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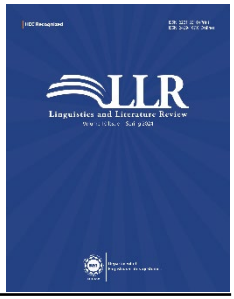

Title:	**Historicising the Anatomy of the Ghost's Passions and its Religious Identity in *Hamlet***
Author (s):	Naseer Ahmed
Affiliation (s):	Kingston University, London, UK
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Historicising the Anatomy of the Ghost's Passions and its Religious Identity in *Hamlet*

Naseer Ahmed*

Kingston University, London, United Kingdom

Abstract

In the early modern period, the appearance of ghosts carried both religious and pathological connotations in the wake of the twin movements of the Reformation and the Renaissance. According to this belief system, the supernatural was seen as a factor in creating an imbalance in bodily humours, including the black bile, thus resulting in a melancholic disposition. Based on contextual and historical data, this article historicises the religious and pathological identity of the Ghost in *Hamlet,* which reflects the early modern understanding of the supernatural. This study is separate from existing discussions that focus solely on the role of the Ghost in the play. However, the very nature of the Ghost, a great driving force behind the plot thrust, as understood by Shakespeare and his society, has been fairly neglected. This study, therefore, situates three distinctive aspects of the Ghost in early modern society, warranting attention in Shakespearean criticism. Firstly, the findings of this study underscore the nuanced religious persona of the ghost, encompassing both Protestant and Catholic perspectives, as understood in the early modern period. Secondly, its pathological and melancholic nature is discussed which finds its origins in the theory of humours. This aspect of the Ghost is strongly linked to creating an imbalance in Hamlet's melancholic humour and driving events to their tragic end in the play. Thirdly, it examines Shakespeare's exploration of the mind-body discourse through the Ghost's interactions with the Prince, reflecting the intellectual currents of the seventeenth century. Moreover, as the Ghost belongs to the past, this fact connects the appearance of the Ghost with the idea of the history of the passions—a still-burgeoning field of study in the humanities.

***Keywords*:** historicising, history of the passions, humours, melancholy ghosts, passions, Shakespeare

*Corresponding Author: naseeer.ahmed@googlemail.com

Introduction

This article historicises the religious identity of the Ghost and the pathological nature of its passions in *Hamlet*, diverting attention from its conventional role in the play. When occasional instances are mentioned in which the Ghost plays a role to move the events of the play, it is to reflect that Shakespeare enacts the early modern religious and pathological perceptions of the supernatural through this character. In other words, the role of the Ghost in *Hamlet* is linked to its nuanced identity—a neglected aspect of the Ghost's elusive character in the scholarly discussions is highlighted in this study. Although the perceptions attached to the religious and pathological manifestations of the supernatural in early modern society apparently seem distant, they are interconnected and at times difficult to demarcate as portrayed by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* in the character of the Ghost. Moreover, Shakespeare's portrayal of the Ghost as melancholic, a concept explored later in this study, marks a pioneering effort in dramatic literature. Therefore, it would be critical to situate the prevalent religious and pathological concepts in their early modern context with which Shakespeare shapes the identity of the Ghost, which is the premise of this study.

To historicise these concepts, this study is based on early modern sources, particularly the seminal works of Timothie Bright (*A Treatise of Melancholie*, 1586) and Robert Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621). Written by a clergyman and physician in the age of the Reformation, *Treatise* by Bright was a foundational work, and the most acclaimed authority on the subject of melancholy which became the source of inspiration for later writers, including Burton. Bright's work predominantly carries religious connotations of the subject. On the other hand, "Burton ransacked about 1500 classical texts" to compile his *Anatomy* (Berrios, 2016, p. 428). The encyclopaedic nature of Burton work is inclusive of the existing scholarship—abundantly available in the Renaissance literature—on the subject from a predominantly pathological perspective, originating from the Classical Antiquity.

