocation of the mother. When superstitious people would have seen such a woman before Jordan's and Scot's work, the chances were big that they would have accused her of being a witch. In this sense, the regendering of madness was an immense progress in the medicine of the Renaissance, although many authors say the medicine improved little in that period. Religious superstition was, however, still an important part of the culture. And although the works of Jordan and Scot proved to be a help for many women, madness was often still linked to possession of the devil or as a punishment of God, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

### **1.3 Madness and Religious Superstition**

*'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world  
William Shakespeare, Hamlet (3.2.331-33)*

The previous chapter talked about the regendering of madness and how physicians attributed madness more and more to natural rather than to supernatural causes. Lederer mentions that physicians were influenced by religion in their diagnose of madness “until the mid-seventeenth century” (10), but most common people still believed in the supernatural causes for a much longer time. They “readily blamed the Devil and his minions, demons and witches, for madness” (MacDonald 174). In theory, each kind of disease could be said to be a punishment of God or a possession by the devil, but there was usually made a distinction

between the body parts affected. The demoniacs, people who were thought to be possessed by the devil, “and their physician, apparently thought that the Devil could harm the mind more readily than the body, because almost all of them complained of some form of mental disturbance” (MacDonald 200). Because of this, the physicians were divided into two groups: the “corporal physicians (*medici corporali*) [and the] spiritual physicians (*medici spirituali*)” (Lederer 6), of which the first group was responsible for curing sickness of the body and the latter for curing diseases of the soul. These physicians had to find out if the patient was either mad, which had a bodily reason, or possessed, which was linked to the soul. Lederer mentions that “in sheer numbers” (6) there were far more spiritual physicians than “university-trained mad-doctors” (6), and also the number of their patients lay far higher, showing that the belief in the supernatural was indeed very important. These spiritual physicians were, in contrast to their corporal counterparts, not trained in medicine and were usually just clergymen. Despite this fact, the Church recognised their practices and these physicians were active not only in England, but throughout the whole of Europe (Lederer 1). According to Lederer, their practices ranged from treating “simple tribulations (the most common form) to suicidal despair and demonic possession” (1), but more generally their task was to restore “equilibrium in the souls of troubled individuals” (1). The dividing line between the mad and the possessed was, however, not always very clear. Lippedge mentions how melancholic delusions were often “misinterpret [...] as divinely inspired” (38) and that “phenomena such as ecstatic visions, witchcraft confessions and mental illness were attributed either to the supernatural or to an excess of black bile at high temperature, or both” (37). An analysis of some references to madness in sixteenth and seventeenth century texts even proved that madness was as often mentioned together with possession, as the words “madness” and

“possession” were mentioned alone (33).<sup>12</sup> Also Lederer wrote about the link between the two. He says that the spiritual physicians were the connection between “science and religion, between knowledge and belief, and between the profane and the sacred” (5), and that their practices not only provided a link to madness, but also to “early modern politics and mentalities” (4). This last part may seem odd, but as is already mentioned above, there is a clear link between for instance the law and madness, since it were judges (law) who convicted people of witchcraft (madness). Also Reginald Scot, author of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, shows this link, since he was not a physician, but a judge, writing about madness and witchcraft. This shows that the unclear division between possession and madness goes far further than only the domains of medicine and religion.

The reason why madness and possession were so often confused, was largely caused due to their similar symptoms. It is already discussed in 1.2. how the symptoms of witchcraft, a form of possession, were connected with those of suffocation of the mother, a form of physical madness. In the following paragraphs, I will explain the possible causes of possession by the Devil and the typical symptoms, to compare this to the theories on madness caused by melancholy. The demoniacs attributed their possession to a couple of different reasons, of which MacDonald describes the main ones. A first cause of possession MacDonald mentions is guilt, saying that many of Satan’s victims were “tormented by guilt” (202). Also Napier, a physician who took notes on each of his patients<sup>13</sup>, registered that a big section of his possessed patients “were tortured by guilt about [...] sins they had committed, and often they had become convinced that they were damned because of them” (MacDonald

---

<sup>12</sup> Research: Kroll, J. and Bachrach, B. “Visions and psychopathology in the Middle Ages.” *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 190 (1982): 41-49.

<sup>13</sup> More than two thousand of Napier’s sixty thousand patients came with problems of mental disorder or possession. The notes of these consultations are analysed by MacDonald in his work *Mystical Bedlam* (Neely, “Documents in Madness” 329).

220). It worked the other way around as well, though. On the one hand people could think that they were possessed and damned because of their sins, on the other hand they ascribed their forbidden and sinful feelings “to the instigation of the Devil” (MacDonald 202). MacDonald describes how Napier’s patients attributed their “evil thoughts and forbidden urges to the temptations of Satan” (202). It were the evil demons inside the patients that made them commit sinful deeds, and not the patients themselves. He illustrates this with some of Napier’s cases: one case talked about a man who had an “inner voice” (202) that said he had killed his wife and would die as punishment, while another talked about how supernatural demons “tempted six men and women [...] to slaughter their children, their parents, or their spouses” (202). According to MacDonald, another explanation for demonic possession lay in the often “oppressively pious” (200) atmosphere within the family, since belief was still very important in the early modern period. People who committed a sin or “screamed spectacular curses and shocking blasphemies” (200) said the devil within them was to blame for this. Very often, however, this was just a case of “religious rebellion” (200) against the oppressive family values they had to live with.

The reasons for demonic possession mentioned above show that the division between madness and possession is a very weak one. Patients thinking that they are demoniacs because they hear an “inner voice” (202) or utter blasphemous things are in these days easier to categorise under the term “madness” than “possessed”. The symptoms from which demoniacs are suffering, make the boundary between madness and possession even less clear, as can be seen in the following account of Sister Anne Andrée de Jésus Marie’s story:

The story [...] resembles that of the typical possessed adolescent in early modern Europe and New England. [...] She might begin to have spontaneous fainting spells or disturbances of sight and of hearing. Protracted fits may follow, accompanied by imaginary confrontations with Satan or his agents. The possessed girl could go into bizarre contortions and have periods of apparent paralysis alternating with frenetic

activity. She might be unable to eat and she would have ‘vocalisations’ when she would speak with Satan’s voice (Lipsedge 25-6).

All of the demonic symptoms this girl is suffering from are also symptoms that were discussed in one or another account of madness and melancholy. Ferrand discussed in his *Erotomania* that “fainting spells or disturbances of sight and of hearing” (Lipsedge mentions it as “eyes rolling or staring” (32)) were typical of lovesickness, as was being “unable to eat”. What in Lipsedge’s quote is described as “alternating” between paralysis and “frenetic activity” was also typical for melancholic patients, who suffered from mood swings, which will be further discussed in 1.4. The “protracted fits” and “bizarre contortions”, or “a face [...] distorted in a hideous grimace” as Lipsedge (32) mentions, are already mentioned in 1.2. as a symptom of both suffocation of the mother and witchcraft, which again emphasises the thin boundary between the natural and the supernatural. The succession of all these symptoms is ultimately “followed by amnesia” (Lipsedge 32), also a symptom of both Jorden’s suffocation of the mother and Ferrand’s love melancholy. Napier’s notes on his cases also show the difficulties he had with the boundaries, since most of the “people who feared that they were possessed or haunted” complained of quite ordinary symptoms as anxiety, dark thoughts, or in the worst case suicidal thoughts (MacDonald 200). They often saw or felt the presence of Satan and his demons and we would classify them today as having “hallucinations or delusions” (MacDonald 200). It was the task of the physician to determine the difference between the illnesses with a natural and those with a supernatural cause. A supernatural cause was often diagnosed if there was no other evidence of any natural causes for a disease. Sometimes even “both natural and supernatural interpretations were regarded as valid” at the same time (Lipsedge 26).

Also Martin Luther linked madness to melancholy: he said that people had to purify their souls regularly, otherwise the blackness of the earth would corrupt their bodies and this would lead to sin and possession (Lederer 7). Essentially, Luther described here how an

excess of melancholy (the blackness mentioned was associated with black cholera, or melancholia) could ultimately lead to possession. There were, however, some symptoms unique to possession, like the “abhorrence” a demoniac would show at “the name or image of Christ” (Lipsedge 32), but also that they “babbled learned languages, vomited pins and nails, toads, and other creatures”, that “they spoke Satan’s words in his own timbre” (MacDonald 205), and that “their afflictions would always be impervious to the natural remedies of the most skilled physician” (MacDonald 199). How different madness and possession might (or might not) be, Lipsedge mentions that they essentially created the same thing: “the destruction of order” (32) and “loss of reason” (32). I mentioned in the introduction how disorder was both central to Shakespeare’s comedies and tragedies, but used differently in each genre. This “destruction of order” is an aspect Shakespeare likes to play with, and will be discussed later, in the analysis of *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*.

In the last paragraph of this chapter I will try to give a short overview of the methods that were used to cure patients from possession. The belief in supernatural causes for madness, such as possession and bewitchment, ranged from the beginning of the Middle Ages to the late seventeenth century and a whole range of cures was invented during this long period. MacDonald came to this conclusion as well, saying that “the methods of curing the afflictions of the mind were as diverse as the forces that were believed to cause them” (175). The most popular methods and also the ones used during the whole period of supernatural beliefs, was driving the devil out through “prayer and fasting” (MacDonald 208), by “invoking the name of God and [...] by the laying on of hands” (Lipsedge 32). MacDonald explains that these harmless methods were even used to cure both supernatural and natural diseases (213), again a sign of the thin dividing line between the two. This method is a mild form of exorcism, only relying on prayers and on other non-harmful practices. Since people believed it to be very successful, it was a very popular method for a long time. MacDonald

tells how both “Puritans and Jesuits often produced spectacular successes” (216), which were “publicized energetically” (216). Exorcism was so successful that people believed it could work sometimes even without a clergyman (MacDonald 216). This was until the end of the sixteenth century when Protestants “effectively eliminated exorcism from the Church of England’s liturgy [...] because they objected to its Popish ceremonies” (MacDonald 176). This led to more unconventional kinds of exorcism with magicians instead of clergyman, and charms and amulets instead of prayers. Also the physician Napier profited of this new trend and either used Catholic prayers or “remove[d] their Popish connotations” (MacDonald 215), adjusting the exorcism to the patient suffering.

Another practiced cure was confinement or segregation. This became popular at the end of the sixteenth century, when everywhere throughout Europe “prisons and houses of correction” (Lederer 242) started to appear. At first, people tried to keep their possessed or mad family member at home, binding them to their beds with rope or even chains if it was necessary (Lederer 259). This was not an ideal treatment, though, since the care for these patients became not only a burden for their families, but also for the community. Lederer explains this by saying that “their continued presence in the locale disrupted the communal and familiar relations in a civil and reproductive sense” (260). The early modern people found the solution to their problem in building secluded cells or boxes in which they could put the possessed or mad person. Lederer says how usually the family put all of their money together and asked support of the community to “construct a cell” (261) or “a pauper’s hut” (261), or in the case of Anna Bärtler even a “crate of wood” (261). It were these secluded spaces that eventually evolved into prisons and houses of correction. The seclusion was a common cure for possessed people, but also other kinds of madness such as melancholy or lovesickness were treated in this way. To end this chapter, this shows again that there is always some kind of link between religion and science, between the supernatural and the natural, and between



possession and madness, until ultimately no distinction was made anymore and all of the mad people became ‘imprisoned’ into the same institutions and treated in the same way. In what follows I will discuss one last kind of madness or melancholy: love melancholy.

#### **1.4 Madness and Ferrand’s “love melancholy”**

*“Love is merely a madness: and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish’d and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.”*

*William Shakespeare, As You Like It (3.2.295-97)*

In one of the previous chapters it is described how at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century case studies of melancholic madness in women originated. Lovesickness was another kind of madness that could not only occur in men, but also in women. The differences in gender and sexuality were less important with respect to lovesickness, because this discourse was “concerned primarily with the satisfaction of desires, only peripherally with marriage, and not at all with reproduction” (Neely 100). Because of this, there was a greater tolerance for strange sexual behaviours or uncommon love objects. Neely mentions how different authors such as André Du Laurens and Robert Burton talked in their works about lovesickness, calling it “a melancholie which commeth by the extremitie of love” and “erotic melancholy”, respectively (99). I will use especially the work of the sixteenth century French physician Jacques Ferrand, since it is the most elaborate one and synthesises the main theories about lovesickness expressed in the other works. His work *Erotomania or a Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy* (from now on *Erotomania*) will be used to explain the

Renaissance view on this disease. Ferrand describes lovesickness as follows in his *Erotomania*: “Love, or this Eroticall Passion is a kind of Dotage, proceeding from an Irregular desire of enjoying a lovely object; and is attended on by Feare and sadnesse” (31). This short quote explains Ferrand’s view on lovesickness: it was a disease caused by an irregular desire, a desire for an object or person who could not reciprocate their love, which caused fear and sadness in the lover.

Ferrand distinguished two types of causes for what he called “love melancholy”: the internal and the external causes. The internal causes were connected with the body, whereas the external causes were influences from outside of the body. There were five external or “evident causes of Love” (Ferrand 41), which coincided with the five senses: form, taste, smell, sound and touch. However, the most important sense is sight, because “no man was ever in love, with one he never saw” (Ferrand 42). Ferrand admitted that there were a few exceptions, like Paris and Helen of Troy, but love was a case of “Nature, not Chance” (43) and those few exceptions did not make sight a less important external cause for love melancholy.

This brings us to the second sense: what Ferrand called “the sense of hearing” (43). Although, for him, hearing seemed to signify hearing the lover’s voice through reading a text, as well as hearing it in the literal sense of the word. He said that the most dangerous and most effective are “the fabulous Love-stories of the Poets, or lascivious songs and sonnets” (44) and the “flattering Love-letters wherewith Lovers are wont to insinuate themselves into their Mistresses favour” (44). However, written words were not the only danger, since “to these other allurements and provocations to Love, caused by the hearing, we might adde Musicke” (Ferrand 46). Like a bird who sings a beautiful and melodious song to convince a mate to pair (45), men could use music to seduce a woman. Although a bad performance could have the opposite effect and “prove[d] rather a remedy against Love” (Ferrand 47).

The next sense Ferrand discussed in his *Erotomania* is the smell; more specifically the air we breathe in and how it could influence love melancholy in a positive or negative way. He followed Hippocrates' vision that people living in the more northern countries, and therefore breathing in colder air, were "very little subject to this disease of Love" (51), whereas the opposite was true for those living in warmer countries.

