

**KLEIN AND FREUD ON THE
MELANCHOLY OR DEPRESSION OF
HAMLET OF SHAKESPEARE:**

**PATHOGRAPHY:
A CASE OF HAMLET DELUSIONAL
PSYCHOSIS**

BY

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GAMAHUCHER PRESS, WEST GEELONG, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

2005

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HOW SHAKESPEARE MAKES SENSE OF THE DEPRESSION/MELANCHOLIA EXPRESSED BY HAMLET ACCORDING TO KLEIN AND FREUD

This essay will argue that Shakespeare makes sense of the depression/melancholia, as expressed by Hamlet, by giving Hamlet certain symptoms which are manifestations of depression/melancholia. Now this essay will not try and outline how the symptoms of depression/melancholia fit into how Shakespeare's culture, or times regarded depression/melancholia but instead show how certain views about depression/melancholia of Freud and Klein give sense, or meaning to Hamlet's depression/melancholia. I will show that some aspects of Freud's characterization of depression/melancholia give sense to Hamlet's depression/melancholia, as outlined by Shakespeare, and in other cases the symptoms of depression/melancholia of Klein give a different sense or meaning such as reparation and pinning. In other words it will be shown that Klein outlines symptoms which Freud does not and by combining both Freud's and Klein's characterizations we get a better understanding of how Shakespeare makes sense of Hamlet's depression/melancholia. It will be shown that in terms of Freud and Klein Hamlet's depression/melancholia is caused by his loss of an object namely his father. This loss Shakespeare himself notes could be the cause of Hamlet's depression/melancholia. Freud and Klein both note that self-deprecation is a symptom of depression/melancholia. Shakespeare uses this self-deprecation to give sense to Hamlet's depression/melancholia. Sorrow and idealization are ways Shakespeare similarly gives sense to Hamlet's depression/melancholia

A fertile field for research into how Shakespeare gives sense to Hamlet's melancholy is to what degree Shakespeare is for, or against, English Renaissance ideas about the relationship between witchcraft and melancholy and the Italian ideas about genius and melancholy.¹ One wonders how Shakespeare's audience regarded the cause of Hamlet's melancholy or depression. Was Shakespeare characterizing Hamlet's melancholy in quite novel and revolutionary ways which were contrary to his audience's ideas, or was he just reinforcing his audience's already preconceived ideas. If Shakespeare was introducing new and revolutionary ideas about the cause of Hamlet's melancholy [i.e. Italian] then his audience may not have understood this and had a completely different understanding to what our age and perhaps Shakespeare understood it. Nevertheless it should be noted that in Shakespeare's time there was a lot of confusion about just what constituted melancholia. In the classic 1632 work of the period, "*The Anatomy of Melancholy*", "Burton himself complains of the confusions and contradictions in the 'literature of the subject' ..."² Burton himself gives a definition of melancholy as " ... a kind of dotage without a fever, having for his ordinary companions, feare, and sadness, without any apparent occasion."³ In the nineteenth classic of Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy", Freud likewise notes the confusion of definitions and symptoms when he states :

" Melancholia, whose definition fluctuates even in descriptive psychiatry, takes on various clinical forms the grouping together of which into a single

¹ A. Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: Anatomy of Depression*, Chatto & Windus 2001, p.244.

² J. B Bamborough, 'Introduction', in R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.xxv1.

³ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.162.

unity does not seem to be established with certainty, and some of these forms suggest somatic rather than psychogenic affections.”⁴

Nevertheless Freud does outline the symptoms of melancholy when he notes:

“ The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings and culminates in delusional expectations of punishment.”⁵

On the other hand in our contemporary times the American Psychiatric Association's Statistical Manual of Mental Diseases {Fourth Edition} i.e. DSM-IV outlines a different set of symptoms for depression when they state:

“... that, for a clinical diagnosis of depression to be made, five or more of the following symptoms must be present over at least a two-week period: depressed mood most of the day; diminished interest or pleasure; significant gain or loss of weight; inability to sleep or sleeping too much; reduced control over bodily movements; fatigue; feeling of worthlessness or guilt; inability to think or concentrate; thoughts of death or suicide.”⁶

⁴ S, Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin Books, 1991, p.251.

⁵ *ibid.*, , p.252.