Manifestation of Ghosts and Early Modern Attitudes

With regards to the manifestation of ghosts, pervasive early modern views can be broadly bifurcated into religious and pathological. Religious versions in this connection can further be divided into Catholic and Protestant

beliefs, whereas the basis for the pathological version about the manifestation of ghosts originates mainly from the humoral theory—accredited to Hippocrates, "the father of medicine" and then later to Galen—popular in early modern society (Smith, 2024). In this way, the pathological version links to Classical Antiquity. Shakespeare's allusion to this bifurcation finds its manifestation in *Julius Caesar* when Brutus questions Caesar's ghost whether it is "some god, some angel, or some devil" (Shakespeare, 2017b, 2.325).[1] Brutus's reference to "some god" may allude to the classical version of the ghost; "some angle" could be equated with the Catholic version and "some devil" could be the Protestant version regarding the appearance of ghosts, which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. However, the play also provides some empirical evidence which testifies that Shakespeare, at times, blends all three versions in the creation of the Ghost that not only provides a peculiar elusiveness to its true identity, open to a variety of interpretations, but it also reflects early modern pervasive attitudes towards the supernatural in general.

Religious Perspectives

According to the Catholic version, as noted by Lewes Lauaterus in his seminal work *Of Ghosts and Spirites Walking by Night* (1572),

> the Papists in former times haue publikely both taught & written, that those spirits which men somtime sée and hear, be either good or bad angels, or els the soules of those which either liue in euerlasting blisse [heaven], or in Purgatorie [purgatory], or in the place of damned persons [hell]. (Lauaterus, 1572, p. 102)[2]

Reginald Scot in *Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft* (1651) reiterates Lauaterus's ideas and states that when ghosts "walketh on the earth" they come "out of heaven, hell, or purgatory" (Scot, 1651, p. 372). Scot's viewpoint about the appearance of ghosts could have been inspired by Lauaterus's work as well as it was an axiomatic knowledge shared by early modern people. However, most Catholics believed that ghosts from purgatory, not hell, come back "bewailing their torments in purgatory"

[1] All citations are from William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. by Gary Taylor and others, modern critical edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) unless otherwise stated.

[2] All spellings from early modern sources have been kept as they appear in original works.

(Scot, 1651, p. 193), and Catholics used "the walking of these souls" on the earth as "a most excellent argument for the proof of purgatory" (Scot, 1651, p. 383). The allusion that the Ghost in *Hamlet* comes from purgatory is a thoroughly Catholic idea as Scot, who wrote against the presence of ghosts and witches in his famous work *The Discouerie of Witchcraft* (1584,1651), mentions that some people think "soules and spirits may come out of heaven or hell, and assume bodies, beleeving many absurd tales told by the schoolemen and Romish doctors to that effect" (Scot, 1651, p. 532) and terrifying stories of "mothers maids" (Scot, 1584, p. 113), referring to oral traditions. These ideas resonate in *The Winter's Tale*: "I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o'th' dead may walk again" (Shakespeare, 2017c, 3.15-16). Despite the advent of Protestantism, Shakespeare's society was very much under the influence of the Old Religion, Catholicism, and Shakespeare not only seems to be fully aware of Lauaterus's and contemporary authors' ideas regarding the supernatural, but he was also aware of the oral traditions of his time which is reflected in the presentation of the Ghost in *Hamlet* particularly.

Protestants, on the other hand, believed that ghosts could not come back, it was the devil that adopted shapes. Such claims were influenced by many seminal works of the day. For example, James I, in his famous *Daemonologie* (1597), writes that "the soule once parting from the bodie, cannot wander anie longer in the worlde", but the devil may "rauishe [people's] thoughtes, and dull their sences" to "represente such formes of persones […] as he pleases to illude them with" in order to make its victims believe that the ghost of the deceased has come back, which according to James is nothing but "the Deuils craft" (James, 1597, p. 41). William Perkins also endorses the Protestant narrative that visiting of ghosts is "indeede the opinion of the Church of Rome, and of many ignorant persons among vs" (Perkins, 1608, p. 115).