If air had an influence on the body, then food was even more important. With respect to the sense of taste, Ferrand distinguished between two sorts of food and drinks: the "Hot, Flatuous, and very Nutritive; or else such as ingender Melancholy Humours" (55). Especially this last kind of food needed to be avoided in order to avoid suffering from melancholy. However, food had not only an influence on melancholy, melancholy had also an effect on food, since a melancholic person often lost his appetite (Ferrand 60). Ferrand linked this to people who missed "the Act of Venerly" (59) because of a loved one who died. The previous chapter already discussed this loss with respect to women, which led to a disease often called "the suffocation of the Mother", but also men were susceptible to this sort of melancholy.

To introduce his last external cause for lovesickness, the sense of the touch, Ferrand quoted the Latin poet Martial, famous for his *Epigrams*, saying that a face never pleases without a smile (50). This pleasing aspect of a smile is what made it especially dangerous for people to fall in love. Even more risky than smiles, however, were kisses, because people actually touched each other. Especially in those countries "where they have a custome, alwaies to kisse at their first salutation" (50), Ferrand said that there was an imminent danger for the girl to fall in love with each cheek she was presented (50). Ferrand immediately neutralised his statements, though, by saying that those external powers "ha[d] no power at all" (51), with the exception of weak and easy impressionable spirits. He said that therefore, some physicians did not even call them external causes, but "occasions" of the disease (51).

Ferrand did stress, however, that it was not safe to expose yourself willingly, “for hee that willfully runnes upon a danger, shall fall in the same” (51).

Since Ferrand said that the external causes had only effect on the fragile spirits, there had to be some other, stronger; causes as well: these were what he called the “Internall causes” (63) or “Antecedents” (64). The first aspect to consider with respect to the internal causes was “the disposition of the body” (Ferrand 63). When a person’s nature and personality was not fully developed yet, or past the age of development, meaning they were full-grown adults, their disposition was “defect” (64), according to Ferrand, and they did not need to fear suffering from love melancholy. This category included young people (boys younger than fourteen and girls younger than twelve), and old people, but also eunuchs for instance, because their body never had the chance to develop completely.

The nature of the body was very important, but the main “cause of Love Melancholy, or Madnesse”, was “the Melancholy Humour” (64), and melancholic persons were the ones most liable to lovesickness. There is a contradiction in this thinking, since it is mentioned in 1.1. that the humour melancholy is cold and dry, the exact opposite of the heat that was essential for love melancholy. This cold black bile (or melancholy) was most present in older men, so they would have been the ones to fall in love easily, rather than younger people. This was obviously not the case, since it is mentioned above that older people did not suffer from love melancholy because their body has not the right disposition anymore. The melancholy Ferrand was talking about was a special kind of humour, namely “Hypocondriacall Melancholy” (65). Earlier in his *Erotomania*, Ferrand made the distinction between three kinds of melancholy: “the first [wa]s engendred of Black Choler” (25), this was the dry and cold black bile mentioned above; the second one was produced in the body and was distributed through the veins. The third, and last one, was the “Flatuous, or Hypocondriacall Melancholy”:

so called for that the substance of this disease is feared in the Hypochondries, which comprehends the Liver, Spleen, Mesentery, Guts, the veine of the Matrix, and other adjoyning parts [...] So that we may very justly reduce the disease of Love Melancholy to this last species, seeing that the parts affected in it are principally the Liver, and the parts adjoyning (Ferrand 26).

Ferrand calls this kind of melancholy “Hypocondriacall” since the disease was especially dangerous for the “Hypocondries”, which were the organs in the lower part of the body such as the “guts” and the “matrix”. Since the liver, one of the “Hypocondries”, was the organ that was most easily affected by lovesickness, Ferrand concludes that the disease must be “reduce[d]” to the “Hypocondriacall Melancholy”. This kind of melancholy was hot and dry and produced some kind of “Flatulent vapour” (Ferrand 66), which titillated and made the sufferer sexually excited. Contrary to the black bile, which made the person stupid and depressive, the hypocondriacal melancholy resulted in a vivid imagination (Ferrand 66), which made someone suffering from lovesickness only dream more about his or her love interest.

Next to the causes of lovesickness, Ferrand also discussed the symptoms of this disease in his *Erotomania*, more specifically in Chapter fourteen. The most important of the external causes was the sight, since “the objective cause of love [wa]s first seen by the eyes” whereupon “the image [wa]s conveyed to the liver, the seat of concupiscence” (Thiher 75). As a result of that, the eyes were also the most important part in looking for symptoms of love melancholy. As soon as the disease had entered the body, it resulted in “a certaine kind of modest cast of the eyes” (Ferrand 106). He said that the eyes were at one time very “hollow, and dry” (107) when the lover was in deep contemplation, whereas at other times they were wet because of tears, or on the contrary looking very happy, “beholding something or other that much delighted them” (Ferrand 107). These changes between sad and happy not only took place within the eyes, but were even worse considering the person’s mood in general. A person suffering from lovesickness went from being extremely happy and laughing to

extremely sad and weeping, to becoming again “as sad, pensive, and dejected as before” (Ferrand 107).

The “unequall and confused beating of the Pulse” (Ferrand 114) was another symptom of love melancholy, and one from which a doctor could easily derive the disease of his patient. He only had to take the pulse of the lover and say the name of the beloved one, and the pulse would quicken and beat erratically (Ferrand 115). There were several other symptoms that appeared on mentioning the name of the beloved one or seeing him or her: blushing or, on the contrary, growing very pale (113), not being able to speak anymore (118), “feeblesse of the knees” (112), and sweating (113). On top of that, the love melancholics suffered from some permanent symptoms as well. They often looked very sickly, or had a “languishing countenance” as Ferrand called it (111), and frequently had a pale colour (111), because they were not able to sleep at night (112). Ferrand also mentioned that they had “no order or equality at all in their Gesture, Motions, or Actions; and they [we]re perpetually sighing, and complaining without any cause” (112). There is one last symptom, which even Ferrand admitted to be a little bit strange; he said that people suffering from lovesickness did not eat grapes, because they caused flatulence. This flatulency oppressed the midriff, hindered the beating of the heart and disturbed the breathing, so they could not sigh when they wanted to. They would relinquish eating grapes to prevent this suffering by not being able to sigh at their pleasures (Ferrand 116-7).

Ferrand’s *Erotomania* would not be complete without several cures for love melancholy, next to the causes and symptoms. The main cure, not only described by Ferrand, but also by Du Laurens and Bright, was to have sexual intercourse with the beloved one, “since the primary symptom of lovesickness [wa]s unsatisfied desire” (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 102). Ferrand made a distinction between a “Lawfull, or Unlawfull” (276) remedy. The lawful remedy, where partners joined each other in marriage and channelled their

passions within wedlock, was of course the most preferable one. Ferrand emphasised that no physician would ever deny a patient from this cure (276). The unlawful remedy, however, was more problematic. If marriage was not an option, traditionally “sex with the beloved object” (without marriage) or another replacement like “prostitutes, slaves, or widows” (Neely 102) was proposed. If it was possible, it was even recommended to have intercourse more than once with multiple partners to be able to purge “the beloved image’s from the brain” and the “sperm from the genitals” (Neely 102). Especially for women, this remedy was socially less acceptable, since it would have been very shameful for them to have sexual intercourse out of wedlock.

Since the remedy of having intercourse with the love object could be both morally and socially problematic, Ferrand gave a whole array of other cures to help the patient. In Chapter 36 of his *Erotomania* he described all of the “empiricall remedies for the Cure of Love, and Erotique Melancholy”, from which “the most famous and certaine Remedy” (311) was that the lovers would throw themselves into the sea from the Leucadian Rock. Because this was quite a painful solution, this resulted in some other alternatives, like bathing in Cupid’s fountain or in the river Selemnus (313). Ferrand fully supported and believed in this remedy, “for it is most certaine, that a Bath of cold water is a very soveraigne Remedy for the cure of the Uterine Fury, which is a Species of Love-Melancholy” (313). Another “empericall remedy”, according to Ferrand, was music, which had a “great force in appealing and composing the perturbation of the Mind” (314). When the great Greek leader Agamemnon left for Troy, he only left an excellent musician with his wife, who kept all unchaste thoughts out of Clytaemnestra’s mind by the power of his music (Ferrand 314). Also Pythagoras told a story wherein a musician could calm down the violence and fury in a person by changing his music to a “heave, grave” tone (Ferrand 315).

In the next chapter of his *Erotomania*, Ferrand discussed the “Methodicall Remedies” (319), proposing “therapies to ameliorate the body’s heat through control of diet or environment” (Neely, *Distracted Subjects* 103). He explains how the same diet which could prevent lovesickness, was also used for the cure of the disease. Ferrand emphasised the importance of certain kinds of meat that possessed curing properties, such as “the Turtle-dove, the heart of a Wolfe, young Owles taken and boyled in the juyce of *Marioram*, the flesh of Rats, and the like” (321). Another one of Ferrand’s methodical remedies was a change of environment for the patient. This way he or she could keep some distance from the love object, and it was prevented that the lover would see the beloved every day. This cure solely worked, though, if the lover himself wanted to get over his or her desires, otherwise the distance only made the heart grow fonder (322-4). In that case solitariness was not a good remedy, because they could only think of their beloved one if they were lonely; and should be diverted with music and feasts instead (Ferrand 326). This isolation was even more dangerous if the disease came forth out of black choler and melancholy, because then the patient could commit suicide or become mad in his seclusion (Ferrand 327-8). Ferrand proposed hunting as the ultimate diversion of solitariness, “not only because it divert[ed] the Lovers mind from entertaining its owne unbridled Passions”, but also because it causes, due to exhaustion, a “pleasant Refreshing Drowsinesse, and disposition to sleepe, which g[ave] him not leasure to dreame of his own fond desires” (328-9). Patients who did not like hunting, should instead divert themselves in other ways, by exercising their body or mind. Ferrand especially recommended “Walking, discoursing, honest pastimes, Banqueting, Musicke, and such exercises of Recreation” (329). It is very important, though, that all men were banished from these exercises if the patient was a woman, and the contrary if the patient was a man, so they would not be distracted (Ferrand 329).



This chapter explained different kinds of madness by means of theories that became popular in the early modern period. It became clear that, although many different names existed for all kinds of madness, most of them could be linked to each other, and the boundaries were often very thin: witchcraft could be linked to the suffocation of the mother, which had symptoms in common with lovesickness and the traditional melancholy, while demonic possession was often confused with natural kinds of madness such as melancholy. Shakespeare presented madness on the stage, and in what follows I will discuss the way in which the theories discussed above were dramatised in both *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, a tragedy and a comedy. The madness had in both of the genres the function of disorder, but was still portrayed differently and had different functions within each play. The use of madness in those plays will be discussed in Chapter 2 and 3.

## Chapter 2

### Madness in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

As is already discussed in Chapter 1, the sixteenth and seventeenth century introduced a new view on madness. In medieval times, and even in Latin and Greek drama, madness was considered as having supernatural causes like possession, bewitchment or a punishment of God for some sin. These theories were still popular in the early modern period, but also more natural explanations, like melancholy and suffocation of the mother, started to appear (Neely 47). The new theories became the topic of cultural debate in that period, and since plays were often a reflection on important society issues, these theories were also an inspiration for the playwrights. Neely formulates it as follows:

Cultural debates over witchcraft, possession, and exorcism heat[ed] up and produce[d] new cultural demands to read madness in order to distinguish it from conditions that look[ed] just like it: bewitchment, possession, or feigning. These theatrical and broader cultural imperatives c[a]me together in three tragedies produced in the first six years of the seventeenth century: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*” (46).

It does not need to surprise that madness appeared on the stage, since the disease was highly theatrical in itself, with symptoms like hysterical fits, mood swings and “bizarre contortions” of the body (see 1.3.). The three Shakespeare tragedies that Neely mentioned staged each one a different kind of madness, always contrasting it to something else in order to make the audience aware of the differences. In *Hamlet* Shakespeare makes the audience aware of the possibility of “feigned madness” (Neely 50), in contrast to Hamlet’s real melancholy, and the

(female) madness of Ophelia. The play *King Lear* staged also three kinds of madness: the “feigned demonic possession, natural madness, and guilt-caused despair” (Neely 50). In *Macbeth* Shakespeare focused on the boundary between the natural (madness) and the supernatural (witchcraft) (Neely 50). Since this last opposition was one of the focus points in the earlier discussion of the theories about madness in Chapter 1, I will focus only on *Macbeth* in this work.

## **2.1 Natural or Supernatural: Lady Macbeth versus the Witches**

*Macbeth* was probably performed for the first time in 1606, three years after the first publication of Jorden’s *Suffocation of the Mother* and about two decades after Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. The work of Jorden and Scot was very important for a new view on female madness, as they both offered natural explanations for what was considered supernatural before. Shakespeare must have been inspired by these works since he offers in *Macbeth* “a new kind of female distraction and a new context for reading it” (Neely 56). Neely discusses how the contrast between Lady Macbeth’s power in the beginning of the play and her madness at the end, the parallelisms with and differences from the witches, and her gender-confusing appearance obscure previously known ideas about madness. This created a new “set of distinctions [...] on reading madness: those between supernatural and natural agency, diabolic and human malevolence” (*Distracted Subjects* 56).

The first aspect that is introduced in *Macbeth* is the supernatural, with the appearance of the witches, or Weird Sisters, in the first scene of the play (Act 1 Scene 1). In this scene they are presented as witches in a very subtle way, namely through the mentions of their familiars:

“First witch: I come, Graymalkin. / Second witch: Paddock calls.” (1.1.8-9).<sup>14</sup> According to the *OED*-definition, a familiar is “a spirit, often taking the form of an animal, which obeys and assists a witch or other person” (“familiar” def. 3). In this case the familiars are a cat and a toad, Graymalkin being a common name for a witch’s cat (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 95, note 8) and paddock a regional English word for a toad or frog (*OED* “paddock” def. 1). Both are animals that were typically associated with witches, even still today. The same scene ends with the words “Hover through the fog and filthy air” (1.1.12), suggesting that the witches can move through the air. This suggestion is confirmed in the next scene of the witches (Act 1 Scene 3), where they meet with Macbeth and Banquo. The stage direction in this scene is not “exeunt”, like normally when characters have to leave the stage, but the “witches vanish” instead of just leaving. It is difficult to say how this was performed on stage in Shakespeare’s time, but the following dialogue between Banquo and Macbeth makes sure the audience knew that the witches did not just left in a normal way:

Banquo:

The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them; whither are they vanished?