⁶ Introduction, *The Other Side of the World: Literature of Sadness- The Body-Mind in Crisis, Study Guide and Reader*, Prepared for the Unit by J. Clemens and A . McCulloch Deakin University, 2005, p.8

The result of all this disagreement in the symptoms of depression/melancholia leads to the situation, as Solomon points out, “... what we call illness is also really quite arbitrary; in the case of depression, it is also in perpetual flux.”⁷ With all this historical overview in regard to the variability in what constitutes depression/melancholia it is important to agree upon a framework to assess how Shakespeare makes sense of the depression/melancholia of Hamlet. The frameworks I will use are those of Freud and Klein

It is important to realize that both Freud and Klein offered a symptomology of depression as well as a metapsychology to explain the symptoms. For Freud the loss of an object be it a thing or idea/ideal resulted in the person identifying with the lost object and regressing to an earlier stage of development where the person attached himself with self-deprecations. As A. Batman & J. Holmes note Freud suggested:

“in ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ ... that loss was a central precipitant and precursor (vulnerability factor) in depression. The triggering current loss reawakens earlier childhood losses – either actual or symbolic – and through ‘identification with the lost object’ the sufferer attacks himself with reproaches that rightly belong to the loved one who has let him down.”⁸

In a similar vein Klein also saw depression as coming from loss of an object. Similarly she the person regressing to an earlier stage where the person blames himself for the loss of the object. As A. Batman & J. Holmes again point out for Klein the loss of the object :

⁷ A. Solomon, *The Noonday Demon: Anatomy of Depression*, Chatto & Windus 2001, p.231.

⁸ A. Batman & J. Holmes, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Brunner Routledge, 1999, p.238.

“ is compensated by the establishment of an internal world into which the lost external object is ‘reinstated ... in depression he is thrown back to the earlier failure to integrate good and bad into whole objects in the inner world. The depressive believes himself omnipotently to be responsible for loss, due to his inherent destructiveness, which has not been integrated with loving feelings.”⁹

Hamlet admits that he suffers from melancholy (Hamlet Act 111 sc 1). Nevertheless in Hamlet Shakespeare casts some doubt as to the cause of Hamlet's melancholy. In one place the King believes Hamlet's melancholy is due to more than his father's death and solicits Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find out the cause of Hamlet's melancholy (Hamlet Act 11 sc 11). Nevertheless the Queen believes the cause of the melancholy is the death of Hamlet's father and her over hasty marriage (Hamlet Act 11 sc 11). Now the King believing that Hamlet's melancholy is due to more than his father's death fits in with the confusion of causes for melancholy of his period. Burton notes a number of possible causes for melancholy ranging from diet, fear, envy, anger, pleasures education terrors etc. The Queen noting that Hamlet's melancholy is caused by his father's death fits in with contemporary ideas. In this regard Shakespeare, in giving his father's death as the cause of melancholy, gives sense to Hamlet's melancholy that can be understood by our historical period.

As we saw Freud notes that loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity are symptoms of melancholy. It is regard to these two symptoms that Shakespeare creates

⁹ibid., , p.238.

some problems for a Freudian account of melancholy because Shakespeare's characterization of Hamlet's melancholy cannot be made sense of by a Freudian account.

There is some non-clarity in Hamlet. Ophelia notes that Hamlet "hath, my lord, of late made many tender Of his affection to me" (Hamlet Act 1 sc11). It is not clear if these tender affection were made before or after Hamlet's father's death. Hamlet's father has died two months before the action of the play (Hamlet Act 1 Sc 11) and Hamlet in his fained, or real madness states to Ophelia that "I did love you once" (Hamlet Act 111 sc 1). but says his love for Ophelia (Hamlet Act V sc 1) was the reason for fighting Laertes. It is a bit improbable that Hamlet has not seen Ophelia for two months. This is backed up by Laertes who says to Ophelia that Hamlet "Perhaps he loves you now" (Hamlet Act 1 sc 11).. Similarly Hamlet states when Laertes shows his love for Ophelia Laertes "did put me into a towering passion" (Hamlet Act V sc 11). Hamlet states that he loved Ophelia (Hamlet Act V sc 1) as the reason for fighting Laertes. Hamlet being in love with Ophelia contradicts Freud's claim that a melancholic cannot love. Now even though Hamlet does state that he "have of late Lost all his mirth ... and the earth a sterile promontory." (Hamlet Act 11 sc 11) this contradicts Hamlet's passion and love for Ophelia. Similarly in Hamlet Act 111 sc11 Hamlet expresses contradictory drives when he expresses his sexual desire for Ophelia only to go on to show his disgust for sex – this ambivalence could be due to his real or fained madness a madness as we shall see under a Kleinian characterization can result from melancholy. Thus in this regard Shakespeare's

characterization of Hamlet's melancholy offers little sense for a contemporary audience brought up on Freudian psychoanalysis.

