TEXTUAL CRITIQUE THROUGH THE ARTIST’S EYE: JOHN AUSTEN’S ILLUSTRATED *HAMLET*

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Statement of Originality

I, Luisa Moore, confirm that this thesis in its entirety is my own original work.

…………………………………. 18/2/21

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Abstract

Textual Critique through the Artist's Eye: John Austen's Illustrated Hamlet explores the way in which the non-verbal, non-explicit mode of interpretation afforded by visual art allows a kind of free play to potentially subversive interpretations of characters' implied interiority in Shakespeare**.** It takes John Austen's highly aesthetic, art nouveau illustrated edition of *Hamlet,* dating to 1922, as a case study. Austen's images represent a distinctive contribution to critical debate surrounding the play, anticipating later critical and performative interpretations of the play.

Provocative and imaginative, his illustrations present a dark prince almost unprecedented in visual art — present in the text but invisible to many of his contemporaries and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forebears — a complicated and independent Ophelia, a diabolical Ghost, and host of disturbing, deeply symbolic, supernatural, feminine entities. Women are no longer relegated to the background in his *Hamlet*, as in so many onstage, visual artistic and filmic adaptations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; instead, they are granted a position centre-stage, with the Greek goddess Nemesis ("Vengeance") as their fierce, relentless champion.

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Introduction: Austen's "Epic Aside"

> Too often I find that students complain that they "can't think of a subject." A complaint which, when I think of the great works of literature, of the almost inexhaustible number of the scores of the great musicians, of the riches of the drama, nearly takes my breath; and when I am sufficiently recovered, I never fail to give them Tristram Shandy's advice: "Read, read my dear sir, read," and then try to translate your reading, into symbols, into abstractions, into design: into anything which will make a picture which expresses you.
>
> (John Austen 71)

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a prolific period for illustrations in editions of Shakespeare. A number of these were nuanced and psychological complex, as demonstrated by the illustrations of Henry C. Selous, John Gilbert and Joseph Kenny Meadows.[1] This thesis explores the ways in which visual art can go beyond simplified readings, engaging not only with the specifically literary and dramaturgical complexity of such intricate texts, but also with the popular and critical traditions that accreted around them. It takes John Archibald Austen's (1886–1948) highly Aestheticist, proto-Surrealist, art nouveau edition of *Hamlet* (1922), lavishly illustrated in a style that superficially recalls the work of Aubrey Beardsley,[2] as a case study, paying close attention to symbol, gesture, expression and overall artistic composition as they reflect Austen's close reading of the play as dramatic text and his unique and even transgressive interpretations of characters' implied interiority. The artist was described by his contemporaries as "one of England's foremost book illustrators, who is equally known in America, where first editions by him are eagerly sought" (*Thanet Advertiser*, 21 September 1937), as "a perfect master of engraving and

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[1] As can be seen in the useful database of such illustrations at the *Victorian Illustrated Shakespeare Archive* (https://shakespeareillustration.org/), collected by Michael John Goodman.

[2] Beardsley has remained in vogue, with a style that resembles that of many modern-day artists. It is strange that Austen's *Hamlet* illustrations, done in a Beardsley-esque style, have not proven equally durable. There are a series of competing factors which may account for this. Austen's small scale of production of *Hamlet*, and subsequent, slow emergence from Beardsley's influence, may have contributed. Austen's edition occupied only a small pocket in time. Beardsley's contrasting prominence in the aesthetic movement and prolific production of works in this particular style could have placed Austen's *Hamlet* at a further disadvantage.

drawing" (*Thanet Advertiser,* 18 March 1937), but by whatever twist of fate, his reputation did not long outlive him.

Enamoured with Beardsley's designs while living in London in 1922, Austen produced an illustrated edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.[3] Originally a carpenter from Kent, born there in 1886, Austen decided to take up finer tools, journeying to London in 1906 where he received artistic training. He took up life drawing, and more unusually, elegant fine-line illustration in a similar style to Aubrey Beardsley, his favourite artist (Steenson 34; D. Richardson 20). Not long after illustrating the play, he returned home and pared back his highly decorative, somewhat Beardsley-esque style, presumably having lost interest in the designs which first drove him to pursue illustration. Austen's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* thus represents a unique moment in his *oeuvre*. Indeed, there are no illustrated editions of any of Shakespeare's plays in existence which resemble it.

Provocative and imaginative, his illustrations provide a "dark" reading of the prince almost unprecedented in visual art, foregrounding its presence in the text despite the tendency of his contemporaries and forebears to overlook it, a complicated and independent Ophelia, a diabolical Ghost, and a host of disturbing, deeply symbolic, supernatural, feminine entities. Women are no longer relegated to the background in his *Hamlet*, as in so many stage, visual artistic and filmic adaptations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries;[4] instead, they are granted a position centre-stage. Austen has actually increased the number of female characters: in the "Dramatis Personae" (DP) drawing (p. 5/224), a gigantic cloaked figure towers ominously over the characters in the upper half of the picture plane, all of whom seem unconscious of its presence.[5] With large eyes and mouth, and a slender tapering face, she appears female. Despite this, wearing white, save for a black monk's cowl, she resembles the Ghost, pictured to her lower right, whose presence she reveals by casting a hand into the shadows and parting the curtains; their visual similarity implies a symbolic connection. Given that the Ghost instigates Hamlet's plotting for revenge, and that personifications of abstract concepts, such as revenge, are commonly female, she most probably represents Nemesis. The

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[3] First edition copies can be found at the Folger Shakespeare Library, the MET Museum, and in the Cambridge University Library Rare Books room.

[4] See discussion on p. lxiv for examples.

[5] In this thesis, page-references to Austen's illustrations are in roman type for his *Hamlet* (the 2010 edition) and italics for the Appendix in this thesis: thus 'p. 47/*228*' means that the image will be found on p. 47 in Austen's *Hamlet* and on p. 228 in the Appendix.

goddess of retribution is traditionally represented carrying a sword, a whip, scales or a measuring-rod. In Austen's drawing, a life size figure raises a monolithic sword directly in front of her. The weapon's size suggests that it belongs to Nemesis. Nemesis is not just another female character: she is their fierce emblem. Thus, this investigation sets out to illuminate Austen's artistic ingenuity and foresight, and to highlight the critical value in interpreting artistic renderings of Shakespeare's characters as a form of literary critique.

The deity's monolithic presence in this illustration and frequent appearance in others, usually as an approximately life-sized figure, is one way in which Austen implies a pervasive feminine presence in the play. Her inclusion is also attributable to the play's preoccupation with the relationship between justice and revenge, and the latter's progressive undermining of the characters' lives. Other fantastic female figures who appear in Austen's images include miniaturised nudes, found on sword handles and in the details of the headrest of Claudius' throne in the "Mousetrap" image (p. 95/231). While their routine presence may partly be a stylistic choice, given Art Nouveau's penchant for female nudity, they serve a greater purpose than merely aestheticizing the erotic, evoking not only Nemesis but other supernatural themes in *Hamlet*.[6]

An American publisher dedicated to reissuing historically significant editions, Dover Publishing added Austen's *Hamlet* to its Calla Editions series in 2010, in time to catch a rising wave of academic interest over the last two decades in the exploration, through the visual arts, of Shakespeare's complex characters. This movement was spear-headed by Stuart Sillars, one of the most prolific and influential writers on this topic. Dover calls its Calla Editions "Books of Distinction for the Contemporary Bibliophile," observing that "[t]his premium imprint features impeccable hardcover reproductions of some of the most beautiful books ever published. Filled with breathtaking artwork and other deluxe features, each Calla Edition recalls a time when bookmaking was considered an artform."