Macbeth:

Into the air; and what seemed corporal melted  
As breath into the wind. Would they had stayed. (1.3.79-82)

Banquo’s words suggest that the Weird Sisters have disappeared into the earth, since the ground is bubbling like the surface of water bubbles if someone goes underwater. When he asks whereto they disappeared, Macbeth answers that they dissolved into the air as if their bodies melted and evaporated, like breath that mingles with the wind and disappears. This confirms the words of the witches from Act 1 Scene 1, when they say about themselves that

---

<sup>14</sup> All quotations from *Macbeth* are taken from Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. Stanley Wells. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

they “hover through the fog and filthy air” (12). It is interesting that Banquo and Macbeth mention all of the natural elements (water, earth, fire, and air) in these four lines, since it was believed that witches could manipulate these elements. They were often accused of destroying a harvest with a storm or heavy rain fall. Banquo mentions both “earth” and “water” in his speech, whereas Macbeth literally mentions “air” and “wind” and creates a link to fire with the word “melted,” since fire is the only one of the elements that is able to melt things. All of these aspects (the familiars, the disappearing, and the manipulating of the elements) are meant to categorise the Weird Sisters in the realm of the supernatural. Banquo alludes to this more clearly when he first sees the witches, saying that they “look not like th’inhabitants o’th’earth / And yet are on’t” (1.3.41-42).

The witches are, however, not fixed in their supernatural status, since Banquo utters his confusion. They look like supernatural beings, who do not belong on the earth, but since they stand before him, he cannot be sure if they are indeed supernatural. Also their name adds to the confusion about their status as supernatural creatures. They call themselves “the Weïrd Sisters” (1.3.32), but the modern spelling of the word “weird” is misleading. Other printers have spelled it “weward” or “weyard”, which makes the original pronunciation of the word more clear and differentiates it from the modern word “weird”. The Weïrd were in Anglo-Saxon culture considered as the sisters of destiny, like the classical Parcae, and were thus more linked to the divine than to witchcraft (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 102, note 32). Their supernatural qualities become, however, more clear and less debatable later on in the play, for instance in the potion brewing-scene (4.1) in which Hecate, the goddess of sorcery, makes an appearance.

It is interesting that Shakespeare suggests their witchcraft in this first act, rather than explicitly stating it. This provides a link between the witches and Lady Macbeth, who appears for the first time in Act 1 Scene 5, when the witches are already introduced. Because of the

still dubious status of the witches in between the natural and the supernatural, it is easier for the audience and the reader to interpret Lady Macbeth also in this way and to identify her as a witch as well. Neely states that Lady Macbeth “and the witches are indirectly identified with each other by their departures from prescribed female subordination” (57), or what is already discussed in 1.2 as “lack of patriarchal authority” (Levin 30). Both Lady Macbeth and the witches challenge the patriarchal control early on in the play: in Act 1 Scene 5 and Act 1 Scene 3, respectively. The lack of femininity, and thus female subordination, is seen in Banquo’s description of the witches in Act 1 Scene 3: “You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so” (1.3.45-47). The fact that they look like men is a threat to patriarchy, since they disturb the traditional gender hierarchy by being both male and female. On top of that, their appearance makes them monstrous beings. This scares other people and makes the witches again very powerful. Also Levin says that many critics see “the witch as the nonconforming figure who threatened ‘hegemonic sex/gender systems’” (23). Some historians even see the witch-hunts as men reclaiming the power over deviant women who threatened their dominance (Levin 23). The witch-hunts only stopped when the threat to patriarchy was neutralised, as is seen in Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* and Jorden’s *Suffocation of the Mother*. In these works the previously patriarchy-challenging witches have become submissive mad women, suffering from hysteria (Levin 23-4), and as such they are no longer a threat to men. Lady Macbeth goes through a similar journey throughout the play, from a witch-like to an hysteric woman, but this will be explained further on.

The witches’ appearance is not the only thing that makes them male figures: it is also apparent in their dominance over the male characters in the play, especially Macbeth. It is only after the witches’ “supernatural soliciting” (1.3.131) that Macbeth starts to think about killing king Duncan: “my thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical” (1.3.140). According to Neely, they are together with Lady Macbeth the “catalysts to Macbeth’s actions” (57) and

as such very essential for the development of the play.<sup>15</sup> This can be seen, for instance, in Act 1 Scene 7: whereas the murder was still “fantastical” earlier on in the play, it is Lady Macbeth who convinces Duncan in this scene to kill his king by threatening his manhood: “When you durst do it, then you were a man” (1.7.49). She is clearly dominant over Macbeth, just like the witches are. Lady Macbeth’s dominant role is already emphasised in the first scene in which she appears (Act 1 Scene 5). In this scene she enters with her husband’s letter in which he wrote to her about the witches’ prophecy that he will be king. She fears, however, that he will be too weak and too kind “to catch the nearest way” (1.5.17) to kingdom:

Yet do I fear thy nature,  
It is too full o’th’ milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way.  
[...]  
Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round (1.5.15-27)

The fact that Lady Macbeth says that she will “pour [her] spirits in [his] ear” suggests that she is the dominant partner in their household, taking control of their situation, just like the witches have an influence over Macbeth’s decisions.

This is, however, not the only part of her speech that links Lady Macbeth to the supernatural Weird Sisters. Although the word “spirits” is explained as “immaterial qualities” or “courage” (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 112, note 25), for early modern people the word would have had connotations to the supernatural and was, according to the *OED*, often used with terms as “evil” and “wicked” (“spirit” def. 3a-b). Both Lady Macbeth’s dominance and her witchlike qualities become even more clear in her next speech:

---

<sup>15</sup> Although many texts are written about the question if the Weird Sisters really did influence Macbeth and his free will, or if his fate was predestined.

Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty.  
[...]  
Come to my woman's breasts  
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
Wherever, in your sightless substances,  
You wait on nature's mischief. (1.5.39-49)

Whereas “the spirits” (1.5.25) Lady Macbeth wanted to pour in her husband's ear would probably have been understood as courage or evil thoughts, the “spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts” she invokes in this monologue are clearly of the supernatural kind. It was believed that spirits or devils were waiting on an evil thought to form in one's head in order to take possession of that person's mind and act the thoughts out in real life (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 112). This can also be seen in the next part of her speech where she talks to the “sightless substances”: the spirits she invokes are invisible, otherworldly, and they wait on “nature's mischief”. These are the disturbances of nature: unnatural or evil thoughts, like they are explained above, and for which the spirits are waiting. Lady Macbeth, however, is not patient enough to wait on the spirits claiming her mind: she calls them herself and asks them to “unsex” her. It is possible that the “sex” in this context does not only apply to her femininity, but to all good human qualities in general, but these good qualities, like kindness, pity and humanity, are typical female qualities (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 113, note 40). We cannot deny that Shakespeare makes here an implicit reference to the witches' bearded appearance, which makes them “unsexed” females as well. Lady Macbeth's unsexing is clearly a threat to patriarchy, since she acquires an equal status to her husband, if she is even not more manly than him. She is filled “top-full / Of direst cruelty”, whereas Macbeth is still doubting their plans in Act 1 Scene 7 and wants to “proceed no further in this business” (1.7.31).



Critics' opinions about Lady Macbeth's speech are very divided, especially concerning her supernatural, witchlike status. Neely argues that the witches are characterised by very "conventional accoutrements of witchcraft belief: familiars, submission to Hecate, spells, potions, fortune-telling, and successful conjuring" (58). Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, attempts in Act 1 Scene 5 to invoke spirits "that seem more natural than supernatural [because] they 'tend on mortal thoughts' and 'wait on nature's mischief' (1.5.41,50)," according to Neely (58). She reinforces her point of view by saying that Lady Macbeth does not call to the spirits to harm someone directly, like witches do, but just to pervert "her own emotions and bodily functions" (58). Levin, on the contrary, argues that Lady Macbeth's "invocation of evil spirits" (39) did make her a witch, although she is never explicitly mentioned as one. She says that "according to the Witchcraft Statute of 1604 [...] the very act of summoning demonic powers transforms her into the witch" (39), since calling evil spirits was "a capital offense" (39). Of these two opinions, my discussion leans towards that of Levin. In my opinion, Shakespeare wanted in the beginning of the play for the audience and the reader to connect the witches with Lady Macbeth. Both she and the witches are presented in a very similar way in all of the scenes in Act 1: dominant, challenging their own femininity and patriarchal authority by manipulating Macbeth, and linked to supernatural powers.

The whole first act even has a parallel structure: the witches are introduced in Scene 1, followed by a scene with king Duncan in which they do not appear. In Scene 3 of Act 1 they appear again and influence Macbeth's thoughts with their prophecy and the following scene is again one with king Duncan. Act 1 Scene 5 is the scene in which Lady Macbeth is introduced, just like the witches in Scene 1. The next scene is a very short one in which king Duncan appears again, followed by the crucial scene of this act. In Act 1 Scene 7 it is Lady Macbeth's turn to influence Macbeth and convince him to kill Duncan. This seems quite complicated,

but the parallel structure of the first Act, which links the witches with Lady Macbeth, is more clear in schematic form:

Act 1	Characters (and actions)
Scene 1	Introduction of the witches
Scene 2	King Duncan
Scene 3	Witches as catalyst for Macbeth's murderous thoughts
Scene 4	King Duncan
Scene 5	Introduction of Lady Macbeth
Scene 6	King Duncan
Scene 7	Lady Macbeth as catalyst for Macbeth's murderous act

Essentially, the whole structure of the play seems to push us towards an interpretation of Lady Macbeth as one of the witches, at least in Act 1. She follows the same pattern as the witches did, alternated with the scenes with king Duncan. Shakespeare draws the attention to Lady Macbeth and makes, from the beginning on, his audience aware of the tension between natural and supernatural evil. By giving both the witches and Lady Macbeth an intermediate status in the beginning of the play, they can develop into their real roles further on: the Weird Sisters into witches and Lady Macbeth into an hysterical woman. Levin stated that “the satanic female and the hysterical mother existed on a close continuum” (22) and this is exactly what Shakespeare shows us in this play. I mentioned in the introduction that Shakespeare dramatised madness and in doing so, he showed the differences between all kinds of madness to the audience. By linking Lady Macbeth and the witches to each other in the beginning of the play, he shows how difficult it was to make a distinction between a witch or a madwoman. This distinction will, however, become more clear towards the end of *Macbeth*.

Lady Macbeth reaches her ultimate witchlike qualities at the end of Act 1, when she shows some symptoms characteristic of possessed people. Scene 7 is also the climax to the

whole first act: both the witches and Lady Macbeth have tried to influence Macbeth and convinced him to kill his king, and it is finally in the last words of Scene 7 that he has made his decision: “I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.” (1.7.80-1). Macbeth would have not reached this point without the ‘help’ of his wife, since she questions his masculinity and uses very powerful, violent imagery in order to convince him. When Macbeth utters to his wife that they “will not proceed further in this business” (1.7.31), she answers by questioning his bravery and other parts of his masculinity:

Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?  
And wakes it now to look so green, and pale,  
At what it did so freely? From this time,  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire? (1.7. 35-41)

Lady Macbeth compares in this passage Macbeth’s bravery to a drunken stupor, the “drunk wherein [he] dressed [him]self,” and a hangover (“And wakes it now to look so green, and pale”). Men are very brave when they are drunk, but when they sleep it off and suffer from a hangover, they realise what they have done, and this is also the case with Macbeth’s hope. He was very hopeful of becoming a king, so much that he wanted to kill king Duncan himself, but when the first passion had faded, he became afraid again. To make it even worse, Lady Macbeth links this lack of bravery to his sexual acts: “From this time, / Such I account thy love”. She suggests that if he is a coward in life, afraid to act and kill King Duncan, that he is also a coward in his desire. Lady Macbeth tells him implicitly that if he cannot act courageous, she does not want him sexually, because he cannot be a real man then. Asp says that “she accuses him of arousing her expectations and then failing to follow through with action” (160).

The fact that Lady Macbeth denies her husband sexual intercourse is a very empowering move, and one that links her again with the witches. People possessed by the devil or being accused of witchcraft were mostly older women or maiden. This is partly due to their lack of patriarchal society, which is already explained above, but also because of their lack of sexual activities. They are the most vulnerable categories to become the devil's prey, since they cannot fulfil the needs they feel. By denying her husband sexual intercourse, Lady Macbeth takes full control over the situation and empowers herself, and puts herself on the same level as the witches. It is remarkable that Lady Macbeth's act of denying her husband would be called a "corruption of nature" (sig. 20r) by Jorden (as explained in 1.2.), since the witches themselves are "corruptions of nature". Jorden was not explaining witchcraft when he mentioned this corruption, but he was mentioning one cause of the suffocation of the mother (or hysteria). This disease could be prevented by keeping the womb active through sexual activities, or "ordinary evacuation" (Jorden sig. 20r) so the humours could not accumulate in the womb. By denying her husband, Lady Macbeth also suppresses her own needs and makes herself very vulnerable with respect to this disease. Although this is the scene in which Lady Macbeth is dramatised the most witchlike, it is also in this part that the first signs of her hysteria start to appear.

The contrast between witchcraft and hysteria can also be seen in the next part of this scene; in one of Lady Macbeth's most famous speeches:

When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
And to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man.  
[...]  
I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn  
As you have done to this. (1.7.49-59)

In the beginning of this speech, Lady Macbeth is again threatening Macbeth's masculinity. She says he will only be a man if he dares to kill Duncan. If Macbeth is brave enough to do that, he will even be "so much more the man," since he would become king himself and in that way more than the average man. In this part she places herself again above Macbeth, and you could even say that she acts as a mother-figure to him. She reprimands him as if he is a boy that is afraid of something and needs to be brave. This matriarch position will be important in light of the next lines as well.

The next part of her speech (1.7.54-9) includes one of the most violent images in the play, which is remarkable since it is a play full of murder. This violence, however, is not an act of masculine bravery, but are merely words that come out of a woman's mouth. She uses the imagery of killing her own child by "dash[ing] the brains out" after she "plucked [her] nipple from his boneless gums". It is interesting that Shakespeare used the violent act of killing a child, one of the worst crimes a mother can commit, and not something else. Chamberlain says that "the most compelling connection between the witches and Lady Macbeth can be seen in the early modern association of witchcraft with motherhood" (80-1) and also Levin discusses how witches were often called "mother" in their trials: "Mother Grevell, Mother Turner, Mother Dutton, Mother Devell, Mother Stile" (33). This was, however, an ironic inversion since a witch was usually "regarded [...] as a 'malevolent antimother to her neighbours and their children,' bringing 'sickness and death to the households of other mothers'" (33). The witches were associated with killing children. This can also be seen later on in the play, in Act 4 Scene 1, in which the Weird Sisters make their potion. One of the last ingredients they add is the "finger of a birth-strangled babe" (4.1.30), which shows their perverted maternity feelings. This is also the case with Lady Macbeth. By using specifically the image of killing her child, Lady Macbeth is directly connected to the

witches again. Levin adds to this that “unlike the Weird Sisters or Lady Macduff, [Lady Macbeth] never receives the title of witch or mother, but her diabolism and reproductive functions (as well as the relation between the two) are always at issue” (39).