When Hamlet calls the Ghost a devil, he "demonstrates a proper awareness of Protestant theology" (Belsey, 2010, p. 13). Moreover, the idea that the Ghost may be an instrument of evil to bring doom on humans and a fear of an early death also results in Hamlet's melancholy, about which the Prince is fully aware:

HAMLET The spirit that I have seen
May be the de'il, and the de'il hath power
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,

> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me. (Shakespeare, 2017a, 7.494–99)

Hamlet demonstrates acute uncertainty concerning the categorisation of different manifestations of the Ghost and is unsure whether it is "a spirit of health or goblin damned" or it brings with it "airs from heaven or blasts from hell" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.40–42). This ambiguity regarding the true nature of the Ghost and its intentions intensify the sense of his own vulnerability, for "the Deuil" could "intyse [him] to his seruice" because of his "desperat desire of reuenge" initiating a "great miserie" (James, 1597, p. 32) or melancholic disposition, because melancholy was known to be a great "miserie" or the "Anguish of the Mind" (Burton, 1621, p. 46) in the early modern period. For Shakespeare and his society, ghosts were "*vncleane spirits settled*" in the "*bodies* […] *mixt with* […] *melancholy humours*" and "*sport themselues*" (Burton, 1621, p. 69). Hamlet understands that if his father's ghost is a devil then he, being a melancholic, may prove to be an ideal victim of the devil who "prepares the way by feeding them [his victims] craftely in their humour, and filling them further and further with despaire" (James, 1597, p. 32) which Burton terms as the manipulation of the "Phantasie" of a melancholic "by mediation of humours" (Burton, 1621, p. 68). Hamlet's dilemma is that he considers himself a potential victim of the devil, or the Ghost, and this will bound him "to follow his advise; and do such thinges as he wil require" of him (James, 1597, p .33) because of his melancholy and these intense thoughts of regicide further "vitiate the humours" (Bradwell, 1636, p. 34) of the Prince, deteriorating his melancholic disposition. According to James's *Daemonologie*, the devil's lethal "snares" with which it "allures persones" to become its victims are "curiositie in great ingines" and the "thrist of revenge" (James, 1597, p. 8). Events in the play later prove that Hamlet falls to these traps and kills Claudius who is repeatedly branded as an "adulterate beast" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 5.41) by the Ghost in order to keep the fire of revenge alive in Hamlet.

In Hamlet's speech above, there is another very interesting and subtle point that needs underscoring. When the Prince says, "and the de'il hath power / T' assume a pleasing shape", Shakespeare refers to a popular understanding connected with the appearance of ghosts, that finds its origin not only in the oral traditions of the time but also in seminal works widely

available. It was believed that the devil mostly appears in the form of its victims' loved ones because "he [devil] appeares as he pleases" (James, 1597, p. 52) and promises its victims that "they may meete again" (James, 1597, p. 33) which effectively traps them in devilish snares. Hamlet's successive meetings with his beloved father's Ghost, dressed in his royal armour, validates his fears about the ghost. Strangely enough, the manner in which the Ghost appears and the way it is attired, seems to have its origins in Lauaterus's famous treatise *Of Ghostes*; and Shakespeare seems to be quite familiar with the work, for he almost portrays the Ghost as is mentioned by Lauaterus. Narrating an account from the "Courte of *Mattheus,* surnamed the great Shyrife of […] Citie", Lauaterus writes that "in the Euening after sunne sette, there was séene a man farre excéeding common stature, sitting on a horse in complete armour" (Lauaterus, 1572, p. 69). Shakespeare portrays Hamlet a representative of the understanding of early modern perceptions concerning the appearance of ghosts, found both in oral and literary traditions. Therefore, when Hamlet claims that "the de'il hath power / T' assume a pleasing shape", Shakespeare reminds the reader of the prevalent early modern Protestant attitudes towards the appearance of ghosts.