Austen seems to have been fascinated by the hermeneutical potential of the illustrator's art. When his primary source of inspiration shifted from Beardsley to other artists, shortly after producing his illustrated *Hamlet*, the artist (and good friend of Austen) Alan Odle, was

[6] Examples of Beardsley's illustrations with female nudity are too numerous to require individual mention.

particularly influential.[7] Austen wrote that "Odle is, I believe, the world's supreme master of the pen […] no other pen and ink draughtsman has ever shown such imaginative power, such fertility of invention, or developed his designs with such mastery" (1937, 42). Austen's belief in the creative autonomy and power of book illustration is also evident in his praise of his companion:

> His book illustrations are never mere illustrations. He takes the theme of the book and expounds it with his rhythmic fantasies; explaining and interpreting his author in terms of pen work. A hint, even a word, enables him to create, to the volume's enrichment and the reader's delight, an epic aside. His page designs need no legend to explain them, rather they explain the story; and at times, such is the power of his imagination, he will take his author by the scruff, and hurl him into realms of wonder unimagined by any literary scribe
>
> (42)

His enthusiasm suggests that he sought to produce this power and depth of meaning in his own work, investing literary illustration with the same significance as its accompanying text. If we look at his illustrations, including early ones such as found in *Hamlet*, we see ample evidence of this. Austen produced his own 'epic aside,' observing

> Your business as a draughtsman is to express yourself. You are an individual; […], so see to it that this self is given full scope to utter what it alone knows. […] Learn to master the tools of your craft, and then say what you have to say in the way that you alone can say it. Be sincere.
>
> (71)

[7] See below, and Martin Steenson's *The Life and Work of Alan Odle* (2012). There are a number of biographies of Dorothy Richardson; the most recent is by Carol Watts, titled *Dorothy Richardson* (1995).

Illustrated Editions and Critical Scholarship

Illustrated editions of Shakespeare began with Nicholas Rowe's pioneering edition of 1709, becoming popular in the late eighteenth century, alongside performances of the plays themselves. They reached their zenith in the Victorian era, and have attracted a significant level of scholarly attention. William Moelwyn Merchant (1959) discusses them alongside stage design and paintings, often while addressing the interplay of these mediums. Stephen Orgel's chapter "Shakespeare Illustrated" in the *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare* (2007) offers an overview of illustrated volumes. He selects a few (well-known) editions for discussion, situating them with respect to wider artistic trends and cultural phenomena. Christopher Decker's chapter "Shakespeare Editions" in Gail Marshall's edited collection of essays *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (2012) traces the development of the illustrated edition with particular attention to changes in the conflation of folios and quartos and other emendations, while offering a general discussion of the purpose of illustrations and engravings in these works.

In the same collection, Sillars' chapter "Shakespeare and the Visual Arts," as the title suggests, addresses Shakespearean visual art in the Victorian era with reference to illustrated editions. His books (discussed below) more substantially address this material. In *The Shakespearean World* (2017), an anthology edited by Jill L. Levenson and Robert Ormsby, Jim Davis' chapter "Interpreting Shakespeare Through the Visual Arts" "charts the ongoing history of visualizing Shakespeare," providing an overview of both Shakespearean paintings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and illustrated editions (with an emphasis on imagery). In *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (2003), Adrian Poole dedicates a chapter to "The Visual Arts," examining a select number of illustrated works. In *Hamlet and the Visual Arts* (1709–1900), Alan Young addresses illustrated editions extensively, with a focus on collected editions and *Hamlet*.

Meanwhile, Georgianna Ziegler's chapter in *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, "Women and Shakespeare," "examine[s]," among other things, the "ways in which the lives of mainly middle-class women intersected with Shakespeare: how they read his works [and] what editions of Shakespeare were directed towards female readers" (205). In *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture* (2008), Kimberly Rhodes pursues a similar thread of investigation

in regard to the representation of Shakespeare's female characters, although with greater emphasis on keepsake (gift) books and annuals than illustrated editions (see Chapter 1).

Sillars describes the function of illustrated editions as that of 'performance readings.' His *Shakespeare, Time and the Victorians* (2012) dedicates a chapter to them, much of which draws upon his *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709–1875* (2009), the most comprehensive delineation of the topic to date. The latter considers major illustrations of each of the plays, *Hamlet* included. Sillars' most recent publication, *Shakespeare Seen* (2018), also provides a chapter on illustrated editions, while his article "Shakespeare in Colour: Illustrated Editions, 1908–14" (2015) looks at a select number of famous editions pre-World War 1.

The examination of illustrated editions of Shakespeare has been largely confined to eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples, excepting Orgel's chapter "Shakespeare Illustrated" and Sillars' article "Shakespeare in Colour." However, the latter does not venture into discussion of the 1920s, leaving Austen's designs outside its investigatory scope. While Orgel claims of the Cranach Press *Hamlet* (1927) (illustrated by Edward Gordon Craig) that "[t]here is no illustrated Shakespeare in which the images are so thoroughly integrated with the typography, and in which text, book, and performance are conceived so completely as a whole"; this edition "reconceives the book of the play as a performance" (89), he omits Austen's edition of *Hamlet* (1922) from this assessment, despite its apparent congruence with this description.

In the nineteenth century, illustrated editions and theatre performances were closely linked. Edward Gordon Craig found numerous similarities between Irving's productions and illustrators' works (Richards 219). Craig pointed to John Gilbert, Honeré Damier and Gustave Doré (1832-1883) as influences. Doré had illustrated editions of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. The illustrations in these editions influenced the aesthetic of Irving's productions of *Don Quixote*, *Dante, King Arthur* and *Faust* (219). More commonly, this relationship of influence went in the opposite direction, whereby illustrated editions were influenced by stage performances. In the *fin-de-siècle* period, actors produced illustrated editions to pair with productions. Lillie Langtry, actress and icon of the Victorian era, issued an edition of *Antony and Cleopatra* containing twelve illustrations of her performance (Duncan 189). Peter Holland observes that Charles Knight's (seven volume) *The Pictorial Works of Shakespeare*

edition was heavily influenced by Charles Kean's historicised productions of Shakespeare's plays.

> Knight's pictures of the scenic locations of the plays can be often be exactly matched by the sets of Kean, or earlier, Macready, and one can trace the direct interconnections and correlation again and again between these two areas of image, illustration to the edition and illustration on stage in much nineteenth-century theatre.
>
> (56)

Michael R. Booth considers that the prominence of Shakespearean book illustration and painting in the Victorian era affected public taste, prompting an increase in historicised stagings of Shakespeare (30).