Now where Shakespeare offers sense to a contemporary audience is in his characterizations of Hamlet's painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, lowering of the self-regarding feelings utterances of self-reproache and self-revilings. In Hamlet Act1 Sc 11 Hamlet is dejected has been weeping and cannot convey the depths of his grief In Hamlet Act 1 Sc 11 he is plunged into despondency and rejects life by saying "How weary stale flat, and unprofitable seems to me all uses of the world ... things rank and gross in nature " At Hamlet Act 11 Sc 11 he dejectedly cries " I have of late ... lost all my mirth ... appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours ..." Hamlet longs for death in one part when he states "... that this to sullied flesh would melt (Hamlet Act 1 Sc 11) and declares death " ... a consummation devoutly to be wish'd" (Hamlet Act 11 Sc 1) Hamlet's self-deprecations is seen when he laments that he is a " rouge and peasant slave ... dull and muddy-mettled rascal." (Hamlet Act 11 Sc 22).

Here we see the classic Freudian symptoms of melancholy. In this regard Shakespeare give sense to Hamlets melancholy which could be understood by a contemporary audience. When it comes to Klein's account of the symptoms of depression the characterizations of Shakespeare seem to lend little support to a number of Kleinian symptoms. Klein argues that depression is characterized by pinning, mourning, guilt, reparation, possibly delusional thinking, omnipotence, denial and idealization.¹⁰

¹⁰ M. Klein, 'Mourning and it Relation to Manic-Depressive State's, in M. Klein *Love Guilt and Reparation*, Vintage, 1998, pp.344-370.

We have seen from the above that Hamlet does mourn and manifest sorrow for his father but he does not seem long to regain him thus only some aspects of Klein's pinning is met with in Hamlet's condition. Nevertheless Hamlet does idealize his father as seen in Hamlet Act 1 Sc 11 where he states "... my noble father person" and again "so excellent king ...". In Hamlet Act 11 Sc 11 Hamlet's guilt is clearly seen and is excessive when he states "How have I heard that guilty creatures ...". Now this guilt of Hamlet's leads him to perform reparation and makes sense of his urge to revenge his father's murder.

Klein argues that the person blaming himself for the loss of the object, due to his destructive impulses, leads the person to try and alleviate the guilt felt by this destructiveness by performing reparation to cancel out the guilt. In this regard Hamlet's revenge can be given sense by the Kleinian notion of reparation. In this regard Shakespeare can be seen as giving sense to Hamlet's melancholy to a contemporary audience. Now one of the contentious symptoms of Hamlet is his madness. Irrespective of whether this madness is faked a Kleinian account of depression can give sense to this madness.

In Hamlet Act 11 Sc 11 Polonius notes that Hamlet is mad when he says "into the madness wherein now he raves." This madness can be accounted for by Klein. Segal notes in a Kleinian account of depression "the ego is dogged by constant anxiety of the total loss of good internal situations, it is impoverished and weakened, its relation

to reality may be tenuous and there is a perpetual dread of and sometimes an actual threat of regression into psychosis.”¹¹

Thus in conclusion we see that Shakespeare makes sense of Hamlet's depression/melancholy by the symptoms of Hamlet that fit with a Freudian and Kleinian account of Melancholy. We saw that Hamlet's self-deprecations fit with a Freudian account. There was some confusion when it came to Hamlet's love/passion for Ophelia because this does not make sense in a Freudian account for love is not possible for a melancholic. Hamlet's sorrow and sadness makes sense in a Freudian and Kleinian account of melancholy. Hamlet's guilt, revenge and possible madness fits in with Klein's account of the reparation a melancholic indulges in and the regression into possible psychosis if integration is not achieved. Thus we saw how Shakespeare makes sense of Hamlet's melancholy through the Kleinian notions of pinning, mourning, guilt, reparation, possibly delusional thinking, omnipotence, denial and idealization. Whether these characterization of Hamlet's melancholy could have made sense for his audience is a moot point. What is certain though is that Hamlet's symptoms of melancholy would make sense to a contemporary audience weaned on Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis.

¹¹ H. Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, Karnac, 2003, pp.80-81.