As has been argued above, Hamlet is not alone in considering the ghost a devil. It was a widely held Protestant notion and Shakespeare represents that through other characters too. Horatio also confides to Hamlet that the Ghost "harrows me with fear and wonder" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 1.42) and it "might deprive your sovereignty of reason, / And draw you into madness?" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.74–75). Although early modern people believed in the possibility of ghosts as being devils, but according to Burton, they were not sure "how farre their [devils'] power doth extend, it is hard to detemine, we finde by experience, that they can hurt not our fields only, cattell, goods, but our bodies and minds" (Burton, 1621, p. 68). Horatio's later remarks "he [devil] waxes desperate with imagination" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.90) imply that if the Ghost is a devil than it might assume a shape of a horrible beast or a demon and temper with Hamlet's imagination, thus driving him into madness—a reference to the extreme form of melancholy. Hamlet also acknowledges that he is more prone to damnation because of his melancholy which is the "ordinary engine by which he [devil] produceth this effect" (Burton, 1621, p. 773) and this worries him. Both Hamlet and Horatio, being scholars, represent contemporary scholars' attitudes towards ghosts, particularly those deriving from Protestant doctrines. However,

these concepts were popular in every section of the society. Marcellus, who represents the lower class, also warns Hamlet of not responding to the Ghost's beckoning by saying "You shall not go, my lord" (Shakespeare, 2017a: 4.81), and later he says, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (Shakespeare, 2017a: 4.93). Earlier in the play, Hamlet expresses his doubts about the rotten business when he says, "all is not well. / I doubt some foul play" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 2.256–57). Marcellus's and Hamlet's remarks resonate Lauaterus who noted that "spirits do often appeare, & many straunge and maruellous things do sundry times chaunce" (Lauaterus, 1572, p. 54). In Shakespeare's society, the appearance of ghosts was considered to be an ominous sign and, according to early modern belief, they would mostly appear before significant crisis in society or when mortal sins were committed against God. In such cases, "God doth suffer Spirites to appeare vnto his electe vnto a good ende, but vnto the reprobate they appeare as a punishemente" (Lauaterus, 1572, p. 175). Both characters' remarks also foreshadow that the appearance of the Ghost might be a kind of 'punishemente'. During the course of the play, this becomes clear that elder Hamlet has been murdered by Claudius—a mortal sing against God, and Hamlet predicts the approaching godly punishment when he says that "Foul deeds will rise, / Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 2.258–59). Furthermore, the Ghost tells Hamlet of its purgatorial sufferings, which is Catholic in nature but strangely enough, as noted by Catherine Belsey, it "does not request prayers for his soul: instead, he wants revenge, a demand for gratification scarcely likely to increase his chances of salvation" (Belsey, 2010, p. 11), which furthers Hamlet's doubts about the Ghost being a devil and its appearance as a punishment from God for regicide. In this way, Shakespeare combines prevalent attitudes to create the Ghost, which is "a compound of the Senecan revenge ghost" and "the Catholic purgatorial spirit" (Siegel, 1963, p. 148).

In the closet scene, when Hamlet turns out to be furious enough to kill Polonius, accuses his mother of incest, the Ghost appears again but this time it is only visible to Hamlet. Gertrude, who is already shocked to see Hamlet's "distemper" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.120), is further perplexed and asks him "To whom do you speak this?" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.128). To this Hamlet replies:

HAMLET Do you see nothing?
QUEEN Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.