An increasing interest in the implied psychology of Shakespeare's characters, partly fueled by the popularity of the Victorian novel, with its focus on interiority, largely drove artists' fascination with Shakespeare. Many Victorian artists found inspiration in the plays: an especially famous example were the Pre-Raphaelites, whose Shakespearean paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy in the 1850s (see Moore). The tradition of illustrating Shakespeare's plays, although no longer as popular, has continued into the present and taken on a wider variety of forms, such as the graphic novel. Nicki Greenberg's *Hamlet* (2010; fig. 1) is a recent, particularly well-known example. However, the play's (almost invariably conflated) text rarely survives intact in these recent works; it is instead cut, partially updated and/or re-arranged, as in Greenberg's work.

Fig. 1. Nicki Greenberg. Illustrations of Act 1.1. *Hamlet*, Allen & Unwin, 2000.

Inevitably, the influences on Austen will have been theatrical as well as textual; however, we have little (or no direct) evidence for his theatre-going.[8] In any case, his *reading* of the plays, or analysis of them as poetic texts, forms the core of this investigation. The text is more of an informing factor in Austen's illustrations than the theatre. As I shall show, while Austen's readings of the text are often subtle and surprising, there are clear instances of his attentiveness to the text that scarcely require interpretation. Hamlet's dagger in the "Seated Hamlet" image (p. 8/224), for example, is found only in the text, not in theatrical performance: in his reference to Gertrude — "I will speak daggers to her, but use none" (3.2.387) —, and in her pained response: "These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears; / No more, sweet Hamlet!" (3.4.95). Austen's synthesis of textual and visual artistic elements is, arguably, almost unparalleled in its detail and complexity, making his *Hamlet* the perfect interdisciplinary case study when it comes to exploring new readings of Shakespeare.

Illustrated Editions Before Austen

I will now situate Austen's *Hamlet* within the changing traditions of illustrated Shakespeare, to show how his drawings borrow from but also revise elements found in the works of his forerunners. Shakespearean illustration went from depicting characters in an onstage environment in the late eighteenth century to portraying them within an extrapolated fictional context in the nineteenth. During that century, three strains of illustrated Shakespeare became available: cheap, widely available ones; mid-tier, more attractive and sophisticated editions; and elite versions, typically with a limited publication run. In the early twentieth century, editions transitioned from exclusively black-and-white drawings to colour, after which, the choice of black-and-white illustration, taken up by Austen, became a statement in its own right. The positioning of images in relation to the text which they purported to represent also became more fluid in this period.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, single-volume collections of Shakespeare were the humblest and most widely available form. Ward and Lock (1890) produced an edition containing all the plays and poems, costing sixpence (Sillars 2015, 216) — for some,

[8] There is evidence of Austen's general interest in amateur theatricals, to which "he devoted the scant leisure he allowed himself" (D. Richardson 1930, 20). See p. lii for discussion.

unfortunately, reading this text necessitated the use of a magnifying glass. Those with a regular income could often afford the serial editions, each instalment costing approximately sixpence. However, acquiring the full set cost as much, if not more, than purchasing a single bound edition (216). *The Globe Shakespeare*, based on the text of the 'Cambridge Shakespeare' (1863–66) but stripped of its critical commentary, was made available to the general reader in 1864. Another significant edition was produced by Irving in the 1890s. His illustrated 'Henry Irving Shakespeare' marked passages which might be cut in performance — those which he had tended to cut himself (Sillars 216).

Despite the existence of a theatre-oriented illustrated edition such as Irving's, the "most common feature among editions beyond those aimed at academic study" were "illustrations depicting […] events as if occurring in life beyond the theatre" (216). An example of this, Gilbert's illustrations (figs. 2 & 3), first produced in a serial and edited by Howard Staunton between 1856 and 1860, became the most well-known images of the plays over ensuing decades. These also came in a three-volume edition, and in the 1870s, in a large paper edition with the original imagery but a re-set text. It was possible to continue producing the images due to steel stereo plates constituted from the original blocks (217). The illustrations appeared in five editions, ranging from *de luxe*, 'on real China paper,' to everyday volumes (217). By the end of the century, the illustrated Shakespeare franchise had achieved such prominence that it seemed destined to exhaust its audiences. However, the emergence of the single-play, highly illustrated gift book helped illustrations of Shakespeare to retain their novelty. Innovations in colour printing were largely to thank for this (217).

Fig. 2. John Gilbert. Illustration of Act 1.2. *The Works of Shakespeare*, edited by Howard Staunton, London, George Routledge and Sons, 1856.

Fig. 3. Gilbert. Illustration of Hamlet, Act 1.2. *The Works of Shakespeare*, 1856.

Although colour printing had been in existence since the 1830s, it was only in 1900 that a cheap single-volume complete works, filled with colour images reproducing famous paintings of the plays, became available. This was published by Collins and relied on basic colour lithography.[9] With the new Hentschel-Colourtype process, formulated by Carl Hentschel, prints became subtler in tonal gradation and deeper in colour. Arthur Rackham's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1908), published by Hodder and Stoughton, was the first of these. Innovations in printing methods contributed to illustrated editions becoming an established genre by the early twentieth century, by ensuring their continued popularity; the most well-known were Rackham's and W. Heath Robinson's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1914), and Edmund Dulac's *Tempest* (1908).

Orgel claims in his overview of illustrated volumes that these new single-volume colour editions "for the most part made no reference to the theatre; [they] did not realize the dramatic action, but retold the story or imaginatively refigured the poetry" (84–85). While he praises Dulac's creation in particular, he complains that "the drama often loses out to the fairytale" as "many of the drawings are content with simply inventing a cast of Prospero's spirits" (86; 88). Seemingly, in Orgel's estimation, only the Cranach Press *Hamlet* adheres to the nineteenth-century tradition of treating illustrations as a kind of performance.

[9] *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* [...] *Illustrated with Sixty-Nine Photo-Engravings and Twenty Coloured Pictures*, published by Collins in 1902.

Sillars offers a contrasting assessment of these coloured editions: designed to please parents as well as children, they "ma[d]e significant statements about the workings of the plays" (218). Despite their intended child readership, many of these editions housed "critical interpretations" which "equalled those of earlier, apparently more serious editions such as those of Charles Knight […] and Sir John Gilbert" (2015, 219). He cites Rackham's 1907 *Midsummer Night's Dream* as an example, albeit conceding that "it would be wrong to assume that he is the subtlest in approaching and reconfiguring Shakespeare's texts in visual form" (223–24). On the other hand, Sillars deems "Heath Robinson's treatment of [*Twelfth Night* (1908) to be] outstanding not just for the darkness of its reading but for the depth with which it engages with the play: it is the most troubling, yet also in a way the most incisive, visual reading of [the play], performance criticism of a deep, original intelligence" (232). However, it provides a less disturbing kind of 'darkness' to that seen in Austen. Further, Heath Robinson's illustrations build a coherent, readerly, fantasy world, whereas Austen creates a writerly (Barthes' *scriptible*) reflection of Hamlet's and Ophelia's troubled psyches.