This “diabolism” Levin mentions is another way to interpret Lady Macbeth in this speech: rather as a possessed woman than as a real witch. It is already mentioned in section 1.3. that people who lived in an oppressive household and wanted to gain more power, just like Lady Macbeth, “screamed spectacular curses and shocking blasphemies” (MacDonald 200). They said that the devil within them was to blame for the committed sins or the shocking words. It seems that Lady Macbeth knows what she is doing by using the violent imagery, and she definitely gains power with it. It cannot be denied, though, that for the audience or reader the notion of possession would be evoked as well. Her shocking words could be blamed on the devil within her, since she called the spirits before to fill her “top-full / of direst cruelty” (1.7.41-2). In light of this interpretation, it would be the spirits themselves that have filled her and are the “cruelty” in her body.

A couple of Napier cases that were already mentioned in section 1.3. talked about how supernatural demons convinced some men and women to kill “their children, their parents, or their spouses” (MacDonald 202). This shows a remarkable parallel with Lady Macbeth’s action in the play, as she kills a child, a parent and her spouse. It is of course an imaginary child that she kills, but the murders of Napier’s patients were also imaginary: they suffered from voices or demons inside their heads and bodies, and hallucinated these murderous acts. I mentioned above that in the first part of this speech (1.7.49-51) she treated Macbeth as her child and acted in a very matriarchal way. When she kills in the following lines her imaginary baby, she kills not only the child, but also Macbeth, whom she treated as her child. In an implied way she kills both her child, and her spouse. Lady Macbeth kills also a parent in the play, since in the early modern period, the king was often seen as a father figure: the father

and patriarch of the whole country. King Duncan is in *Macbeth* mentioned a couple of times as a father figure or with relation to a father figure. In Act 2 Scene 2 Lady Macbeth says that she would have killed the king “Had he not resembled / My father as he slept” (2.2.13-4) and also Macduff refers two times to the king as a “royal father” (2.3.102 and 4.3.108). Although Lady Macbeth did not kill king Duncan herself, she is still responsible for the murder on this father figure. She was the one to convince Macbeth to kill him, and because of that she is almost as guilty as he is.

The fact that king Duncan acts as a father, introduces also “the classical Oedipal conflict” (Coursen 102-3) into the play. We already saw that Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth’s masculinity in 1.7.38-41 and treats him like a child in 1.7.49-51. This results in Macbeth wanting to prove his manliness by killing Duncan (his father) to get the reward of sleeping with Lady Macbeth (his wife, but also a mother-figure). I will not discuss this topic in further detail, though, since it would lead too far from the theme of madness, but this is explained in detail in Krohn and Hunter.<sup>16</sup> By killing her child, her father, and her husband (although some of them only figuratively), Lady Macbeth fits the description of Napier’s demonic patients. Lady Macbeth is the most demonic and most witchlike in this scene, which provides a contrast with the next scenes. Although the following scenes are the one in which the murder happens, and although they show Lady Macbeth at her highest point, she is less a witch and more a malevolent woman. Shakespeare provides in Lady Macbeth the contrast between what Neely calls the “diabolic and human malevolence” (56): the diabolic more present in Act 1, while the human malevolence is more present in Act 2, as will be discussed in what follows.

---

<sup>16</sup> In their works “Addressing the Oedipal Dilemma in *Macbeth*” and “Doubling, Mythic Difference, and the Scapegoating of Female Power in *Macbeth*”

In Act 2 Lady Macbeth shows more of her human evilness, rather than demonic possession or witchcraft. In Act 2 Scene 2, she says that she has “drugged their possets, / That death and nature do contend about them / whether they live or die” (6-8). If she would have been a real witch, she would have cursed them, or poisoned them with a potion, but not merely have “drugged” their possets, which was “hot milk curdled with liquor” and used as “a nightcap” (Shakespeare *Macbeth* 126, note 6). She does not even care if they stay alive or die and leaves it in the control of nature, whereas witches would have taken control themselves, since they can control the elements and nature.

Lady Macbeth shows a first sign of weakness a couple of lines further in the play: “Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done’t” (2.2.13-4). Whereas she was ready in Act 1 Scene 7 to kill her baby, which would have been considered a deed of witchcraft, and encouraged and convinced Macbeth to kill Duncan, here she shows her emotional and more feminine side again. Williams argues that this is the first real “evidence that her dedication to evil [...] is not going to sustain her” (222). It is interesting that this happens at the exact moment of the murder, since in the following lines Macbeth comes back to her to say he has killed king Duncan. Maybe Shakespeare shows here the first sign of weakness in Lady Macbeth to give her a first, be it unconscious, revelation of what they have done?

In the next lines, however, she appears again as the strong women from Act 1: she convinces her husband that they should not think too much about it, since she seems to realise that it could make them mad: “These deeds must not be thought / After these ways; so, it will make us mad” (2.2.32-3). With these words she announces her fate to the audience and reader, while in the same scene Macbeth already mirrors her actions later in the play:

Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood



Clean from my hand? No – this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red. (2.2.56-62)

Macbeth is suffering from guilt in this speech and he thinks he will never get his bloody hands clean, not even with the help of the great seas of Neptune. On top of that, he is afraid of every noise he hears. At this point in the play, Lady Macbeth is still full of “human malevolence” as Neely (56) calls it, and answers him that her “hands are of [his] colour”, but that “A little water clears [them] of this deed. / How easy is it then!”. I mentioned above that Macbeth’s deeds mirror those of Lady Macbeth later on in the play. Macbeth has, on the contrary to what his wife says, reason for his exclamations here: his hands are still bloody from the murder and there is really someone knocking at the door. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, imagines her bloody hands later on in the play, and also hears sounds that are not there.

Lady Macbeth only appears one other time in Act 2: when the others discover the murdered body of king Duncan. At that point, she either plays her role very well or is actually disturbed, since she faints while exclaiming “Help me hence, ho!” (2.3.120). We do not know if her fainting is real or not, as also the notes to the play say: “it is ambiguous whether Lady Macbeth is pretending, or does actually faint – and will inevitably be so in performance, despite the many editors who have pronounced one way or the other” (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 137, note 120). Both the options are possible, depending on how the fainting and the following scenes are interpreted. In Act 3 Lady Macbeth is again stronger than her husband, who sees Banquo’s ghost at the dinner table. She seems completely in control at that point in the play, so this seems to indicate that the fainting in Act 2 was false. She has already shown a sign of weakness, however, earlier in Act 2 when she could not murder Duncan herself. This could suggest that the fainting was a second sign of weakness and an introduction to Lady Macbeth as an hysteric madwoman, rather than the witch as whom she was previously identified. It is already discussed in section 1.2. that suffocation of the mother or hysteria

could influence the heart, through the womb, and this could slow down the pulse of the patient. The result of this could be fainting, like Lady Macbeth, or sleeping for a long time. Jorden also mentioned in his *Suffocation of the Mother* that the disease could make the patient lose control over her body, so maybe Lady Macbeth's fainting is not an act, but a loss of control. Shakespeare leaves the decision if Lady Macbeth really faints or just pretends to the actors in the play, the performance of the piece, and the interpretation of the audience or reader. It is interesting that he leaves the option open, since it makes the audience think about her sanity. Lady Macbeth could still be interpreted as the conniving power-lusting wife, but at the same time it leaves the option open that she is not as powerful as she appears to be. It suggests to the audience a first time Lady Macbeth's madness, which will make the abrupt transition from powerful witchlike woman to hysteric later on in the play more likely.

Although Lady Macbeth seems to be strong when her husband sees the ghost of Banquo in the first Scene of Act 3, her speech shows that she puts on a mask in front of her husband, while she is actually starting to feel bad about their act. When she is alone on the stage she says:

Nought's had, all's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content;  
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (3.2.5-8)

This speech shows the real turning point in Lady Macbeth's behaviour. She explains how they have "spent" everything, but without result ("Nought's had"): they got what they desired, but are still not happy. It appears that she starts to feel remorse, but also anxiety, because of their vicious act, since she says how she rather wants to be the one that was murdered. At least she would live "safer" then, which has the usual meaning of "free from danger", but can also apply to the mental and spiritual health of a person (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 148, note 7-8). They have murdered, and as a result they have to "dwell in doubtful joy": she lives in anxiety,

fearing for revenge, but also for her mental health. When Macbeth enters the scene, however, she puts on her brave mask and says to him that he should not dwell on what has happened: “what’s done, is done” (3.2.13). Although she was thinking about the murder herself, she says to him that the thoughts should have been killed together with the person “they think on” (3.2.12). Macbeth seems to sense the hesitations of his wife, since he does not tell her his plans to murder Banquo and Fleance, instead saying to Lady Macbeth: “Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, / Till thou applaud the deed” (3.2.48-9).

Despite the starting downfall of Lady Macbeth, she is still the one in Act 3 Scene 4 who saves her husband from humiliation and from almost admitting his murder on Banquo. When Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo and starts acting strange by talking to the ghost, Lady Macbeth explains his behaviour to their guests as follows:

Sit, worthy friends, my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth. Pray you keep seat,  
The fit is momentary, upon a thought  
He will again be well. If much you note him  
You shall offend him and extend his passion:  
Feed, and regard him not. (3.4.53-8)

Lady Macbeth seems to suggest here that her husband is suffering from some kind of melancholy. In section 1.1., it was mentioned how melancholics did not “take pleasure [anymore] from activities they had previously delighted in” (MacDonald 160) and did not enjoy the company of other people anymore because of their sadness and fear. This is exactly what Lady Macbeth is suggesting in this speech: the guests cannot bother him or his “fit” will only be worse, and he cannot enjoy the company of others. This becomes even more clear when Lady Macbeth has to help him a second time and says to the others that they cannot speak since “he grows worse and worse, / Question enrages him” (3.4.118-9). Not only Lady Macbeth’s explanations of Macbeth’s strange behaviour points to melancholy; Macbeth

himself shows some typical signs of melancholic madness in Act 3 Scene 4. These will, however, be discussed further down in the section 2.2. on Macbeth's madness.

Act 3 Scene 4 is the last scene in which Lady Macbeth appears before she becomes mad. From Act 3 Scene 5 onwards the witches take over her role as catalyst for Macbeth's actions, and she only appears back on the stage in Act 5. Whereas the Weird Sisters' identity as witches was still dubious in the beginning of the play, in Act 3 Scene 5, and Act 4 Scene 1 there is no doubt about the fact that they are witches. By the end of Act 3 it is clear that Lady Macbeth is not a witch or a witchlike figure but just a malevolent woman, so the appearance of the witches' real witchcraft provides a stark contrast. The first sign that their witchcraft is real is their meeting with Hecate, the goddess of sorcery. Hecate reprimands the witches because they influenced Macbeth's fate without consulting her first. The terms she uses to refer to the witches' powers are all clearly linked to witchcraft: "your charms, / The close contriver of all harms" and "Your vessels, and your spells, provide, / Your charms, and everything beside" (3.5.6-7, 18-9). Their sorcery becomes even more clear in Act 4 Scene 1, when they start brewing a potion in their "cauldron", or their "charmèd pot" (4.1.4,9). Most of the animals they use in their potion are linked with witches as well: a toad, snake, frog, bat, adder, etc., and it is already mentioned previously how the "birth-strangled babe" (4.1.30) refers to the belief that witches killed children. This image is used later in the scene as well, when they "Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten / Her nine farrow": they use the blood of a mother pig that has eaten her nine piglets. The image is used another time when one of the apparitions Macbeth sees is a bloody child.

The witches' role as a catalyst to Macbeth's actions was more clear in the beginning of the play, since in this part they only seem to predict his future. Their prediction, however, still influences Macbeth: he thinks he has not to be afraid for revenge, since "none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.94-5), and

Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until  
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinan Hill  
Shall come against him. (4.1.107-9)

Macbeth feels safe since he thinks that everyone is born from a woman, and that a forest cannot move. The witches thus still influence Macbeth's decisions, as he would have taken more precautions without their predictions.<sup>17</sup> They take over Lady Macbeth's role when she is not able anymore to act as a catalyst for her husband's acts.

The role of the witches in the play ends with their appearance in Act 4 Scene 1, and from Scene 5 onwards the focus shifts to Lady Macbeth again. The Weird Sisters were at their highest point in the previous scene, which makes the contrast with Lady Macbeth at her lowest point in Act 5 even bigger. Whereas she showed in Act 3 some signs of weakness and maybe the beginning of madness, she turns into a real hysteric woman at this point in the play. Before discussing the symptoms of suffocation of the mother, or hysteria, which Lady Macbeth shows in Act 5, I will first discuss the possible cause of her disease. It is already explained some paragraphs earlier that by denying her husband sexual activities, Lady Macbeth empowers herself, but makes herself at the same time quite vulnerable for hysteria or suffocation of the mother. According to Neely, the disease "locates the cause of women's perturbations of mind in disordered female wombs and genitals" (69) "as a result of unsatisfied sexual desire" (92). The disease can in this way be linked to love melancholy or lovesickness, "another disease of excess of unevacuated menstrual blood or sperma" (82). Because Lady Macbeth does not want to have sexual intercourse, the humours in her womb rise, which can cause suffocation of the mother.

---

<sup>17</sup> This part links again to the popular debate about free will versus fate in *Macbeth* mentioned in an earlier footnote.

Many of the symptoms that Jorden lists in his treatise *Suffocation of the Mother* (and which are previously discussed in section 1.2.) are recognizable in Lady Macbeth's behaviour. A first symptom is that the patients are deprived from their "internall sence" (Jorden sig. 13r) with the result that they imagine things that are not there in reality. One of the most obvious examples of this symptom in *Macbeth* is the imagined blood on Lady Macbeth's hands. I already mentioned the speech in which Macbeth thinks he will never get his hands clean and the way in which it mirrors Lady Macbeth's actions later on in the play. The big difference is that the blood on Macbeth's hands was real, whereas that on Lady Macbeth's hands is not. The doctor and the gentlewoman discuss this in the play:

Doctor: What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman: It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady Macbeth: Yet here's a spot. (5.1.25-30)

As reader and audience we know from the doctor and the gentlewoman that there is no blood on Lady Macbeth's hands, otherwise they would have mentioned it. Lady Macbeth, however, is still convinced that her hands are bloody and that they stay this way during the rest of Act 5 Scene 1: "Out damned spot" (33), "Yet who / would have thought the old man to have had so much / blood in him" (36-8), "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" (41), and "Here's the smell of blood still – all the / perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (48-9).