HAMLET Nor did you nothing hear?
QUEEN No, nothing but ourselves.
HAMLET Why, look you there. Look how it steals away— My father, in his habit, as he lived. Look where he goes even now out at the portal. (Shakespeare, 2017a, 11.128–133)

Some might argue that there is an instance of a dramatic inconsistency in this part of the play because the Ghost is not visible to Gertrude in the closet scene, which is clear from her speech. However, Shakespeare was not unaware of the different religious beliefs concerning the appearance of ghosts in his society that were readily available to people through didactic and religious treatises. For example, Lauaterus, in his famous *Of Ghostes and Spirites*, argues that it is not necessary that everyone sees a ghost when it appears:

"And moreouer it commeth often times to passe, that some one-man doth heare or sée something most plainly, when another which standeth by him, or walketh wyth him, neyther séeth, nor heareth any such matter" (Lauaterus, 1572, p.89).

This makes it clear that ghosts, according to early modern understanding, could choose to be visible to only those whom they wanted to interact with. The closet scene seems to be an enactment of Lauaterus's observation and reflects Shakespeare's close reading of *Of Ghostes*.

The above discussion does not intend to prove that the Ghost is a devil as per Protestant beliefs or it has come from the purgatory as per Catholic beliefs. It draws on the idea that if, by any chance, it is a devil, as Hamlet anticipates, then he would be eternally condemned, a religious ideology shared by both Catholic and Protestants. The fear of damnation in the hereafter was driven into people's mind through Protestant and Catholic "rigid" and "thundering ministers" (Burton, 1621, p. 775) and kept them under constant apprehension. Shakespeare provides an insight into this fear of damnation, taught to early modern people, in the Ghost's speech thus:

GHOST But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,

> And each particular hair to stand on end,
> Like quills upon the fearful porcupine.
> But this eternal blazon must not be
> To ears of flesh and blood. (Shakespeare, 2017a, 5.14–22)

Although the Ghost does not actually relate the true nature of its punishments in the "prison house", the imagery that it uses is very suggestive and creates a horrible picture of purgatory. In this way, the Ghost represents those Catholic and Protestant preachers who frightened people of dreadful consequences in the hereafter in case they did not lead a pious life. As outlined in early modern religious doctrines, devils were considered to be one of those many reasons which could cause eternal damnation. Hamlet, who represents the mental trauma of early modern people's fear of perdition, foresees that if the Ghost is evil or a devil, then "the devil hath the power" to "abuse me to damn me". Hamlet's "dread of something after death" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 8.79) because of a possible damnation by a devilish ghost has been repeated multiple times by the Prince, particularly in his famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, and is also reflected in his invocation "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 4.42). In a highly charged early modern religious environment, the concept of damnation in the hereafter was used to "tyrannise ouer mens consciences" (Burton, 1621, p. 725), as the Ghost tries to tyrannise Hamlet with the description of its purgatorial sufferings; and it was also a continuous source of fear, causing melancholy. Hamlet, in this sense, is a true reflection of the melancholic disposition of society, a mirror to his age.

Although the premise of this study is the identity of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, a passing reference to the supernatural elements in *Macbeth*, serves to reinforce the idea that ghosts and the supernatural in Shakespeare's time were imbued with religious connotations. Therefore, as in *Hamlet*, the idea of the supernatural as evil and fear of damnation because of them also finds a strong echo in *Macbeth*. Both Macbeth and Banquo are doubtful of the witches' good intentions and share the same dilemma as Hamlet. For Macbeth, the "supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good" (*Macbeth*, 2017, I.3.126–27) and for Banquo, these are "The instruments of darkness" (*Macbeth*, 2017, I.3.119), and he calls these witches "devil" (*Macbeth*, 2017, I.3.102). At the end of the play, Macbeth clearly sees the devilish trap in which he is trapped by the apparently well-wisher witches. That is why he declares that "these juggling fiends no more believed"

(*Macbeth*, 2017, V.10.20). In this way, Shakespeare's portrayal of the supernatural as an evil force in *Macbeth*, like in *Hamlet*, also presents a close symbiosis between his drama and the prevalent early modern understanding of the supernatural.