Heath Robinson's images contrasted with those of the post-World War 1 editions which followed. According to Sillars, "[t]he lush colorations, and restrained eroticism of Rackham, the darker readings of Heath Robinson" were "very much products of their own time" (237–38). He observes that Rackham's *Tempest,* appearing in 1926 and produced by Heinemann, lacked the "intensity" (described above) of his *Midsummer Night's Dream* (237), while Lorna Burgoyne's primarily monochrome illustrations for the same play (1919) "feature exaggerated, etiolated figures against heavy black settings" (237).[10] The Cranach Press *Hamlet* is likewise monochrome, although it features solid black figures thrown into stark relief by a white background.

Austen's *Hamlet* is monochrome, save for the front cover; despite this, his images echo Sillars' assessment of pre-World War 1 editions. They complicate and intensify their "darker readings" and "eroticism." Arguably, the artist fought to retain the emotional "intensity" of these earlier child-friendly editions but, like Beardsley's work and the Cranach Press *Hamlet*, turned to monochromatic illustration because his *Hamlet* also catered exclusively to an adult audience. Further, the neoclassical simplicity of the Cranach Press *Hamlet*, mirroring Greek vase painting, would likewise have held limited appeal for children. To summarise, early

[10] Published by Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co. in 1919.

twentieth-century illustrated editions of Shakespeare were intended for families, while many of those which followed, Austen's *Hamlet* included, were meant for an adult audience. The stark disillusionment accompanying World War 1 may have made the cheering warmth of these earlier editions appear disingenuous. Austen says of nineteenth-century editions that

> To the present generation the work of the nineteenth-century illustrators is hardly more than a legend, and the books they illustrated are to be found only on the cheaper shelves of the second-hand book shops; their drawings stored away in museums; their names hidden away in forgotten catalogues.
>
> (72)

Although they still had the public's attention, twentieth-century illustrated editions were unable to win back the enthusiastic support such works had had in the preceding century. Now that I have situated Austen's *Hamlet* within the historical development of illustrated editions, I will address which interpretation-based theories might aid us in analysing his edition and illustrated editions in general.

The Question of Adaptation

While adaptation theory may not provide an exhaustive framework for the consideration of Shakespearean illustration, it does bring insights to that study. Some of these insights also pertain to the close, informative relationship between silent (black and white) cinema and Austen's illustrations, explored in the following chapter.

Visual representations of Shakespearean scenes and characters have sometimes been considered as a form of adaptation rather than direct representation, presumably in part because there is no platonic reality of 'Shakespeare' to represent. Indeed, as Julie Sanders points out, the idea of fidelity between an adaptation and the Shakespearean play it stems from is problematic not least because the "plays [are] highly labile, adaptive patchworks themselves" (28).

Although they do not address illustrated editions directly, the general theory of adaptation which Linda Hutcheon and Sanders, among others, have sought to establish, may be argued to have application in the case of Austen's *Hamlet*. On the one hand, the

description Hutcheon provides of problematic modern attitudes towards adaptation does not fit illustrated editions: "the idea of 'fidelity' to that prior text is often what drives any directly comparative method of study" (xv). On the other hand, Sanders presents the contrasting view that "[i]ntellectual or scholarly examinations [of adaptations in general] are [not] engaged in identifying where an adaptation has been faithful or unfaithful to its source, at least in the context of any value judgment" (27).

There are discernible analogies between Hutcheon's conception of adaptation and Shakespearean illustration. She observes that "an adaptation is likely to be greeted as minor and subsidiary and never as good as the original" (xiv). Sillars likewise remarks (of Shakespearean painting, although this remark equally applies to illustrated editions) that "[f]requent descriptions of [such works] as 'theatrical conversation pieces' reveals their identity as a sub-order of a genre common in the eighteenth century" (2015, 14). "Despite the clear differences between the identities of the play on the page and in performance, the desire to see images as straightforward evidence of stage practice has been, and remains, strong" (8). This is despite the fact that, although "a static image may draw on theatrical material, it will generally be different in its detail, method and effect" (15). Like adaptations, illustrations need not always be prosaic reflections of popular assumptions about the play.

Sanders' definition of adaptations more clearly (and closely) reflects the nature of Austen's illustrations. She remarks that "as the notion of hostile takeover present in a term such as 'appropriation' implies, adaptation can be oppositional, even subversive. There are as many opportunities for divergence as adherence, for assault as well as homage" (9). As I argue throughout this work, Austen illustrations radically subvert traditional readings of the play. Adaptations "serv[e] in the capacity of incremental literature (Zabus 2002, 4), adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating, amplifying" (Sanders 22). Put more explicitly, adaptation

> can parallel editorial practices in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning: yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion, accretion and interpolation [...]. Adaptation is nevertheless frequently involved in offering commentary on the source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original,' adding hypothetical motivation or voicing what the text silences or marginalizes.

(26)

Austen's illustrations, as I will show, build on the text, offering "commentary" on (among other things) Hamlet and Ophelia's fraught relationship and their troubled psyches. Traditional — particularly patriarchal — readings of the play 'silence or marginalize' Ophelia by overlooking textual evidence of her (admittedly subtle) attempts at self-assertion; Austen compensates for this by "amplifying" her presence and "offering a revised point of view," whereby she is openly enraged at Hamlet. Further "hypothetical motivation" is suggested by Hamlet's complex, often disturbing depiction: Austen's imagery implies that cruelty is a driving force behind some of his actions. Now that I have assigned Austen's illustrated edition — and by extension illustrated editions which imaginatively reinterpret Shakespeare's text — to a clearly defined and thus investigable category, I will explore the methodologies (and their backgrounds) which seem best suited to exploring its attributes.

The Artist as Critic

In terms of methodology, my project is interdisciplinary, addressing as it does the relationship between visual artistic depictions of Shakespeare and the plays as both text and performance. It draws its conceptual framework and methodology from literary and cultural studies as well as from visual culture and art history. I primarily draw on the 'Artist as Critic' line of inquiry, named, although not invented by, Sillars. This approach is ideally suited to analysing illustrated editions.

Sillars' and others' (see below) manner of analysing Shakespearean artworks entails an interpretive method which continues to dominate art historical discourse today: these critics examine the formal qualities of a figurative artwork, including gesture, expression and gaze, symbolism and composition, with respect to their collective meaning, and their significance in relation to the text. However, because they specifically address artists' visualisations of a literary narrative, their basic assumptions about the artwork departs somewhat from the traditional formalist approach. Their interpretive method often relies on the idea of the 'Artist as Critic,' because they investigate the commentary on the text which these images imply. Adrian Poole's descriptions of artworks, explored below, serves as an excellent example of this approach.