This can be connected with another symptom that Jorden mentions, and is already explained in 1.2. He says that suffocation of the mother often depraves its patients from "feeling facultie" (sig. 13v); some parts of their body are numb, or they feel, on the contrary, things that are not there. There is obviously something wrong with Lady Macbeth's "feeling facultie", since she feels the blood on her hands that is not there. This is not the only one of the senses that they are deprived of; their smell, hearing and sight is disturbed as well. Also this is seen in Act 1 Scene 5, as the doctor says to the gentlewoman that Lady Macbeth's

“eyes are open” (23), on which the gentlewoman answers: “Ay but their sense are shut” (24). The fact that Lady Macbeth can smell the blood on her hands shows that also her smelling sense is disturbed, while the hearing of knocking at the door that is not there shows the depravity of her hearing sense. The fact that she hears knocking mirrors the scene with Macbeth mentioned above (2.2.56-62). Both Lady Macbeth and her husband hear knocking at the door in their scenes, but just like the bloody hands, is the knocking Macbeth hears real, while what his wife hears (“To bed, to bed – there’s knocking at the / gate” (5.1.63-4)) is imagined.

In Lady Macbeth’s last scene, we see another symptom mentioned before in 1.2.: the patients fantasies and dreams are so vivid that they often “wil walke, talke, laugh, [and] crye” (Jordan sig. 13v) in their sleep. The gentlewoman describes it as follows:

I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown  
upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it,  
write upon’t, read it, afterwards seal it, and again  
return to bed: yet all this while in a most fast sleep. (5.1.4-8)

This is again a very clear example of one of the symptoms Jordan mentions in his *Suffocation of the Mother*. It is remarkable, though, that the doctor cannot cure her, since the “disease is beyond [his] practice” (5.1.56). As an explanation, he says that “More she needs the divine than the physician” (5.1.72). I find it noteworthy that although Shakespeare gives some clear examples of the symptoms of hysteria in this scene, he still keeps his audience in doubt by mentioning the supernatural again.

Neely mentioned that “the symptoms of suffocation of the mother closely resemble those of possession and bewitchment” (82), and, indeed, some of the symptoms of possession are also present in this last scene. In section 1.3. it was mentioned how Napier registered in his case notes that a big section of his possessed patients “were tortured by guilt about [...] sins they had committed, and often they had become convinced that they were damned

because of them” (MacDonald 220). This is clearly the case with Lady Macbeth, something that she already announces in Act 3 Scene 1: “‘Tis safer to be that which we destroy, / Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy” (6-7). Also the fact that the doctor could not help her, is one of the symptoms that are unique to possession: “their afflictions would always be impervious to the natural remedies of the most skilled physician” (MacDonald 199).

Lady Macbeth ultimately dies, restoring the order in the play she has previously disturbed by killing Duncan and by her own madness. We do not know for sure if she died because of her disease or because she killed herself. She dies during battle time, so there is little time spent on her death and it is announced in only one sentence: “The Queen, my lord, is dead” (5.5.16). In Malcolm’s final speech there is an allusion to possible suicide: “and his fiend-like Queen, / Who, as ‘tis thought, by self and violent hands / Took off her life” (5.7.99-101). This would be a fitting end for a madwoman, since suicide was seen as one of the possible results from madness.

In my opinion, Shakespeare tries to confuse the reader and audience in the first acts to show how thin the boundary between witchcraft and hysteria is. Towards the middle and the end of the play, he separates the real witches more and more from the hysteric Lady Macbeth, showing that conclusions cannot be made too fast. Neely states that the play [...] contrasts Lady Macbeth and the witches in ways that sharpen the disjunctions between the natural and the supernatural” (57). Levin calls Lady Macbeth the “link between the demonic and the hysterical” (25), a shift that can be seen throughout the play: “Lady Macbeth begins the play by invoking evil spirits and ends in a fit of hysterical somnambulism (38). Although she is the most interesting mad character in this play because of her double identity, her husband shows some signs of madness as well. Macbeth’s madness is, however, not a fit of hysteria, but rather one that leans towards the “traditional” melancholy.



## 2.2 Macbeth's Madness

Most works on madness in *Macbeth* focus on Lady Macbeth's madness and the contrast between the natural and the supernatural, while very few critics talk about Macbeth himself. In my opinion, though, Macbeth shows some clear signs of madness or possession as well. The starting point is still Lady Macbeth's evilness and madness, which she received when she called to the "spirits" in Act 1 Scene 5 (39). She asked those spirits to "Come to [her] woman's breasts / And take [her] milk for gall" (46-7). This is especially interesting when you consider her speech in Act 1 Scene 7, in which Macbeth is treated as a child that she murders figuratively a couple of lines later. If you consider Macbeth as the child here, he is "the babe that milks" (1.7.55) Lady Macbeth. Chamberlain discusses in her essay on infanticide how early modern people believed that a mother could not only pass on diseases to her child via her milk, but also negative character traits (74). According to this theory, Lady Macbeth does not only poison herself when she asks the "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" (1.5.39-40) to turn her milk into gall, but she also poisons the baby that sucks her breasts, in this case Macbeth. She passes her evil thoughts about the murder, or even worse, the demons inside her, on to him via her milk. It seems to work as well, since these are Macbeth's words at the end of Act 1 Scene 7, only a couple of lines later than Lady Macbeth's speech:

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show,  
False face must hide what the false heart does know. (1.7.80-3)

Macbeth has committed himself to "this terrible feat" of murder, but he realises that he has to hide "with fairest show" the evilness in his "false heart". It sounds almost like he has to hide the demons inside him. Although this could accuse him of being possessed, Macbeth is not

yet mad in this part of the play. It is only when the murder comes closer that his madness starts to appear and he starts to see things that are not there:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?  
[...]  
Mine eyes are made the fools o'th' other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still;  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. (2.1.34-48)

In section 1.1. it is discussed how, according to Galen, the melanchole was the most important of the four humours to change a person's character. Patients suffering from a disturbance in their black bile were often very frightened and suffered from delusions and hallucinations. These two symptoms seem to fit with Macbeth's speech, since he is seeing a bloody dagger that is "a false creation". He can see the dagger, but cannot take it, just like Lady Macbeth at the end of the play, when she sees the blood on her hands, but cannot clean them. This scene is again an announcement of Lady Macbeth's actions in Act 5. This can also be seen in the line "Mine eyes are made the fools o'th' other senses", which mirrors the lines of the doctor and gentlewoman in Act 5: "You see her eyes are open. / Ay but their sense are shut" (5.1.23-4). Lady Macbeth's mirroring position is confirmed by Hallett, who says that the "feminine characters [who appear] in plays where evil and injustice oppress humanity [...] sometimes function as mirrors" (58).

Although Macbeth announces the madness of his wife, he is not suffering from the suffocation of the mother, of course, but his madness links more to melancholic madness. I

already explained that his hallucinations point in that direction, and this is especially the case when we consider the theory of how they originate. The theory about the hallucinations was that the black bile caused vapours which ascended to the brain, “whereby the understanding [was] obscured” (Bright 2). Because of the colour of the black bile, the thoughts were darkened and obscured, which made the people fearful and delusional. This theory is interesting if we consider lines 39-40 from Act 2 Scene 1, where Macbeth talks about how the dagger is “a false creation / Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain”. Shakespeare may allude here to this theory, and also the notes to the play seem to consider this theory: “Heat was thought of as a fluid substance which could literally weigh on the brain: it was also a property of the humours, producing passion and fever, thus figuratively oppressing the brain” (Wells, ed., *Macbeth* 124, note 40). Although the note does not explain it in the exact same way, the theories are quite similar.

Another scene which supports the melancholic madness theory is the one where Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo in Act 3 Scene 4. MacDonald mentions that “melancholics suffer from delusions and may think they find themselves in danger, whereas this is not the case. This causes a fearfulness in the most common situations” (157). This is the case when Macbeth is sure he saw Banquo’s ghost at the table (“If I stand here, I saw him” (75)), while everyone else cannot see anything. These symptoms that Macbeth shows, can all be linked to regular melancholy, but also a little to Ferrand’s love melancholy or lovesickness. While a woman can suffer from suffocation of the mother if she is denied sexual activities, love melancholy can be caused by the same reason and can also be applied to men. We know that Macbeth is denied sexual intercourse with his wife so he could suffer from love melancholy, although this theory seems less plausible than him suffering from normal melancholy.

There is one other plausible explanation for Macbeth’s madness, namely possession. This can be seen in Act 2 Scene 2 when Macbeth has just murdered king Duncan and he

cannot say 'Amen': "I could not say 'Amen' / When they did say 'God bless us' (27-8). This is one of the symptoms discussed in 1.3. that are unique to possession: the "abhorrence" a demoniac would show at "the name or image of Christ" (Lipsedge 32). The fact that Macbeth cannot say 'Amen' may be because he is possessed by the devil. This links us back to the beginning of this section, where I discussed how Lady Macbeth may have given her demonic spirits to Macbeth through her milk. The possible possession of Macbeth is also present in the last scene of the play in which Macbeth says that he "bear[s] a charmèd life" (5.7.42), which refers to the prophecies of the witches and Hecate in Act 4 Scene 1.

Although Macbeth's madness seems to have a smaller role in the play than that of Lady Macbeth, in my opinion, it is still blatantly present. Both Macbeth and his wife introduce the distinction between the natural and the supernatural into the play, but still in a different way. Whereas Lady Macbeth's madness introduces the distinction between the natural suffocation of the mother and the supernatural witchcraft into *Macbeth*, her husband's madness presents the difference between natural (love) melancholy or the supernatural possessed person. A lot of critics ignore Macbeth's madness and focus on his presentation of masculinity in the play, but it deserves to be focused on as well. It is interesting that Lady Macbeth's mad actions mirror the previous actions of her husband. Macbeth seems to announce Lady Macbeth's madness, whereas in the end their roles are reversed. She is the one to die first (naturally or by her own hand), introducing Macbeth's fate to the audience as well. The function of madness in *Macbeth* will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

## 2.3 The Function of Madness and Disorder in *Macbeth* and Society

Most critics analyse the different kinds of madness in *Macbeth*, but fail to give a broader understanding of the theme. Why would Shakespeare present these mad characters and why could it keep the audience interested? Neely discusses this problem as well, saying that “there have been few recent attempts to understand [madness] [...] dramatic function in Shakespeare’s tragedies, or its wider cultural significance” (“Documents in Madness” 322) and that none of the critics ask how the play “participate[s] in cultural needs, practices, and attitudes” (“Documents in Madness” 323). Following Neely’s point of view that the broader cultural and social significance is important as well, this part will try to give an understanding on why Shakespeare would introduce madness in *Macbeth* and what the effects are on the play itself, but also on the audience.

It is previously mentioned that the early modern period gave rise to a whole array of treatises and works about madness. Neely discusses how Shakespeare’s tragedies help the audience to deal with these works. They shape

a new language for madness and provides one important site for its redefinition. The plays, by representing both madness and the process of reading madness, theatricalize and disseminate the complicated distinctions that the treatises theorize. [...] It enable[s] the drama’s audience to participate [...] in distinguishing madness from sanity and from madness’s look-alikes – loss of grace, bewitchment, possession, or fraud. (“Documents in Madness” 321-2)

By bringing the madness on stage, it acts out the theories from the treatises and new medical works, providing the symptoms of the disease in a less theoretical form for the audience. We can see this in *Macbeth* in the representation of the natural and the supernatural madness and the weak boundary between the two. Shakespeare forced his audience to diagnose madness in the characters, but they had to decide for themselves which kind of madness it was. *Macbeth* provides a very confusing portrayal of madness in the beginning of the play, which makes the

audience think about the different symptoms, and how they are often alike in different kinds of madness. “The public stage assists the culture in making such distinctions and finding alternative explanations by showing them what madness looks like and contrasting it to similar conditions” (Neely 49). This is seen in *Macbeth* towards the end of the play, where it is more clear that Lady Macbeth suffers from a natural kind of madness, rather than a supernatural. Shakespeare taught his audience with this play how difficult it is to attribute symptoms to a certain disease. “By representing both madness and the process of reading madness, [the play] teach[es] the audiences how to identify and respond to it” (Neely 49).

Next to helping the audience define madness, these plays have another role as well: they can provide a critique on society. Neely expresses this idea as follows:

performed madness continues not just to elicit attention and compassion but [is] potentially transgressive through unsettling production, adaptations, or indecorous interventions by actors that highlight the social critique in [the tragedies] (67).

He explains this by saying that theatre does not have to follow the rules of society and “is not simply seamlessly embedded in the dominant ideology” (67). Plays are not just perfect reflections of the culture they exist in, but are able to perform a critique by subverting society rules or reflecting on the way society works, since the playwright “is protected from harm because play texts are illusions” (68). It is rather difficult for the playwright to be blamed of social critique, since the reading and performing of a play is always an interpretation of the text by someone else.

Aside from the wider function of madness on the stage as a critique on contemporary society and a way to help the audience deal with madness in real life, madness has also a function in *Macbeth* itself. Hallett discusses how madness on stage is the “inevitable outcome” of “a character who has lived by the principle that rage or lust or jealousy is gloriously refreshing” (51). The madness inside the character’s head turns ultimately in real madness, which is the case for Lady Macbeth. She is jealous of the king’s position and

enraged by her husband's cowardness and these "mad" thoughts turn her into a real madwoman at the end of the play. At the same time, her madness (and to a lesser extent also that of Macbeth) is also a way to a "restoration of normality", according to Neely ("Document in Madness" 336). Her madness, and the suicide or death that result from it, provide a natural solution to her disturbing acts. It is already mentioned in the discussion of Lady Macbeth and the witches in 3.1. that they provide a continuum of madness ranging from the supernatural to the natural. Neely says the following about this:

This continuum has made it tempting to put to the play the questions the period (through witchcraft prosecutions and through reading madness) was wrestling with – who is to blame for Duncan's murder, Macbeth's fall, Scotland's decline? Who or what is the source of harm and evil? The questions produce no simple answers. The continuum of malevolence blurs the question of agency in the play as it blurs the question of the ontological status of "witches". It reproduces the period's 'hovering' between contradictory belief systems and conflicting attributions of causality and agency: melancholy or the devil, madwomen or witches, castrating wives or ambitious tyrants" (59)

This quote shows that the function of madness inside the play, providing both the link and the rupture between the witches and Lady Macbeth as is shown in the last three lines of Neely's quote, is still connected with the bigger picture. Neely goes even further in saying that the "gender distinctions" (66) in madness may have occurred on the stage before they appeared in the treatises or in real life. The representation of madness in theatre needed, after all, some "variations on the popular motif" (66). The differences between men and women were obviously interesting to portray, since even the women on stage were played by boy actors, which "may have encouraged gender stereotyping in dramatic characters" (66). While Shakespeare tried to show the difference between witchcraft and madness in *Macbeth*, this did not stop witch-hunting in real life and it was still popular for "several centuries and across many cultural locations" (Neely 94). The performed madness still had its influence on society,

though, since “by providing a language for madness, the theatre contributed to the process whereby it was becoming a secular, medical, and gendered condition” (Neely, “Documents in Madness” 337).