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PATHOGRAPHY:

A CASE OF HAMLET DELUSIONAL PSYCHOSIS

This pathography will use the set text “*Cry of the Damaged Man*”¹² as my model. The text I will draw on for my rational will be the text I use as a model i.e. *Cry of the Damaged Man*. What struck me about this book was how Moore’s depression seemed to have some of its beginning in the collapse of his self-esteem. When he is first injured and his initial time in hospital Moore is at pains to let people know he is a doctor. These early episodes of the asserting of his status can be seen as him trying to maintain his self-image and thus self-esteem. Moore realizes the importance of self-image when he states “the case of undermining someone’s confidence depends partly on the starting point of their self-esteem.”¹³ At one point Moore admits he has a big ego when he states “I also admitted that a nuclear reactor was required to supply the energy need to sustain my ego.”¹⁴ In one place he admits he suffered from melancholy.¹⁵

These thoughts of Moore struck me as supporting Lacan’s claim in regard to the mirror stage i.e. the ego is built up upon an image.¹⁶ Lacan claims that the mirror stage is an attempt to alleviate the fragmentation of the body¹⁷. This pathography will explore how the loss of self-esteem through the loss of self-image reinstates fragmentation and depression. Moore himself notes that he began to fragment when

¹² T. Moore, *Cry of the Damaged Man*, Picador, 1995.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.47.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.58

¹⁶ D, Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, Brunner-Routledge, 1996, pp-114-116..

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.67.

he states that “ I was aware that in my state of internal disarray I was easier to bring down irrespective of whether my fragmentation had been caused by physical damage or emotional assault.”¹⁸

Freud and Klein both maintained that loss of an object precipitated depression.¹⁹ I will explore in this pathology how loss of self-image leads to depression. Moore suffers from despair, loss of pleasure, anger, sleeplessness, sorrow, grief, as well as loss of energy²⁰. Moore’s depression thus has some of the characteristics Freud outlined as the characteristics of depression , namely “... profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings and culminates in delusional expectations of punishment.”²¹ There is one interesting place in the book where Moore is turned on by a glimpse through a nurse’s uniform thighs thus undermining Freud’s claim for loss of libido.²² Now these experiences of Moore that I will explore in this pathogarchy as his self-image collapses. This collapse will take the form of a regression into psychosis or delusional thinking. As we saw above Freud notes that delusion can be a characteristic of depression and Klein herself maintains that depression can end in psychosis.²³

Moore notes in his book a big footballer who was with him in hospital.²⁴ This ruckman like wise suffered from depression. This pathogarchy will be his pathogarchy.

¹⁸ T. Moore , op.cit. p.38.

¹⁹ A. Batman & J. Holmes, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Brunner Routledge, 1999, p.238.

²⁰ T, Moore, op.cit, p.28, 29, 29, 33, 35, 88,

²¹ S, Freud, ‘Mourning and Melancholia, in *On Metapsychology*, Penguin Books, 1991, p.252.

²² T. Moore, op. cit, p.71.

²³ H. Segal, *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein*, Karnac, 2003, pp.80-81

²⁴ T. Moore, op.cit, pp.89-90.

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ACCIDENT

At the time of the accident I was a ruckman in one of the AFL clubs. I was not one of those meat head types. I was university educated with a MA in English literature. My thesis was on Shakespeare's Hamlet and I was planning to do a PhD on some other work of Shakespeare. My football career had made me a bit of a celebrity. Women flocked around me men praised me and young boys took me for a role model. All in all life was a hoot I was famous. and envied . Looking back I was a legend in my own mind. So when I found my self laying on the road with my 1100 XZ Yamaha wrapped around a pole and buckled up under it I did not know then that my life was going to take a nose dive. The first thing I recall is a person saying "wow this is K... the footballer ' .After that there is a haze. Next an ambulance officer was putting me on a stretcher and saying to me "don't worry mate you will be back playing soon the club needs you.' All I recall on the way to the hospital is that I could not feel my legs . As they wheeled me into the hospital nurses swarmed around me smiling blushing so much so that the doctor had to ask them to stand back.. The then rushed me into the operating theater.