Sillars' *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720–1820* (2006) describes the genesis of this interpretive tradition, while also providing a helpful analysis of its operation. This critical method remains principally unaltered in contemporary examinations of Shakespearean illustrations. As the book's opening explains, this work "explores the tradition of critical and interpretive painting and engraving that developed when eighteenth-century artists rejected the depiction of Shakespeare's plays in performance to produce images based on the new scholarly editions." Sillars is principally "concerned with the individual images as interpretive statement [and hopes] to reveal the importance of visual criticism as an endeavour parallel to importance in performance, production and editing" (25).

According to Sillars, the emerging practice of painting interpretive images drew on "convention[s] taken from the practices of landscape and narrative painting" (3), including visual devices such as "[r]eferential symbolism," "emblematic detail" (4), and "atmospheric landscape," the last of which "visualise[d the] language" of the play, thereby reflecting mood and tone (5). The "schematic representation of the passions" also became a prominent feature in these depictions (14); "readers" could "be involved with greater emotional directness through gesture, action or landscape" (18). The sum of these parts constituted the artist's "critical reading" of the play (5).

Sillars analyses eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century paintings with reference to these visual elements because the latter were consciously employed by artists of the time and increasingly discussed in critical discourse. As we see from his (and others') critical interpretation of Shakespearean character portraits in the nineteenth century (mentioned elsewhere in this Introduction), the inclusion and critical analysis of these visual components in art also formed the building blocks of artistic production and interpretation from the nineteenth century onwards.

In her article "Elaborated Knowledge: Reading Kinesis in Pictures," Ellen Spolsky deconstructs the way in which we interpret a bodily kinaesthetic in visual imagery: in other words, she examines how we read body language in art and make inferences about emotional states. Although brief, Spolsky's article provides a thought-provoking, helpful guide for those hesitant about interpreting gesture and expression in an artwork. Consequently, her insights have utility when applied to the analysis of characters in visual art, including those of Austen's figures. She acknowledges that "many gestures" are "entirely conventional" and

"style of dress [is] often stereotyped," but observes that "posture, eye focus, blushing and expression are more resistant to cultural codification" (and thus more universal) (161). Although the distinction between "what is natural and what is culturally coded" is "far from clear," "gestures" ostensibly "under less conscious control are more likely to be believed than conventionalised messages, when the two conflict" (161).

The investigation of the interpretation of Shakespearean characters through visual art has become prominent thanks to Sillars' numerous, detailed studies; however, he is not the first to pursue this particular line of enquiry. A significant number of scholars have written on Shakespearean character portraiture; until recently, painting has been the primary focus, and studies have been encyclopaedic in approach. Malcolm Salaman was first to offer a narrative approach to Shakespearean painting and scenography, followed in similar ways by Merchant, Martin Meisel and Richard Altick.[11] A collection of essays titled *Shakespeare in Art,* published in 2003 and edited by Jane Martineau, dedicates two chapters to painting: Maria Grazia Messina writes on 'Shakespeare and the Sublime,' looking at early Romantic artistic treatments of Shakespeare;[12] John Christian writes on 'Shakespeare and Victorian Art,' with a particular emphasis on the Pre-Raphaelites.

Michael Benton and Sally Butcher privilege the artist's individual interpretation more than these critics, observing that "painting a Shakespearean scene is itself an interpretation; at its best, it can open up elements of the literary text and be viewed as a sort of performance that offers a form of understanding akin to that reached through watching a scene in production" (54). The duo discuss three well-known paintings in order to demonstrate the distinctions in the type of Shakespearean visual depictions on offer. This imagery generally portrayed scenes from the play's text, either as imagined by the artist or as representing generic or specific staged performances (54). Jim Davis' (aforementioned) chapter in the anthology *The Shakespearean World* "consider[s] visual art as a form of critique and commentary, […] almost invariably implying a perspective or point of view; often establishing critical and/or imaginative frameworks through which to anticipate, judge, and even recall individual plays and productions" (314–15).

[11] Meisel (1983), *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*; Merchant (1959), *Shakespeare and the Artist*; Altick (1958), *Paintings from Books: Art and Literature in Britain, 1760–1900*.

[12] Messina discusses James Barry, William Blake, Henry Fuseli and Joshua Reynolds.

Pursuing this topic in greater detail, Sillars' most recent publication, *Shakespeare Seen* (2018), charts the development and interpretation of Shakespearean imagery, adding to his impressive overview of the topic thus far. Here, he adopts a broad, multidisciplinary approach, analysing the relationship between image, history, text, print culture, book history and performance. Despite this, he avoids significant overlap with his previous writings, shedding new light on Shakespearean imagery. He dedicates a chapter to illustrated editions, describing their layout and function as 'performance readings.' In another chapter, he examines the visual artistic theories underpinning painted images. He analyses case studies including *The Comedy of Errors, King Lear, The Merchant of Venice, Othello* and the Roman plays. While the insights provided in this work are invaluable, as in his other publications, it does not achieve what which I have set out to do: that is, to subject the Shakespearean illustrations of a single artist to prolonged scrutiny, examining their collective impression in terms of character's implied interiority in *Hamlet*. The anthological nature of Sillars' publications limits the degree to which he may dissect individual works, suggesting that *Painting Shakespeare* and *Shakespeare Seen* offer an implicit invitation to others to further the work the author has begun.

Since Sillars, a number of scholars have analysed artworks in a manner suggestive of the 'Artist as Critic' line of inquiry, Davis included. In *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture*, Rhodes has charted the changes in artistic portrayals of Ophelia, examining the socio-historical signification of Ophelia's various depictions through a feminist lens.[13] While it is not her stated aim to discuss at length artists' personal readings of the play, particularly as regards Ophelia's implied psychology, this is what some of her analyses achieve. Her nuanced socio-political critique and the quantity of images she investigates also provide the groundwork for such an approach.

Young adopts a similar method, inspecting the artist's individual reading of the play within a socio-historical context; however, he places more overt emphasis than Rhodes on an artist's unique interpretation as reflected in these depictions. He dedicates an entire book (mentioned above), titled *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709–1900* (2002) to registering the

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[13] See also Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Willams' edited collection of essays, *The Afterlife of Ophelia*. This collection covers diverse methodological areas and illustrating current approaches in Shakespearean scholarship, including increasing interdisciplinarity. The wide range of contexts the essays address includes popular culture, historicism, film and new media studies, theatre and performance studies.

evolution in artistic portrayals of Hamlet, examining popular as well as lesser-known works within their socio-historical context. He observes that these images "reflect the critical reception of the play and simultaneously possess a significant role in the ever-changing constructed cultural phenomenon that we refer to as Shakespeare" (9). Like Rhodes, Young is particularly helpful in situating Austen's illustrations within traditions of the preceding period, and in providing a framework for interpreting them.