As an addition to Neely’s discussion of madness in both the comedies and the tragedies, I discussed in the introduction that both Shakespeare’s tragedies and his comedies show disorder on the stage, but with a different function. The tragedy normally talked about powerful men, such as King Duncan, Macbeth, and Macduff in this play, and the disorder in the play was usually related to their ruling and politics. This is also the case in *Macbeth*, although the disorder in the play is first introduced by the witches and Lady Macbeth. Because of their witchcraft, witchlike abilities, and ultimately also madness, they caused disorder in Macbeth’s head, which led to the ultimate disorder: the murder on the king. Since the king was seen as the father of all people, his death caused disorder in the whole country. This can be seen in *Macbeth* in Act 2 Scene 4, the scene after king Duncan is murdered. An old man talks to Ross about how he has seen many things, but the weather during “this sore night / Hath trifled former knowings” (3-4). The whole normal system is disturbed, since “by th’clock ‘tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp” (6-7). The situation does not improve, since their next king, Macbeth, becomes mad because of the sin he has committed. Salkeld argues that showing madness on stage is a form of subversion since “the body [is] a metaphor for order [and] is radically disrupted in [...] madness” (59). Not only in *Macbeth*, but also in other popular tragedies as *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, it are the kings or rulers of a country that become mad. As they are the prime example for the country and the ultimate “body”, making them mad is also the ultimate way of providing critique on society. The disorder in *Macbeth* is ultimately solved, but only by the death of the two mad, disordered, characters in the play: Macbeth and his wife.



## Chapter 3

### Renaissance Theories on Madness and Melancholy

In the previous chapter, the appearance and use of madness in one of Shakespeare's tragedies was discussed. This chapter will provide the contrast with the previous one in analysing madness in one of his comedies. It is already mentioned in the introduction that most critics researched the mad characters in Shakespeare's (revenge) tragedies, paying little attention to the use of madness in his comedies. And when, on the contrary, the comedies are discussed, few critics focus on madness or provide the comparison with his tragedies. One exception to this rule is Carol Neely, who discusses in her work *Distracted Subjects* madness in both Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies. Her theories on madness in Shakespearean tragedy provided the basis for my analysis of *Macbeth*, and her book will also be the main source for this discussion of *Twelfth Night*.

The research of madness in *Twelfth Night* already starts with the full title of the play, which is *Twelfth Night, Or What You Will*. Twelfth Night was seen as a holiday of reversal and "licensed mocking" (Neely 137), when people could dress up like they belonged to a different class or gender. By using the name of this holiday as a title, it "deliberately showcase[s] [its] genre by emphasizing [...] misrule" (Neely 137), and prepares the audience for the madness and misrule that could follow in the play. This is also expressed in the subtitle of the play: *Or What You Will*. Thier discusses how madness "could be the result of a diseased will" (46), when passion takes over in the mind. This cause of madness links the

disease directly to the subtitle, but also to the content of the play: passion and the resulting problem of lovesickness is one of the main themes of madness in *Twelfth Night*. The “will” in the title also refers to the characters themselves. They follow their passions and will, and do what they want, and this is also reflected in their names: Malvolio (derived from the Latin for ‘ill-will’), Viola (derived from the Latin for ‘wanting’), and Olivia (an anagram of Viola’s name). Neely says that these “three symbolically named willful characters [...] designate [the play] a site of unruly desires” (115), which leads to a certain kind of madness in at least two of these characters, as will be discussed in what follows.

### 3.1 Olivia’s and Orsino’s Lovesickness

The analysis and discussion of *Macbeth* showed that Shakespeare presented the then popular social discussion about madness on the stage. Section 1.2 explained how madness was regendered, focusing not only on men anymore, but on women as well. This could be seen in *Macbeth* in Lady Macbeth’s madness. Lovesickness is another kind of madness that was originally attributed to men, but takes “increasingly [...] women into account” since the Renaissance (Neely 106). Neely discusses how the already mentioned case notes of Napier discussed more often men than women with respect to lovesickness, but often “classical and mythological women - Phaedra, Iphis, Persephone, Dido, Semiramis, and Sappho – [were] deployed so as to emphasise that this disease [wa]s gender-blind” (106). That lovesickness appeared in both women and men is also seen in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. This play portrays both a woman, Olivia, and a man, Orsino, suffering from love melancholy. This part will discuss the symptoms of their suffering, as well as the causes, on the basis of Ferrand’s work *Erotomania*, which is extensively discussed in Chapter 1.

Lovesickness is an important factor throughout the play. The first scene already shows a cause for love melancholy, with respect to the character of Orsino: the sight. Ferrand discussed that sight was the most important one of the senses to fall in love, since “no man was ever in love, with one he never saw” (42). Orsino’s “O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first” (1.1.18) confirm this theory, saying that it was a love on first sight.<sup>18</sup> The connection between love and sight is introduced in Act 1 Scene 1 and is repeated throughout the whole play. In Act 1 Scene 2 the captain explains to Viola Olivia’s situation and how she lost her father and brother not long ago, “for whose dear love / (They say) she hath abjured the company / And sight of men” (38-40). This suggests that even seeing a man could be dangerous for Olivia’s abstinence and could make her fall in love. The importance of sight is another time expressed in the conversations between Viola/Cesario and Olivia. When they meet for the first time, Olivia is veiled because she mourns her father and her brother. It is for Viola/Cesario, however, very important that he sees her face before he can deliver the loving lines of her/his master:

Viola: Good madam, let me see your face.

Olivia: Have you any commission from your lord to negotiate with my face? You are now out of your text; but we will draw the curtain, and show you the picture [*She unveils.*] Look you, sir, such a one I was this present: is’t not well done?

Viola: Excellently done, if God did all. (1.5.214-20)

It is only when Viola/Cesario has seen Olivia’s face, that she/he starts complementing her and voices her master’s love for her. The association between sight and love is even more clear somewhat further in this scene. When Viola/Cesario has left the scene, Olivia expresses how she fell in love with her/him in the following way:

---

<sup>18</sup> All quotations from *Twelfth Night* are taken from Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. Ed. Cedric Watts. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001. Print.

“Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit,  
Do give thee five-fold blazon.  
[...]  
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. (1.5.275-81)

Especially these last lines are important with respect to this discussion. It is clear that Olivia’s love starts with her eyes, in which the “youth’s perfections [creep] with an invisible and subtle stealth”. This follows the theory explained by Thiher in which is said that “the objective cause of love is first seen by the eyes” whereupon “the image is conveyed to the liver, the seat of concupiscence” (75). It are the youth’s superficial beautiful qualities like her/his tongue, face, and limbs that make Olivia fall in love at first sight, and she expresses her concern about this in one of the last lines of this scene: “I do I know not what, and fear to find / Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind” (1.5.291-2). She is afraid that her love has blinded her, and that she is not thinking clearly at the moment, since she had sworn off men. The fact that love makes blind is also one of the characteristics which Ferrand mentions in his *Erotomania*: “For we see, that a Lover cannot give a right judgement of the thing he loves, and which is the object of his affections: and for this cause Love is always painted blind” (31).

Next to the sight as an important cause for falling in love, Ferrand discusses also the hearing. This includes love letters or “lascivious songs and sonnets” (44). This can be seen in Act 1 Scene 5 when Viola/Cesario tries to convince Olivia of the love of her/his master. He/she praises Olivia’s beauty with utterances as “Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty” or “’Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white / Nature’s own sweet and cunning hand laid on” (1.5.158, 222-23). The beautiful words seem to work, since by the end of this scene Olivia has fallen in love with Viola/Cesario. Despite her/his convincing words, sight is

still the most important, though, since previous messengers from Orsino did not return with as much success. These are the causes of falling in love, of course, and not of lovesickness itself. It is because Orsino's love for Olivia, and Olivia's love for Cesario are both unanswered, that the characters suffer from lovesickness. Neely gives as reason for Olivia's denial of Orsino's love that she may not be drawn "to the perhaps older and more socially powerful [...] Orsino [...] because she has sworn not 'to match above her degree, neither in estate, years, nor wit' (1.3.105-6)" (117), while Cesario cannot answer Olivia's love because in reality he is a woman.

The fact that their love is not mutual, makes them subject to the disordered state of lovesickness. Several of the symptoms Ferrand discussed in his work, appear in the text in relation to Orsino's or Olivia's feelings. A first symptom of lovesickness appears in the first scene of the play. Ferrand mentioned how people suffering from love melancholy could have terrible mood swings; their eyes went from hollow and dry to wet with tears, while their heart (and with that their mood) went from extremely happy to very sad. This happens to Orsino in Act 1 Scene 1 when he listens to the music that is played. His first line in the play is: "If music be the food of love, play on" (1.1.1), but only six lines further he changes his mind, saying "Enough, no more! / 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before" (1.1.7-8).

Next to expressing a symptom of Orsino's lovesickness, these lines show also another theory of Ferrand: music could both be a cause or a cure for love. When Orsino tells us that "music [is] the food of love" (1.1.1) or that he thought that the "old and antic song we heard last night: / [...] did relieve my passion much" he reformulates Ferrand's statement that "to [the] allurements and provocations to Love, caused by the hearing, we might adde Musicke" (46). The opposite, happens, however, when the music is performed badly, or as Orsino would say "'Tis not so sweet now as it was before" (1.1.8). In that case it could not be a cause of love, but a cure against lovesickness. Music did not have to be performed badly, though, to be

a cure against love melancholy. Good music could help to get the love melancholic out of his or her melancholic and solitary state, which is another symptom of lovesickness. Also Orsino shows that he is suffering from solitariness when he says that “I myself am best / When least in company” (1.4.37-8). Another couple of Ferrand’s symptoms Orsino shows are the uncontrollability of his gestures and motions, saying that he is like “all true lovers are, / Unstaid and skittish in all motions else” (2.4.16-7), and the symptoms of crying and sighing. These last symptoms are expressed when Viola answers Olivia’s question of how Orsino loves her: “With adorations, fertile tears, / With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire” (1.5.238-9).

Whereas Orsino’s expressions of his lovesickness are very melancholy-like, if we think of the solitariness, the listening to music, and the crying and sighing, Olivia expresses her lovesickness in a very different way. Neely states that female characters in Shakespeare’s comedies “pursu[e] desire more aggressively [and] explicitly seek sexual therapies for the condition” (115). This can, indeed, be seen in Olivia’s character. While Orsino is sending other people to Olivia to declare his love, Olivia approaches Cesario directly and she almost threatens him to be with her, as can be seen in the following part:

I did send,  
After the last enchantment you did here,  
A ring in chase of you. So did I abuse  
Myself, my servant and, I fear me, you:  
[...]  
Have you not set mine honour at the stake,  
And baited it with all th’unmuzzled thoughts  
That tyrannous heart can think? (3.1.107-16)

Olivia is suggesting that she has set her “honour at the stake” by falling in love with him and sending her servants with her ring “in chase of” him. Cesario should be honoured that a woman of her position wants to be with him, but instead he answers “I pity you” (3.1.120).

Even then Olivia cannot accept his rejection and she answers that pity is still “a degree to love” (3.1.120).

Olivia seeks a direct and effective cure for her lovesickness and the best way to do that is by having sexual intercourse with the beloved person. Therefore she tries to marry Cesario, who of course denies her hand because he is actually a girl. Olivia’s problem is solved when Cesario/Viola’s twin brother Sebastian appears in the play. Although he previously has never seen Olivia, she is so convincing and aggressively seeking satisfaction that he immediately agrees to marry her: Olivia asks “Nay, come, I prithee: would thou’dst be ruled by me!” on which Sebastian answers “Madam, I will.” (4.1.60-1). Olivia does not want to waste time (“Blame not this haste of mine” (4.3.22)) and the marriage takes place only two scenes after the proposal. Olivia seems to realise her own forward and aggressive behaviour at this point, since she says that Sebastian has to “Plight [her] the full assurance of [his] faith, / That [her] most jealous and too doubtful soul / May live in peace” (4.3.26-8). As previously said, though, the consummation of marriage is the most important part to cure Olivia from her lovesickness and she refers to it in asking “What time we will our celebration keep” (4.3.30).

Neely states that their marriage is not a complete solution to the disorder, though, since it does not restore the patriarchy. She discusses that “the urgency of desires and the agency of women also complicate the capacity of the concluding moments of marriages to reproduce patriarchy and secure normative gender hierarchy” (114). The marriages seem like the traditional conclusion to a comedy, but because of Sebastian’s submissive behaviour (“would thou’dst be ruled by me!” – “Madam, I will” (4.1.60-1)) the disorder is not restored. The “patriarchy” and “normative gender hierarchy” Neely mentions is still disturbed, since Olivia has power over Sebastian, whereas normally the man was supposed to be the most powerful in a relationship and household.

During the play, this strong female position of Olivia contrasts with the emotionally weaker one of Orsino. Neely discusses that this is a typical characteristic of Shakespeare's comedies as well:

The history of lovesickness brings women's desires to the forefront, and the drama mines the narrative and comic potential of this development. [...] They are routinely represented as erotic, urgent, aggressive, and acted on. In contrast men's love is more often passive, Petrarchan, and fetishistic" (114).

The "Petrarchan, and fetishistic" Neely mentions in the quote above, is in the treatises of that period only attributed to men and refers to the fact that they love "an idealized, unobtainable object" (118), like Orsino who loves Olivia. Despite his love for her, he seems to like that she is unobtainable and more like a fantasy, since he always sends other people to her, but never pursues her personally. The opposition between Orsino's passive love and Olivia's aggressive one dramatises the popular cultural debate "about who loves most, men or women, and seem[s] to agree with the treatises that women do" (Neely 115). Ferrand's explanations for this is that women were more passionate and could love stronger to compensate the fact that they had to suffer "pain in childbirth" (Neely 109). This discussion about who loves most is dramatised in *Twelfth Night* and can be seen in one of the conversations between Orsino and Viola/Cesario:

Orsino: 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  
[...]  
Make no compare  
Between that love a woman can bear me,  
And that I owe Olivia.  
Viola: Ay, but I know...  
Orsino: What dost thou know?