Pathological Perspective

From a pathological perspective, early modern physicians and anatomists, believed that ghosts could influence human passions and create an imbalance in the black bile, either by instilling violent passions or fear of damnation in them, thus causing melancholy. That is why, when Burton lists various causes of melancholy in his *Anatomy*, he includes "witches" and "the Divell and his ministers" (Burton, 1621, pp. 73, 71) as strong candidates that cause melancholy in humans. This finds its representation in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. If put in its historical context, "there are indications that early audiences saw *Hamlet* as a ghost story" (Belsey, 2010, p. 2), then the role of the Ghost from the perspective of passions and in causing Hamlet's melancholy by giving him constant thinking and bringing about pathological change in the young Prince's humoral balance, has been fairly neglected. Whether the Ghost has any "physiological stimuli for its passions, mechanical or otherwise" is not pertinent, but "clearly the ghost has a healthy appetite for vengeance" (Slater, 2016, p. 606), causing Hamlet's doom. Thomas Wright, in his highly acclaimed work, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* states that "the desier of revenge may be revived, quickned and increased by the exaggeration of the iniury received" (Wright, 1604, p. 278), and it is imperative to acknowledge that the Ghost infuses excessively violent passions of revenge in Hamlet's mind with its multiple appearances and reminders of the "iniury received" by calling Claudius an "incestuous" and "adulterate beast" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 5.41) and commanding him assertively to "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (Shakespeare, 2017a: 5.25). Moreover, the Ghost tries to manipulate Hamlet psychologically by imposing the duty of regicide on the young prince. When the Ghost asks Hamlet to listen to his command carefully, Hamlet responds by saying that he is "bound to hear" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 5.7). Upon this, the Ghost cleverly binds Hamlet by saying "So art thou [bound] to revenge, when thou shalt hear" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 5.7). These reminders and a sense of newly assigned duty of killing King Claudius do not allow Hamlet to part with negative passions as well as the sense of the Ghost's formidable presence. These psychological

perturbations then deteriorate Hamlet's humoral balance, making him furious at the discovery of his father's murder by Claudius in the first place and then his "*Anger* [...] which carries the spirits outwards [...] prepares the body to melancholy" (Burton, 1621, p. 141). Hamlet then proceeds from anger to vengeance, hatred, melancholy, misanthropy, and revenge.

Much emphasis on the widely held criticism that the tragedy of *Hamlet* is driven by the young prince's inaction has surely eclipsed the negative role of the Ghost from the perspective of passions and the extent to which it shares the responsibility of Hamlet's tragedy. As aforesaid, the Ghost is full of revenge, a violent passion that causes, according to the humoral theory, the vital spirits to dry up and result in melancholy. It must be acknowledged that revenge is a compounded passion which constitutes, in Bright's words, "anger", "vehement & continuall" (Bright, 1586, p. 245) contemplation and "intent thinking" (Babb, 1951, p. 24) that "diminisheth the spirits", cause an imbalance in bodily humours and thus "produceth Melancholy" (Burton, 1621, pp. 168, 141). Multiple appearances of the Ghost reflect the idea that its "intent thinking" (Babb, 1951, p. 24), which Burton calls, "intent cares and meditations" (Burton, 1621, p. 273) and Shakespeare terms it as "the pale cast of thought" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 8.86), is only focused on revenge—a passion that dries up bodily spirits and causes melancholy. In this way, Shakespeare applies the principles of the humoral theory to the Ghost and treats the supernatural in a distinctive way by portraying the Ghost as a melancholic too that has "a countenance more in sorrow" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 3.230), as described by Horatio in one of the early encounters with it. Consequently, the melancholic Ghost of the father infects the son with melancholy, converting Hamlet's humour into "cool and sluggish" (Wood, 2002, p. 186), thus causing inaction and delay in order to allow the monstrosity of revenge to ferment to monstrous limits. Had the Ghost not urged "his son to commit high treason, even against a murderer" or regicide, Hamlet's melancholy might not have transformed from "naturall" to "vnnaturalle" (Elyot, 1539, p. 9), but "when the English ghosts are incorporated into the action of the play, they incite the living to acts of violence" (Belsey, 2010, pp. 6, 17) as is seen from the contribution of the Ghost to incite the violent events of *Hamlet*. In this way, the tragedy of Hamlet, due to his melancholic disposition, originates from the continuous incitement of his father's melancholic ghost that moves the prince's passions and leads him to his doom.