Adrian Poole pursues the same form of close reading as these critics in *Shakespeare and the Victorians*, although his work covers a wider range of Shakespearean representation, with just one chapter on the visual arts. Where the artworks discussed are sufficiently symbolic or mimetic to allow a psychological reading, he interprets, among other things, the moods and inclinations of the characters portrayed. He does this with reference to characters' gestures, expressions and gazes, as well as the image's symbolism and overall composition. His description of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Hamlet and Ophelia* (1858–59; on p. 69) is a case in point. He illustrates instances where the artist appears to have mirrored in their work stylistic elements of the text in addition to dominant motifs contained therein. For example, he says that a painting of Ophelia "echoes the suspended quality of Gertrude's speech" (68). In general, Poole looks at the impact these formal elements have on meaning and the viewer's response.

The present work will pay attention to Austen's artistic and socio-historical influences, without expecting these to account definitively for all aspects of his imagery. Further, a degree of subjectivity in interpreting artistic works is inevitable. Sillars determines that although his more complicated "interpretations" of "[eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century paintings] were not made explicit in critical writings contemporary with the paintings does not mean the original readers were not aware of their implications at some deeper, unexpressed level" (2006, 13–14). Sillars warns against relying on a wholly subjective interpretation of iconographical allusions in art "because it renders impossible the recovery of insights genuinely part of an eighteenth-century critical conspectus" (12). The critic also rejects the opposite extreme, whereby the interpreter relies solely on "concept and practices firmly demonstrable from the artist's other work, written intention or similar direct evidence" (12), as "this denies the imaginative life of the painting" (12–13).

Scholars other than Sillars have addressed the broader visual artistic treatment of *Hamlet* at length. Young offers the most in-depth examination to date of illustrated editions of the play in *Hamlet*, primarily focusing on the prince, but turning to Ophelia in the concluding chapters. In contrast, Mander and Mitchenson look at images of *Hamlet*, with a key interest in the prince, specifically through the lens of theatre history.[14] Rhodes devotes an entire book to Ophelia, examining the social-historical signification of her various representations, excepting illustrated editions.[15] While these studies are fascinating and extensive, spanning a significant chronology, twentieth-century illustrated editions (and thus Austen's illustrations) lie beyond the scope of their investigation.

Overlapping Methodologies

The 'Artist as Critic' approach incorporates methodologies other than formalist analysis, such as iconology. However, as I will show, its application also benefits from character study and feminist theory. The approach to character study adopted in this thesis, in the process of interpreting the reading of implied character interiority made available by Austen's illustrations, requires elucidation. Fluctuations in dominant critical theories mean that the study of Shakespeare's characters has at times been viewed with scepticism, although the last few decades have treated it with renewed openness and curiosity.[16] The issue of

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[14] *Hamlet Through the Ages: A Pictorial Record from 1709* (1952).

[15] Young (in *Hamlet and the Visual Arts*) and Rhodes (in *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture*) have traced the visual treatment of these characters throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and sometimes twentieth centuries.

[16] Freudian psychoanalysis has been making more of a comeback over the last three decades. B. J. Sokol, in a collection of essays titled *The Undiscover'd Country: New Essays on Shakespeare and Psychoanalysis* (1993), observes that when it comes to character study and psychoanalysis, "the 'tide of fashion' is turning" (1), despite recent 'taboos' against psychoanalytical literary study. Jean-Michel Rabaté argues in *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Psychoanalysis* (2014) that psychoanalysis, particularly Freudian psychoanalysis, has recently re-emerged as a method of interpretation. Just as in Carolyn Brown's *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory* (2015), Rabaté argues for psychoanalytic approaches to character. Meanwhile, over the two decades, cognitive science has risen to pre-eminence as boasting new frameworks for literary study, including character analysis. Theory of Mind (ToM) is the most prominent cognitive theory which has been used to this end. See for example, the four essays within the section titled "Mind Reading and Literary Characterisation" in *Theory of Mind and Literature* (2011), edited by Paula Leverage and Howard Mancing. Nineteen different scholars have contributed to this collection. Mancing and Leverage in particular study the ToM of the characters themselves, as regards these characters' beliefs surrounding how other characters think and feel. Leverage defines ToM as "mind reading, empathy, creative imagination of another person's perspective" (1).

Hamlet's 'delay' featured prominently in this debate. Since the Romantics, critics have been in the habit of interpreting Hamlet's implied thought-world with a view to explaining why he delays: for example, Coleridge considered that Hamlet was a Romantic poet in the making, accounting for his procrastination (Griffiths 37).

Several factors have since driven this dialogue out of fashion: psychoanalytic approaches to literature lost popularity in the late twentieth century — psychoanalysis and delay have been inextricably linked in the case of *Hamlet*. During the twentieth century, Shakespearean scholarship frequently investigated the reason(s) for Hamlet's delay in achieving retribution for his father's murder.[17] Further, critics have tired of referring to the same conundrum of Hamlet's "delay," and its thematic centrality in the play has increasingly been called into question.[18]

However, accounting for Hamlet's delay need not drive a central understanding of his character; his behaviour is mimetically convincing without it. In *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (2017), Rhodri Lewis is at pains to emphasise that "*Hamlet* can be read as a profound meditation on the nature of human individuality without relying on conceptual frameworks drawn from the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty first centuries" (5–6). Although he does not reject such frameworks outright, he expresses a clear preference for a New Historicist angle, deferring to the "psychological, rhetorical and moral-political theorising that lay at the heart of sixteenth-century humanism" (6).

While I would not deny the value of Lewis' approach and others' which are similarly New Historicist in vein, I would dispute the necessity of relying exclusively on such a framework. Instead, I would argue that discussing Hamlet's implied mental states with

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[17] A. C. Bradley diagnosed melancholy as the principal cause of Hamlet's seeming torpor (in *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904). Ernest Jones (1954) following in the footsteps of Freud, ascribed Hamlet's misery and procrastination to a repressed Oedipal desire for his mother: by killing Claudius, Hamlet would be forced to consciously confront his identification with his uncle's sexual desire for Gertrude, and his own consequent jealousy.

[18] Twentieth-century authors Julius Leopold Klein and Karl Werder refute the idea that Hamlet delays, pointing to obstacles which prevent Hamlet's revenge. They declare him an active agent hindered by circumstance, not neurotic inhibition (Klein 1846; Werder 1875). Arguing along similar lines, mid-twentieth scholar Robert Reed Jr. (1958) rejects the idea that Hamlet's self-reproach over delay is evidence of his actually delaying. Reed attributes Hamlet's self-condemnation to an unconscious wish to obtain relief from a conscience frustrated by its forced capitulation to reason. The prince feels duty-bound to avenge his father, but also knows that he must establish Claudius' guilt lest the Ghost prove deceitful. Following this, he must await a viable opportunity in which to kill the king.

reference to “conceptual frameworks drawn from [recent] centuries” has its merit. Evolutionary psychology, a framework endorsing the theory that human behaviour to some degree results from psychological adaptations which evolved to handle recurring problems in human ancestral environments, now forms the theoretical basis of contemporary psychological discourse. In short, this theory assumes that human psychology is at least as much a product of evolution as it is of local cultural variation.