Viola: Too well what love women to men may owe:  
In faith they are as true of heart as we. (2.4.92-105)

Orsino is telling that a man's love is much stronger and passionate than that of a woman since their "hearts are too small and their palates only, not their livers, are infected" (Neely 118). Despite Orsino's conviction of his dominance in love, it is the lovesick woman in the play, Olivia, who acts the most aggressively to get her beloved one. Neely mentions how this opposition loosened the "conventional gender and erotic roles," and how "love may make men [...] vulnerable, passive, irrational, and subordinate – that is, more like normative women" (113). The effect of love on women, on the other hand, could "turn their bodies hotter and their actions more aggressive, making them [...] more like normative men" (113). Like *Macbeth*, Shakespeare used his play *Twelfth Night* to present social discussion on the stage. In contrast to the tragic ending in *Macbeth*, however, this play "exploit[s] lovesickness' comic potential and gender-bending effects" (Neely 100), as is discussed above.

Although lovesickness seems to be less a form of madness, and more an emotion, it would still be considered a kind of madness in the early modern period. Neely mentions that "in medical traditions from the second to the seventeenth century, lovesickness is associated with the melancholy humour" (101), which was one of the causes of madness. The boundaries of madness were quite vague in the Renaissance, and they would have considered quite some diseases or emotions as madness, which we would in present times see as natural diseases or quite normal emotions. One of the *OED*-definitions of madness is "(wild) foolishness", which shows the vagueness of the word "madness" and shows that it could easily include lovesickness. Neely mentions that the meaning of the word could "include almost any excessive expression of emotion" (3). This definitely applies to lovesickness, which can be seen as an excessive expression of the emotion love and melancholy for a beloved one. When we look at the function of lovesickness in *Twelfth Night*, we see that it has the same function as the madness in *Macbeth*: it disturbs the order within the play, although it is used in a

comical way here. The next kind of madness that appears in *Twelfth Night*, which is Malvolio's fake demonic possession, has this function as well.

### 3.2 Malvolio's Imposed Madness

The lovesickness discussed in the previous chapter led to “two households where no one is in charge because [...] the master and the mistress are distracted by lovesickness” (Neely 151). Neely explains that “intersecting with the primary [...] erotic intrigues is the Malvolio subplot in which a self-serving courtship [...] is deliberately incited and farcically punished” (115). This provides an interesting contrast, since the desires of Orsino and Olivia were rewarded ultimately by marriage, whereas Malvolio is punished for expressing essentially the same desires of love. Neely explains why his “dream of marrying Olivia leads to his maddening, confinement, and mock exorcism” (136):

The maddening and brief restraining of [...] Malvolio – [a] sexually errant, socially aggressive, and greedy [man] who commodif[ies] women – serve[s] as a farcical climax to growing misidentifications. The self-absorbed misogyny of the maddened man is punished (136).

The characters are punishing Malvolio not only for his own faults, but also for their faults. Neely says that the “maddened character” serves as a “scapegoat figure who [is] punished in excess of [his] own flaws for the inadequacies of [himself] and of others” (138). Not only Malvolio acts like a selfish, sexual man who subjects women to his desires, he shares these characteristics with Duke Orsino, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. He is not only punished for his own flaws, but also for those of the other three male characters, who act as self-absorbed as he does. Neely links also Feste and Maria to Malvolio's flaws, on top of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, as is described in the following excerpt:

They mock his ambiguous authority as a steward, his impotence as an unmarried, unloved, anti-festive man, and his nastily aggressive status hunger. Like Malvolio, three of his tormenters are single, impotent men of ambiguous status who seek advancement. Sir Andrew is tricked into playing a pathetic suitor to Olivia; Sir Toby is an impecunious parasite advocating Sir Andrew's suit for his own advantage; Feste is a licensed, placeless, unmarried, dependent fool [...] Maria, whose position of intimacy and dependency as Olivia's waiting woman most closely resembles Malvolio's, may initiate the trick against him out of rivalry for her mistress's favor and possibly to disavow the sort of cross-class marriage she herself desires" (152).

The question could be asked why it is exactly Malvolio that had to be punished for the flaws of all these different characters mentioned in Neely's quote. The answer lies partly in his name: the name Malvolio is derived from the Latin words "malus", which means "bad", "evil", or "ill", and the verb "volere", which means "wanting", so his name means literally "ill-will" or "evil-wanting". This ill-will is constantly present in the play, as he reprimands the other characters and acts as their superior, which he is actually not. He appears for the first time in Act 1 Scene 5 and immediately mocks the fool, saying to Olivia that he "marvel[s] [her] ladyship takes delight in such a barren / rascal" (76-7). He even insults his mistress at the end of his paragraph when he says that he "take[s] these wise men, that crow so at these set / kind of fools, no better than the fools' zanies" (81-2). Malvolio is immediately characterised as an unlovable, selfish person, which his lady confirms by saying he is "sick of self-love [...] and taste[s] with a / distempered appetite" (83-4).

Feste is not the only one Malvolio insulted, by calling him a "barren rascal". In Act 2 Scene 3 Feste, Sir Andrew, Sir Toby and Maria are singing together and Malvolio, disturbed by their noise, exclaims:

My masters, are you mad? Or what are you? Have you  
no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers  
at this time of night?

[...]

Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you? (2.3.81-6)

All of the characters are called “mad” and told they have “no wit,” no “manners,” no “honesty,” and even “no respect”. They are all offended by Malvolio’s behaviour and decide to punish him by writing him a love letter in Olivia’s name. In that letter, he is asked to do things that would make it seem to Olivia as if he is mad, so he is insulted in the same way as the other characters who he called mad. It is already mentioned above that he also needs to be punished for his sexually errant ways and his “aggressive status hunger” (Neely 152). These self-absorbed tendencies can be seen in Act 2 Scene 5 when Malvolio is expressing his feelings of wanting to marry Olivia and being her powerful husband, even before finding the letter. He imagines how it would feel “To be Count Malvolio!”, “Calling [his] officers” in his “branched velvet gown” and “wind up [his] watch, or play with [his] – some rich jewel” while “Toby approaches [and] curtsies there to [him]” (2.5.32, 44-5, 56-8). Neely discusses how Malvolio is punished because he “desires [Olivia’s] place, not her, as his soliloquy *before* reading the letter shows” (152).

Once Malvolio finds and reads the letter, his selfishness is reaffirmed: the random letters “M, O, A, I” (2.5.113) that are mentioned in the letter make him think it is written for him, since “every one of these letters are in [his] name” (2.5.130-1). Neely argues that “his reasons for wanting Olivia are to be found not in the missive’s C’s and U’s and T’s that signify her penetrable sexuality, an enticement for the lovesick, but in its M.O.A.I., letters that signify his name and his own palpable ‘self-love’ (1.5.83)” (152). It is remarkable how, after reading the letter, Malvolio mentions that he does “not now fool [him]self, to let imagination jade [him]” (2.5.153-4), since that is exactly what is happening. Although his madness further on in the play is not a real one, Daalder argues that in this part of the play “Malvolio is self-deluded, and mad to that extent” (109), because he believes the letter is written to him by Olivia. Because of this delusion, he does exactly what the letter tells him to do and he lets his love “appear in [his] smiling”, while he “will be strange, stout, in yellow stockings, and cross-

gartered” (2.5.165-6, 160-1). According to Neely, “the resulting performance of lovesickness – smiling, cross-gartering, yellow stockings – is punished by an attribution of madness [...] by inscribing the loss of control characteristic of the devil-possessed, the bewitched, the mad” (152).

When Malvolio appears in Act 3 Scene 4, he has followed the instructions of the letter, which make him appear like he is delusional. In the introduction to religious superstition in Chapter 1, it is mentioned that delusions and hallucinations were typical characteristics of possessed people. For Olivia, it seems like Malvolio is not himself, since she asks him: “What is the matter with thee?” (3.4.24-5). He talks to her about things written in the letter, but since she never saw the letter, she thinks he is delusional and that he is suffering from “midsummer madness” (3.4.52). Maria only makes it worse by saying that he acts “in a very strange manner” and as such “he is sure possessed” and “tainted in’s wits” (3.4.8, 9, 13). Sir Toby and Maria are not only fooling Olivia, but keep up their appearances in front of Malvolio himself as well:

My niece is already in the belief that he’s mad; we may  
carry it thus, for our pleasure and his penance, till our  
very pastime, tired out of breath, prompt us to have  
mercy on him (3.4.126-30)

They talk to him like he is really mad, although they know for sure he is not. Maria says that “the fiend speaks within him”, while Sir Toby tells Malvolio that he should “defy the devil” since he is “an enemy to mankind” (3.4.85, 91-2). Hallett argues that “though Malvolio never goes crazy, the symbolic effect is the same”, since all of the characters surrounding him “presume from his actions that he is mad” to “make the point that a certain life style culminates in madness” (53). The effect is the same, because both real or fake madness suggests that “the particular desires of the character are desires that have their end in a chaotic ‘phrenzie’ (54).

In this part of the play, Act 3 Scene 4, they also propose several cures that were typically used against demonic possession, like prayer and seclusion. MacDonald discussed that one of the most popular methods was driving the devil out through “prayer and fasting” (208), which is in the play suggested by Maria: “Get him to say his prayers, good Sir Toby, get him to pray” (3.4.110-1). The other cure against demonic possession mentioned in this scene is seclusion, which will be performed in Act 4 Scene 2. It is previously mentioned in Chapter 1 that demoniacs were chained to their bed, or if this did not suffice, secluded in a cell or box. This is also the solution that Sir Toby proposes for Malvolio’s ‘possession’: “Come, we’ll have him in a dark room and bound” (3.4.126).

In Act 4 Scene 2 the scene directions mention that at the back of the stage “Malvolio’s temporary cell” is visible, suggesting that Sir Toby’s proposal to seclude Malvolio has been executed. In Chapter 1 it was explained how it was the task of the physician to determine the difference between possession or madness with a natural cause. When the cause was considered supernatural, it were spiritual physicians, rather than real medicines who came to treat the patient. These spiritual physicians, however, were usually not trained in medicine, and were just clergymen. Bearing this in mind, the fact that Feste dresses like the priest Sir Topas is remarkable. Feste is one of the people who punished Malvolio with his false possession, just like a priest would have diagnosed a demonic patient. Lederer mentions how a spiritual physician provided a link to madness, but also made a connection between “knowledge and belief, and between the profane and the sacred” (5). Also this could be linked to Feste dressing up as the priest in *Twelfth Night*. He can be seen as the link between the priest he is dressed like, and the madness with which he is generally associated as a fool. Michel Foucault, however, argues that the fool is no longer only associated with “the character of the Madman”, but “stands center stage as the guardian of truth” (14). He provides the “comedy to the second degree: the deception of deception; he utters in his simpleton’s

language which makes no show of reason, the words of reason that release, in the comic, the comedy” (14). Linking this back to Lederer’s words that the spiritual physician was the connection between the knowledge and belief, this can also be applied to Feste. Although Feste might seem the ultimate mad character, he is actually more a representation of knowledge. Dressed as priest he thus makes the connection between belief linked to the priest, and the knowledge he stands for as a fool.

It is previously mentioned in Chapter 1 that the practices of the spiritual physicians were, according to Lederer, very varying and ranged from treating simple disturbances to “suicidal despair and demonic possession” (1). More generally, however, their task was to restore “equilibrium in the souls of troubled individuals” (1). Although Malvolio is not really possessed, restoring his equilibrium is indeed something that is necessary if we consider his selfish behaviour. This links the fool Feste again with the priest, since they take on similar roles, both wanting their patients to behave more normally again.

When we look in more detail at Act 4 Scene 2, it can be noticed that, although Malvolio keeps saying he is not mad, he compares himself two times with the fool. The first time Malvolio says to the fool, dressed as Sir Topas: “I am no more mad than you are” (46). He is, obviously, not aware of the fact that he is talking to the fool and not to a priest. The second time, though, he is aware of the fact, since the fool appears in his own person to Malvolio. When Feste asks Malvolio how he “fell besides [his] five wits”, Malvolio answers: “Fool, there was never man so notoriously abused: I am / as well in my wits, fool, as thou art” (83, 84-5). This is a remarkable statement, on the one hand since he insulted Feste earlier in the play, and on the other hand because the fool was usually associated with madness. The fool confirms this when he answers Malvolio that he is “mad indeed” if he is “no better in [his] wits than a fool” (86-7). We do not know why Malvolio is comparing himself with the fool at

this point in the play; it may be because he wants to flatter Feste in releasing him, or his behaviour could really have been improved by this point because of his punishment.

This second option, however, is not very likely since his last word in the play are “I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you!” (5.1.367). These last words make that “nothing in the play’s ending suggests that order has been permanently resecured” (Neely 31). Although all of the main characters marry at the end of *Twelfth Night*, this last statement leaves the ending unfulfilled in a certain way. Neely says that “the lack of projection of a social order [...] allows the circuits of desire to remain open at the ending” (120). In the next chapter we will see that Malvolio’s madness has more function in the play than only leaving the ending unfulfilled.

### **3.3 The Function of Madness and Disorder in *Twelfth Night* and Society**

We have analysed Orsino’s and Olivia’s lovesickness and Malvolio’s maddening in the previous chapter, but their madness is more than just a comical effect in *Twelfth Night*. This chapter will first discuss how the use of madness functions within the play, before broadening the perspective and explaining the cultural and social functions, and finish with the representation of disorder in *Twelfth Night*. Especially Malvolio’s madness scenes have a central role within the play, although this is not immediately noticeable while watching or reading the play. Neely explains the function of Malvolio’s scenes as follows:

The situating of the scenes of confinement draws negative attention away from scenes of romantic satisfaction. [...] Malvolio is punished for pursuing his dream of marriage to his rich mistress, Olivia, at the same time that Sebastian is passively being seduced by her. [...] The farcical maddening and confining of a sexually errant man (who serves as a scapegoat) permits (structurally, thematically, and ideologically) other kinds of



unruliness and sudden matches of the lovesick. [...] In particular, by punishing those who commodify women, the mockery confinements let women protect their power and marriages. (139).