> But his meeting with the Ghost changes the terms of the protagonist's situation in more ways than one. The specter brings Hamlet face to face with death itself. Moreover, in calling for revenge, the Ghost demands that Hamlet incur the possibility of his own extinction sooner rather than later. (Belsey, 2010, p. 13)

Belsey's observation underpins the fact that the ghost, in true sense, is not Hamlet's friend but his enemy. It is an evil force that is bent on destroying him, rather than saving him from eternal damnation. This worries Hamlet so much that he becomes a melancholic and lacks courage to take action and, hence, his cause remains "unpregnant" (Shakespeare, 2017a, 7.464) for a very long time.

In terms of passions, Shakespeare's portrayal of the supernatural as a source of melancholy and as an instrument of evil in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is compellingly identical and also reflects the prevailing concepts in this regard. Although the focus of this study is the Ghost in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*'s reference is merely to prove that the portrayal of the early modern concepts relevant to the Ghost in *Hamlet* is not an isolated example. These concepts had achieved an axiomatic status in Shakespeare's society. Reference to *Macbeth* only endorses the validity of the current discussion regarding the Ghost's identity. Like the Ghost in *Hamlet*, the witches infuse the violent passions of ambition and jealousy in Macbeth's mind that vitiate his bodily humours, resulting in his melancholic frame of mind. Macbeth's melancholy, then, is transferred to Lady Macbeth as well. In this way, the witches also have significance from the perspective of passions like the Ghost.

Shakespeare does not portray the Ghost as passionless and ignorant of the anatomy of passions. At different points in the play, the Ghost demonstrates that it experiences passions of anger, revenge and repentance, which qualifies it to the status of a melancholic ghost because these passions are strong enough to cause humoral disturbance, as argued above. Moreover, the Ghost understands the anatomy of others' passions to manipulate them. For example, when Hamlet expresses his desire to take a swift revenge on the murderer of his father, the Ghost seems satisfied by his initial response, however, it does not want Hamlet to forget his responsibility of taking revenge. Therefore, the Ghost operates psychologically and challenges Hamlet that "duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed / That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf, / Wouldst thou not

stir in this" (*Hamlet*, 2016, 5.32–34). In this speech, the Ghost indirectly reminds Hamlet of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in the classical underworld, and spurs Hamlet's revenge by comparing him to the fat weed growing on the wharf if he forgets his newly assigned duty of killing his uncle. Moreover, the Ghost also makes sure that Hamlet does not procrastinate and keeps stressing the idea of revenge in its multiple appearances. The ghost once again demonstrates its understanding of the human passions when it forbids Hamlet not to hurt the Queen, his mother, and "Leave her to heaven, / And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge / To prick and sting her" (*Hamlet*, 2016, 5.85–87). This speech portrays two sides of the passionate Ghost: first, its strong love for the Queen, and second, its understanding of the anatomy of repentance. The Ghost understands that a sinner may start to repent once the initial flavour of the sin is subsided. In the closet scene, after Hamlet makes the Queen realise that she has been in an incestuous relationship, she starts feeling the compunctions of her conscience and requests Hamlet to stop as he "hath cleft my heart in twain" (*Hamlet*, 2016, 11.153). The Ghost believes that the realisation of the sin and repentance would be enough punishment for her, however, it wants Claudius to be killed for committing regicide and incest.