Hamlet would hold little appeal if its characters’ behaviour bore no resemblance to our own. This is, for example, evidenced by theatre reviewers’ fascination with the manner in which individual characters are realised. As Emma Smith observes, “poems don’t come over well on stage, people do” (7). William F. Allman notes that “much of the world of literature, drama, and humour relies on the supreme ability of humans not only to create theories about each character’s mind but also to imagine simultaneously how each of these imaginary minds might view the minds of other characters” (68). Presentism in Shakespeare studies has “challenged the dominant theoretical and critical practice of reading Shakespeare historically,” preferring to “[interpret] Shakespeare’s texts in relation to contemporary political, social, and economic ideologies” (Gajoswki 675). Shakespeare’s characters are relatable, which is why presentism offers promise as a “theoretical and critical strategy” (675). To summarise, it makes rational sense to refer to contemporary, not just early modern, theories of behaviour and motivations when discussing Hamlet’s implied interiority. Shakespeare’s plays should be interpreted in our moment as well as his own, in order to do justice to their enduring qualities.

Bernard Paris, an advocate of literary character criticism, is sceptical of New Historicism and similar approaches. He contends that literature is a “form of knowledge” which outlives the “conceptual systems” which were in existence when it was created, so it is highly “reductive” to “understand it primarily in terms of those systems” (1991, 20). Paris considers that a New Historicist (and similar) method(s) do(es) not exclusively “help us […] to recover Shakespeare’s psychological intuitions and to appreciate his genius in mimetic characterization,” because “the great artist sees and portrays more than he can comprehend” (1991, 20). I agree that it is “reductive” to rely exclusively on New Historicist methods, but deem it equally reductive to make exclusive recourse to recent psychological frameworks.

When interpreting characters' implied interiority, investigating the formal attributes of a literary text — such as complex metaphor, rhetoric, thematic structures, sound-patterning and metre — is necessary. However, strict New Historicist approaches generally downplay the ability of literary texts to produce meaning through these formal elements. They reject the idea that, as Murray Krieger has noted, literature houses perceptions that are "under language," "not yet analyzed, realized in institutions, or even understood" (59). Thus, for this reason also, a strict New Historicist approach risks being reductive.

To summarise, while engaging in literary character study, this thesis will also draw upon formalist analysis such as metre and sound-patterning, metaphor and rhetorical figures. Evolutionary psychology will also play a significant role, because, as discussed, this is the accepted framework underpinning modern-day psychological discourse, and the following investigation will frequently touch on the implied inner thought world of fictional characters. However, as mentioned, it will also extend its hermeneutical reach by drawing upon other theoretical systems, including that of iconology and feminism.

I will begin with iconology. In the mid-eighteenth century, the interpretation of painterly composition and its effect on meaning, particularly in terms of narrative, was still in its infancy. Historical painting and literary narrative painting, the two dominant genres of Western art at that time, occupied the heart of this expanding discourse. Judeo-Christian imagery found in medieval and Renaissance painting provided a catalogue of 'emblematic devices' ripe for interpretation. In Austen's illustrations, the most obvious example of one such 'device' is the Ghost's nimbus in "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" on p. 37/226; in conjunction with its suspended elevation over Hamlet, its nimbus ironically suggests that is delivers holy tidings. In the eighteenth century, numerous authors compiled descriptions and interpretations of these emblems in visual imagery:[19] prominent art theorists, Jonathan Richardson, in his *Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715) and *Essay on the Whole of Criticism as it Relates to Painting and the Science of the Connoisseur* (1719), and Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) were salient examples. Well into the nineteenth century, the writings of Richardson and the Earl of Shaftesbury, in addition to that of Joshua Reynolds and Henry Fuseli, were highly influential in theoretical discourse

[19] However, the 1590s had seen the creation of the first (literal) catalogue of these symbols. See Sillars (2006, 7) for further detail.

pertaining to Shakespearean painting. They contributed to increasing critical interest in the reception of Shakespearean artworks and art in general.

Richardson felt that the painter should feel free to "sometimes depart even from Natural and Historical truth" for the sake of demonstrating a wider meaning beyond the image (49). In general, he implicitly welcomed artists' critical interpretations, believing that artists could freely develop new symbols (7). Austen does this: for example, on p. 29/225, eyes are positioned on the bodice of Ophelia's dress, directly over her nipples. Their emblematic significance is explored in the "Austen's Ophelia: A New Autonomy" chapter. In reference to emblematic meanings, Richardson claimed that "painting is a sort of writing, it ought to be easily legible" (74). Austen's illustrations can certainly be "read," although not always with ease. Rather they challenge the viewer in a writerly way, facilitating numerous, sometimes ostensibly conflicting, interpretations. Further, as a rule, iconographical allusions evoke comparisons either serious or comic in nature. Austen's *Hamlet* tends towards the former, but just as the play includes dark, comedic elements, the same can be said of his images. In the "Puppeteer Death" image (p. 78/231), a man's cap sprouts a comically large plant stem, gesturing at the play's pervasive nature imagery, as explored in the following chapters.

This work will investigate Austen's "symbols," but will avoid referring to his "icons" and "indexes." Although identifying and analysing symbols already had a long tradition in artistic critique, Erwin Panofsky, in the 1930s, was first to distinguish iconography from iconology, and to formalise iconographical analysis:

> the discovery and interpretation of these "symbolical" values (which are often unknown to the artist himself and may emphatically differ from what he consciously intended to express) is the object of what we may call "iconology" as opposed to "iconography"
>
> (1955, 33)

"Iconology" and "symbolic analysis" appear to me to be interchangeable terms. Although Charles Peirce's typology of signs, in which "symbol" is construed more narrowly, currently dominates typological discourse, I find Panofsky's broader label more helpful in

application.[20] Everything in a painting is a symbol for us, whether or not it is diegetically an icon or an index.

Feminist theory in its various forms also informs my critical perspective and theoretical framework. For example, as discussed in the chapter "Diabolical Influences: Nemesis, Death and the Ghost," Austen's feminised representation of the Ghost reflects the increasing interest in androgyny and its cultural meaning around the *fin de siècle*. This was associated with the "alarming" rise of the New Woman in the late nineteenth century. In the "Ophelia: A New Autonomy" chapter, I use a feminist critical lens to identify ways in which Austen amplifies Ophelia's experience of grief. In particular, Rhodes, Sophie Duncan and Elaine Showalter influence my writing. Rhodes, as mentioned, provides an overview of visual depictions of Ophelia while highlighting the impact of socio-historical factors on this imagery. The "feminist vision" of Ophelia she offers "suggest[s] that [Ophelia] is usually a product of her time and that her image, in all its forms, is indebted to societal attitudes towards women and their bodies" (1). Duncan, meanwhile, paints a detailed portrait of "that select group of *fin-de-siècle* performers who gave the most iconoclastic and controversial performances of Shakespeare's heroines" (1). These "performances became crucibles for debates on gender and sexuality in popular theatre, despite scholarship's emphasis on Ibsen, Shaw, and 'sex problem' plays." Indeed, "[*f*]*in-de-siècle* Shakespeare was characterized by [the preponderance of major] actresses" (1). Lastly, Showalter, one of the first major authorities on feminist Shakespearean criticism, demonstrates how Ophelia's madness has both reflected and inspired shifting views of insane women in Victorian society.[21] Although other feminist Shakespearean scholars have provided fresh insight into Ophelia's representation, I have prioritised the writings of these three because their subject matter ties in closely with the themes which feature prominently in this thesis: these include the relationship(s) between Austen's depiction of Ophelia and the visual arts, *fin-de-siècle* actresses, and Ophelia's madness.[22] The approach of Rhodes and Showalter in particular, investigating the link between artistic representation and socio-historical influences, has inspired my methodology.