If we take a closer look at the play, we can indeed confirm Neely's statement, especially with respect to the last scenes of *Twelfth Night*. At the end of Act 4 Scene 1, Olivia runs into Sebastian, whom she mistakenly takes for Cesario/Viola. She asks him to marry her, and surprisingly enough Sebastian says he will, although he has never met her before. The scene that follows Olivia's and Sebastian's conversation is the one in which Malvolio is locked in his cell. The comical effect of this scene diverts the audience's attention of the strange thing that just happened. "The scenes' placement and farcical action draw both laughter and condemnation onto Malvolio, and away from the erotic unruliness, gender fluidity and willful marriages examined in the preceding chapter" (Neely 151). It has this same effect on the following scene, Act 4 Scene 3, in which Olivia and Sebastian are married by a priest. The audience is still laughing with the preceding scene of Malvolio, which makes them forget how strange the marriage between Olivia and Sebastian actually is. Neely discusses that these scenes "pathologize Malvolio's status-seeking match to elicit tolerance for those driven by erotic desire" (152). Whereas the last scene of other comedies includes the marriage and concludes the play with a happy ending, in *Twelfth Night* the last scene is centred around the character of Malvolio. As previously discussed, Malvolio's last utterance about revenge does not permit the play to have a full conclusion, but at the same time it lets Olivia "protect [her] power and marriage" (Neely 139), since she is able to marry with a submissive person. The last scene tries to draw the attention away from the marriages that happened in the previous scenes and the "unfestive scene repeated three times, increasingly casts its shadow over the more festive matches" (Neely 139-40).

Next to this internal function, madness has also an external function in *Twelfth Night*: providing a view on contemporary society. Daalder says that the mock exorcism in *Twelfth*

*Night*, provided by the fool dressed as Sir Topas, shows that Shakespeare does not accept the “Renaissance concept of [...] demonic possession” because he “plainly satirizes [the concept] through his presentation of Malvolio” (109, own emphasis). I would not go as far in saying that Shakespeare does not accept demonic possession entirely, since we have seen that he presented many different kinds of madness on the stage without really giving his own opinion. In *Macbeth* the witches are portrayed very realistically, so following Daalder’s reasoning, this would mean that Shakespeare did believe in witchcraft and demonic possession. In my opinion, Shakespeare tried to dramatise the contemporary cultural debates, without offering the right solution to the audience. This does, however, not exclude that he gave severe critique on the society and the practice of exorcism. Neely says that “the effect of these scenes is to discredit [...] exorcism, and to consolidate comic community (136). Daalder argues that Feste taking on the role of a priest “is a mockery of what a medical examination should be” (110), which is supported by the following quote by Neely:

When madness is imposed as ascribed devil possession or bewitchment, and is imagined “cured” by fake exorcism, the discourse of possession and bewitchment is harshly discredited. [...] the relationship of possession to distraction and the validity of exorcism were topics of intense debate during the time these plays were written (*Distracted Subjects* 138-9).

This supports my earlier statement that Shakespeare especially tried to bring the cultural debates about madness onto the stage. Except from expressing critique, Neely argues that the play also shows the “social usefulness” of confining the madman: “by mocking the healers but not the social efficacy of such rituals, the plays resituate them within community social practice” (139). The play “helps us to understand how the scenes of gulling, confinement, and exorcism could be received with pleasure and put to social use” (158). Neely explains here that the play mocks the persons who exorcise, by making the fool the priest in *Twelfth Night*,

but by only mocking the healer, it suggests at the same time that confinement and seclusion could be useful as well, and help the mad.

I explained in 2.3. that the function of madness as disorder is different in Shakespeare's comedies and his tragedies. Whereas the disorder was one of politics in *Macbeth* and ended badly, it has a more comical function in *Twelfth Night*. Comedies focus, in general, on family bonds, and women and their domestic households, instead of on men and their politics, and this is also the case in this play. *Twelfth Night* focuses on the households of Olivia and Orsino, which are disordered because of their lovesickness. Their love melancholy prevents them from properly ruling their households, since they can only think about themselves and their beloved ones. Malvolio's character disrupted society by wanting to marry his mistress, and being a selfish and misogynistic person in general. Because Malvolio disrupted society, he is ultimately made disordered himself, since he is declared mad by the other characters. It is especially interesting that his madness, his disorder, makes the other disorders in the play less obvious. Although the households of Olivia and Orsino are not ruled well, it is especially Malvolio's madness and the comical effects caused by it which grab the attention of the audience. We have seen that in *Macbeth* the order was restored, but only because the main disordered characters died. This is not the case in a comedy, where normally the order is restored at the end of the play by means of a marriage. Although a marriage takes place in *Twelfth Night*, it is already mentioned previously, that the play has an unfulfilled ending. Malvolio's disorder seems solved, since Olivia knows he was not really mad, but his last words in the play are words of revenge, which make that "nothing in the play's ending suggests that order has been permanently resecured" (Neely 31). Also the disorder caused by lovesickness seems resolved at the end of *Twelfth Night* because of the marriages, but even the marriage between Olivia and Sebastian is a strange one, since she seems the most powerful of the two. Normally, patriarchy is restored at the end of a comedy, but with the

powerful Olivia marrying the compliant Sebastian “the gender-bending effects” Neely (100) mentioned are still in full force and this “allows the circuits of desire to remain open at the ending” (Neely 120).

## Conclusion

I started this work by saying that madness is one of the recurring themes in Shakespeare's plays, both in his comedies and in his tragedies. Although the subject is widely discussed by various critics, only Carol Neely provided the comparison between madness in both genres. I thought it was interesting to compare madness in the comedies to madness in the tragedies, since both genres have each their own conventions. Each genre emphasises other aspects of madness and uses it in a different way with respect to the wider social and cultural context. Based on Neely's work *Distracted Subjects*, I discussed the representation and use of madness in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*.

To start my discussion of madness, I first examined what the term incorporated in the early modern period. We saw that madness was only one word of the many words used to describe a "disturbed" or "melancholic" person. All of these words had in common, however, that they emphasised the temporary condition of the disease, in contrary to the eighteenth century word "insanity", which implied a fixed state of madness.

In what followed next, it was discussed how the Renaissance was a time in which many new theories on madness arose and conflicted with the older, but still popular, beliefs about the disease. It was the contrast between the old and the new theories that made madness an interesting subject to present on the stage. We have seen that Shakespeare liked to present more than one kind of madness in *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*, to be able to contrast them with each other.

In order to be able to examine the different kinds of madness on the Shakespearean stage, it was, however, necessary to discuss the older and newer theories that were popular in Shakespeare's time. In this discussion, I started with Galen's humoral theory, which was the foundation for all medicine in the early modern period. His theory of the four humours provided the basis for the following discussion on the melancholic madness, of which the causes, symptoms, and cures were explained. The next chapter on the general theories about madness talked about the regendering of madness. Since so many new theories arose in the Renaissance, the ones that previously only talked about men, were now regendered and included theories about women's madness as well. Especially the link between witchcraft and suffocation of the mother, as explained in the works of Scot and Jorden, were important in this chapter. The third chapter on the general theories talked more about witchcraft, and about religious superstition in general. Many characteristics of the possessed or demoniac could be confused with those of (love) melancholy, so I focused on discussing the differences and similarities between natural and supernatural madness in this chapter. The last theory on madness I explained, was Ferrand's theory about love melancholy, of which the causes, symptoms and cures were discussed.

All of these Renaissance theories about madness provided a link to madness represented in *Macbeth* or *Twelfth Night*, or even both. The melancholy was discussed with respect to *Macbeth*, while the chapter on regendering madness was central to the discussion of Lady *Macbeth* and the witches. The two last chapters, about religious superstition and love melancholy, were more important for the discussion of *Twelfth Night*, referring to Malvolio's, and Olivia's and Orsino's madness, respectively.

In chapter 2 the representation of the different kinds of madness in *Macbeth* was discussed. We saw that Shakespeare showed in this play especially the difference between witchcraft and hysteria, and between demonic and human malevolence in Lady *Macbeth* and

the witches, while Macbeth's madness was linked to both the melancholic madness and possession by the devil. The use of madness in the play made the audience aware of the thin boundaries between the different kinds of madness and could help them in identifying these sorts of madness in real life. By representing witchcraft and hysteria on the stage, the play also voiced critique on the witch-hunting practices which were still popular in that time. Lastly, I added my own voice to this discussion and provided a view on the function of madness as a way to disorder in *Macbeth*. Both Lady Macbeth and the witches caused disorder in the play by influencing Macbeth's decisions, which led to the ultimate disorder: the death of the king. We have seen that disorder of rulers and politics was typical of tragedies, and that the order could be restored rather difficultly. In *Macbeth*, the order was only restored by killing the disordered characters: Macbeth and his wife.

In Chapter 3, I discussed Orsino's and Olivia's lovesickness in *Twelfth Night*. Especially Orsino showed the typical symptoms associated with the disease, such as sighing, mood swings, and wanting solitude. Olivia, on the other hand, acted more aggressively and pursued her beloved one in a more direct way. We have seen that this reversal of the gender-roles is typical of the comedy: lovesick women acted more aggressively, while lovesick men acted like passive lovers. This love melancholy, was, however, disrupted by the disorder Malvolio caused. Firstly, because he was a threat to the normal society, being a very selfish and misogynistic person. Secondly, because of his imposed, fake, madness and the mock exorcism that was played on the stage. We have seen that Malvolio acted as a scapegoat and is not only punished for his own behaviour, but also for that of the other persons in the play. His scenes functioned as a diversion from the lovesickness and marriage scenes, which happen at the same time as his exorcism scene. In what followed, it was discussed how this fake exorcism provided critique on the society, but by only mocking the healers and not the act itself, it also suggested that confinement and seclusion could help a mad person. Lastly, I

compared the disorder as presented in *Macbeth* to that in *Twelfth Night*, showing that it had an entirely different function in the comedy than in the tragedy. The disorder in *Twelfth Night* was caused by both Orsino's and Olivia's lovesickness, and the fake madness of Malvolio. Whereas the disorder in *Macbeth* helped to develop the tragedy in the play, the disorder in *Twelfth Night* served more of a comical function. We also saw that the order was not really restored, since Malvolio ended the play with a threat of revenge, and the marriage between Olivia and Sebastian did not restore the patriarchy.

In this work, I tried to give a valuable discussion of the use of madness in *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth*. Building upon Carol Neely's work *Distracted Subjects*, I discussed some of the new theories about madness that arose in the Renaissance, and analysed how they were presented onto the Shakespearean stage. I discussed after each analysis the function of madness within the play, but the function of madness with respect to the wider social and cultural context. To express my own voice, next to Neely's, I ended each discussion with the link between madness and disorder within the plays, comparing the disorder within the tragedy with the disorder within the comedy. As a conclusion, I would like to say that Shakespeare helped his audience identifying madness by presenting the different kinds of madness on the stage, showing the differences between each kind. It was for him also a way to voice social and cultural critique on the topics presented in each play. For further research, it would be interesting to look more in detail to the exact differences between tragedy and comedy and the function of disorder and madness in each genre, for which my discussion can serve as a foundation.



## Bibliography

- Asp, Carolyn. "‘Be bloody, bold and resolute’: Tragic Action and Sexual Stereotyping in *Macbeth*." *Studies in Philology* Spring 1981: 153-169. *JStor* Web. 19 Mar. 2013.
- Ayoub, Lois. "Old English waeta and the Medical Theory of the Humours." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 94.3 (1995): 332-46. *JStor*. Web. 8 April 2014.
- Bright, Timothie. *A Treatise of Melancholie*. London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1586. *EEBO*. Web. 22 Feb. 2014.
- Chamberlain, Stephanie. "Fantasizing Infanticide: Lady Macbeth and the Murdering Mother in Early Modern England." *College Literature* Summer 2005: 72-91. *JStor*. Web. 18 Nov. 2012.
- Coursen, H.R. *Macbeth. A Guide to the Play*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997. Print.
- Daalder, Joost. "Perspectives of Madness in *Twelfth Night*." *English Studies* 78.2 (1997): 105-10). *Taylor & Francis*. Web. 15 Nov. 2013.

“Familiar, n., adj., and adv.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

Ferrand, Jacques. *Erotomania or a Treatise Discoursing of the Essence, Causes, Symptomes, Prognosticks, and Cure of Love, or Erotique Melancholy*. Trans. Edmund Chilmead. Oxford: L. Lichfield for Edward Forrest, 1640. EEBO. Web. 15 Feb. 2014.

Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. London: Tavistock, 1967. Print.

Hallett, Charles A, and Elaine S. Hallett. *The Revenger's Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1980. Print.

Jackson, William A. “A Short Guide to Humoral Medicine.” *Trends in Pharmacological Sciences* 9 Sept. 2001: 487-89. *ScienceDirect*. Web. 11 April 2014.

Jones, Ann Rosalind. “Heterosexuality: A Beast with Many Backs.” *A Cultural History of Sexuality in the Renaissance*. Ed. Bette Talvacchia. Oxford: Berg, 2011. 35-72. Print.

Jorden, Edward. *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*. London: Iohn Windet, 1603. EEBO. Web. 22 Feb. 2014.

Lederer, David. *Madness, Religion and the State in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.

Levin, Joanna. "Lady Macbeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria." *English Literary History* 69.1 (2002): 21-55. *JStor*. Web. 7 Nov. 2012.

Lipsedge, Maurice. "Religion and Madness in History." *Psychiatry and Religion: Context, Consensus and Controversies*. Ed. Dinesh Bhugra. London: Routledge, 2013. Print.

MacDonald, Michael. *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Print.

"Madness, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 21 Mar. 2014.

Neely, Carol Thomas. *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004. Print.

Neely, Carol Thomas. "'Documents in Madness': Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.3 (1991): 315-338. *JStor*. Web. 12 Nov. 2013

"Paddock, n.1." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2014.

"Philtre/philter, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 11 April 2014.

Salkeld, Duncan. *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. *Google Books*. Web. 17 Oct. 2013.

Scot, Reginald. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. London: Henry Denham for William Brome, 1584. *EEBO*. Web. 21 Feb. 2014.

Shakespeare, William. *The RSC Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Eds. Jonathan Bate, and Eric Rasmussen. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Ed. Stanley Wells. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Twelfth Night*. Ed. Cedric Watts. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2001. Print.

“spirit, n.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 13 Mar. 2014.

Stelmack, Robert M., and Anastasios Stalikas. “Galen and the Humour Theory of Temperament.” *Personality and Individual Differences* 12.3 (1991): 255-63. *ScienceDirect*. Web. 11 Nov. 2014.

Thiher, Allen. *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999. Print.

Williams, Edith Whitehurst. “In Defense of Lady Macbeth.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* Spring 1973: 221-223. *JStor*. Web. 18 Mar. 2013.