The meetings between Hamlet and the Ghost ("The spirit that I have seen", Shakespeare, 2017a, 7.494) and Macbeth and the witches ("Into the air; and what seemed corporal melted", *Macbeth*, 2017, I.3.76) operate between incorporeal and corporeal worlds or dimensions. These interactions suggest Shakespeare's treatment and awareness of the popular early modern concept of mind-body union, an important aspect of the humoral theory, in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth.* Although Descartes and Louis de La Forge explored this relationship between the mind and the body in greater depths in the seventeenth century, the debate had already been started in Shakespeare's time. Jeremy Schmidt believes that melancholy is "a pattern of thought, mood and behavior" (Schmidt, 2007, p. 2) that "was determined not only by the condition of the body, but also by the state of the soul" (Swannack, 2008, p. 250). Therefore, the mind-body discussion prevalent in Shakespeare's society also find its way into his works.

Hamlet's father's ghost, an incorporeal entity which represents the passion of vengeance, interacts with Hamlet, the corporeal or physical entity, and moves the humours in his body, creating violent passions. This

also suggests that passions have history because ghosts, according to early modern belief, "belong to the past, to a history that should have closed with their death, and yet they reappear to trouble the present and change the future" (Belsey, 2010, p. 5). Consequently, from an early modern perspective, there are two conclusions that can be drawn from the portrayal of the Ghost and melancholic Hamlet. Firstly, the incorporeal Ghost's interaction with corporeal Hamlet suggests the idea of mind-body union; and secondly, the Ghost also belongs to the past and tries to change the future or the natural order of things through inciting revenge, suggesting that passions have history. Hamlet's current melancholic state, triggering the passion of revenge, and his future doom is infused by the Ghost.

Conclusion

To conclude, Shakespeare became the first playwright to portray a melancholic ghost in *Hamlet*, and this depiction is thoroughly situated in the Protestant and Catholic perceptions regarding the appearance of the supernatural in the age of the Reformation. Moreover, the depiction of Ghost also represents the prevalent pathological concepts pertaining to its manifestation, widely available to Shakespeare and his society in the wake of the Renaissance. As this study has underpinned, Shakespeare, occasionally, blends Catholic, Protestant and pathological elements in order to provide a theatrical elusiveness to the intelligibility of the identity of the Ghost.

Based on the pervasive concepts regarding the manifestations of the supernatural, Shakespeare, as this article has explored, provides the Ghost in *Hamlet* three distinctive features: firstly, it reflects the Catholic beliefs that ghosts could be either good or bad spirits that would come from heaven, hell or purgatory. It was also believed that ghosts appeared before significant crisis to warn people or as a punishment for any mortal sins committed against God. Secondly, contrary to Catholic beliefs, Protestants in early modern society believed that ghosts were nothing but the devil adopting different shapes to bring eternal damnation to humans. The religious ideology of eternal damnation was shared by Catholics and Protestants whether it was brought by spirits from hell or purgatory or by the devil adopting shapes; and the Ghost personifies this idea in *Hamlet*. Thirdly, Shakespeare depicts the Ghost as melancholic and driven by powerful passions. Not only this, but the Ghost is also fully aware of the anatomy of human passions and the ways to manipulate them to serve its

purpose—an aspect of the Ghost's character which has been underscored in this article. Furthermore, this article also highlights that Shakespeare's dramatic conceptions surrounding the identity of the Ghost are also indicative of the mind-body union discussion as he stages multiple meetings between the Ghost and Hamlet, incorporeal and corporeal entities respectively. Lastly, Shakespeare portrays the Ghost from the past that tries to change the future, which suggests that the passions have history. In this way, this article emphasises that the nuanced identity of the Ghost incorporates complex and subtle religious and pathological perspectives that offer intriguing avenues for further research and interpretation in Shakespearean studies.

Conflict of Interest

The author of the manuscript has no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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