THE WARD

As I cam out of anesthetic I saw my girlfriend Ophelia standing over me. She was such a spunk. When I saw her I felt a tingle in my groin and became a bit excited. I noticed other nurses standing around smiling their tight white uniforms contrasting with Ophelia's red top and black mini skirt.. I could not feel my legs and I saw tears in

Ophelia's eyes which I could not understand. .Nevertheless the smiling nurses and Ophelia's attention made me feel good. I even signed some autographs for the nurses. I recall with the note " from studly K.. the leagues best ruckman". I was in bed for a week then it happened my life was shattered turned up side down. Two nurses came with a wheel chair and gently placed me in it. I was constipated and they where taking me to the toilet. As we where approaching the toilet we passed a large window partition in it I saw my reflection. It mirrored back to me my image. What I saw was that I was legless. My body was fragmented uncoordinated from the trunk down there was a void and emptiness an abyss of nothing. My mind reeled I was cut adrift nothing to hang onto . Me the leagues best ruckman women's phantasy beef cake was no more My self shattered in the instance I saw the image. My I obliterated to be or not to be that was the question and my I ceased to be. I was dissolving breaking apart into fragmented pieces which I could not integrate

As time went on in that ward I feel into a stupor. I lacked energy. I did not sleep very well. I looked into space for hours. Nothing interested me I was flat lifeless brooding . I had lost all my mirth forgone all custom of exercise the earth seemed to me a sterile promontory. I though time and time again what a piece of work is man a paragon of animals yet I was but a quintessence of dust I delights me not I thought over and over again week out week in in that ward.

Ophelia came often. At one point she said we can still marry to which I replied get you to a nunnery why should you be a breeder of sinners. What frail creatures are women After that I felt I was nothing but a rouge a peasant a muddly-mettled rascal. I loathed my self I felt a worthless slug. At one time a nurse walked past a light and I saw her

white lacy panties clutching her arse. I felt nothing, no urges, no feelings only disgust at what I had become. From such a noble person to a now low vile mass O, I thought that this too too solid flesh would melt thaw and resolve itself into dew.

One day my old school friend Rosencrantz came to visit it me. But I was not fooled. The club had sent him to find out why I had changed They could no understand my moods and behavior . To put them on the wrong path I fained madness. I spoke to Rosencrantz with ambivalent words, strange actions He went away convinced I was mad, little did he know that was putting it on for my eventual revenge against the club that had made me into a false image.

Every time I saw my reflection my self-image I felt disorientated. Like a broken glass shattered on the floor my Self could not gain any order. Days nights nothing but one long brooding on my vileness on that club that had created me in their image. I new what Quasimodo felt to look at his image and feel disgust, loathing and revoltion. I remember a Nurse told me that the chap who had been next to me in bed was Tony Moore. Alas I said “poor Tony I knew him well” The dejected haviour of my visage together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief that did denote me truly.

As time dragged on suicide did cross my mind. To end this pestilential life. I thought whether ‘tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of courageous fortune or to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing ends them to die: to sleep ; no more and but a sleep to say we end. These thoughts crossed my mind to such a degree that I was transferred to a psych ward. Ah my success to have fooled them all

Rosencrantz, Ophelia the doctors my greatest success so far to feign madness so that I can reek my revenge.

THE PYSCH WARD

The doctors asked me whether I suffered from sleeplessness, anger, self deprecations. I did suffer all these things but I fooled them by saying no. They asked about my sexuality . Did I love Ophelia. I said I desired her and loved her heaps but little did they know I hated her and her body left me cold like a dead fish.. My moods switched and changed. My self felt cut up and strewn around I could not draw the bits together . I knew there was something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it. I wondered what had becomes of that spunky ruckman that footballer that saved the team week after week. Where had he gone? What had happened to him. Were these drugs hiding him? Perhaps he had been projected into Tony? Perhaps my self was hiding in Tony. What was that fragmented thing that was in my mind? How did it get there? Some process of absorption I thought. Or perhaps it was Tony hiding in me through some projection he may have performed. If only I could find out why I was so dejected sad and in sorrow. If only I could rebuild those broken parts of my self and form this fragmented thing back into a solid hunk of flesh. To laugh to sing to smile rather than this deadening mirthless waste land of hollowness and abandonment

The doctors filled me with anti depressants and anti psychotics, Boy had I fooled them. I knew they where talking to Rosencrantz, my club and Ophelia. But I bided my time. Revenge was going to be sweet. I would teach them for stealing my self. For stealing my self and putting its image up on a billboard advertising the club. I know what you think. I know what you believe. You believe it is only my brain. I know you don't think there is a think called the mind. You think that by filling my brain with drugs you will

cure me. But you are wrong. I know you fools. You think there is only brain neurons beta-blockers serotonin levels. But there are more things under heaven and earth than in your psychiatry Doc.

ISBN 1876347465