[20] See Peirce, *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic* (1994).

[21] In 'Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism' (1985).

[22] See also Peterson and Williams' collection of essays.

Austen's *Hamlet* Contextualised

Austen's slim and elegant 1922 edition of *Hamlet* was an expensive issue *de luxe*, printed on hand-made paper.[23] Just sixty copies were made, only fifty of which were for sale, numbered and signed by the artist. Its expense and rarity indicate that the edition was meant not for the mass market of the cheap Globe edition, but for a sophisticated intellectual's private consideration, someone likely to be capable of appreciating the complexity of meaning in Austen's drawings. In short, these traits suggest that it was an aesthetic object and a symbol of artistic and intellectual prestige, a signifier of taste and cultural capital.

The illustrations in Austen's *Hamlet* follow a pattern of placement similar to that found in illustrated editions of the two preceding decades (1900–1920), such as those by Rackham, Dulac and Heath Robinson (mentioned above), James Linton and Hugh Thomson. Early twentieth-century editions contrasted with previous works in that they tended to disjoin text and associated image, often with several pages separating the two. This encouraged the reader to contemplate the independent signification of the image rather than seeing it as a mere appendage of the text. As Sillars observes (and goes on to demonstrate), this staggered placement did not make the images "merely incidental or unimportant in the […] critical processes that they generate" (2015, 219). The same can be said of Austen's images, where placement of text and image would appear arbitrary if not for the symbolic connection between them, suggestive of his interpreting the text as poetry rather than theatre.

Sillars reminds us that "the pulse of an illustrated edition is inherently different from that of a self-defining easel-painting, concerned as it is with *mise-en-page* and the location within the individual reader's progression through a printed text" (2006, 25).[24] When analysing illustrated editions in *Illustrated Shakespeare*, Sillars repeatedly demonstrates how an image's purpose, meaning and effect are influenced by its positioning, both within the edition and on the page. Sillars charts the impact such arrangements have on the reader's response, comparing the affective operation of a frontispiece to that of an internal illustration; the effect of situating an illustration opposite, before or after the text it seeks to represent, of presenting an image as part of a balanced pair, or on the left or right-hand page; the

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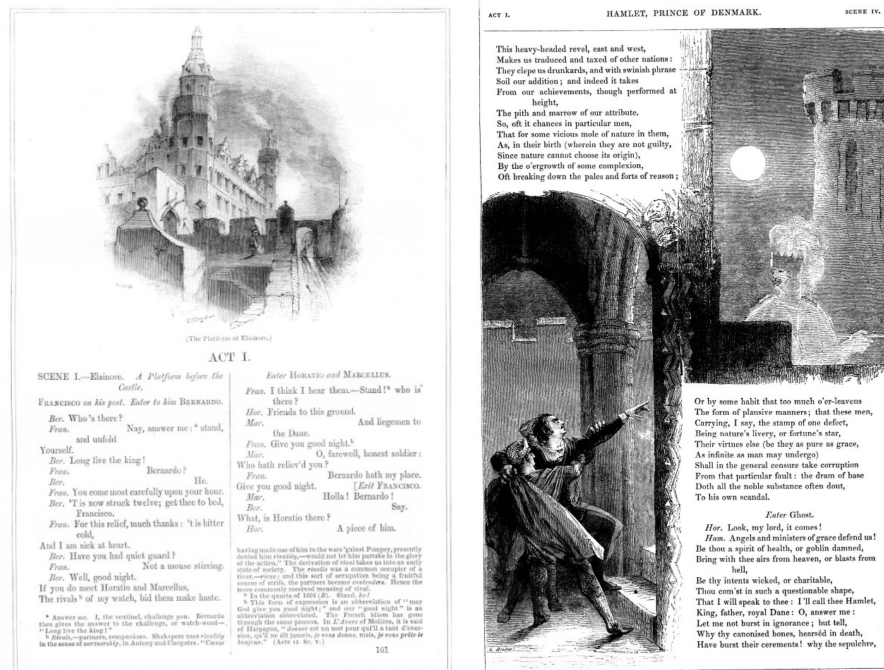
[23] A copy can be found in the Cambridge University Library Rare Books Room.

[24] He describes a *mise-en-page* as "a term […] realising the complex relation between page design and stage setting" (2008, 19).

impression made by round or oval frames, or by situating illustrations deep within the text. For example, he observes of an illustration of *Twelfth Night* (designed by Henry [?] Richter and engraved by William Walker) from Bellamy and Robarts *Plays* (1787–91), that “the image is greatly enhanced by its placement in the text” (2009, 145):

> Orsino’s question ‘And what’s her history?’ […] comes right at the foot of a recto page but, rather than being located opposite this line and so forestalling Viola’s answer, the engraving is bound opposite her lines on the next page. Its resultant placement on a verso rather than a recto page slows the action—the very act of looking at the image makes the reader move backwards. This furthers what is a major event of the reading structure of this edition, the break in the act of reading to focus on a moment of emotional intensity or contemplation, presented through careful visual presentation of the metaphoric movement of the passage.
>
> (145–46)

In a Victorian illustrated edition, illustrations are frequently (but not always) subordinate to a reading of the text; for example, Charles Knight’s popular *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspere* (1839) has just three full-page illustrations and a small number of unassuming ones, many of which are of a castle and/or its natural surrounds. These images do not assert themselves as equal to the text. More unusually, Joseph Kenny Meadows’ illustrations in an 1846 edition (fig. 4) are more demanding of the reader’s attention, as they are positioned anywhere in the text — sometimes the text seems forced to move to accommodate the image — and largely portray the dramatic action. At the farthest end of the spectrum, in an edition dating to 1864–68, Henry C. Selous provides numerous full-page, and other large, illustrations, while in general, his images provide greater dynamism and detail than Meadows’. In an 1867 edition, Gilbert’s illustrations are equally numerous and attention-grabbing.



[The Platform at Elsinore.]

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Elsinore. *A Platform before the Castle.*

FRANCISCO *on his post. Enter to him* BERNARDO.

Ber. Who 's there?
Fran. Nay, answer me:[a] stand, and unfold
Yourself.
Ber. Long live the king!
Fran. Bernardo?
Ber. He.
Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Ber. 'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.
Fran. For this relief, much thanks: 't is bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
Ber. Have you had quiet guard?
Fran. Not a mouse stirring.
Ber. Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals[b] of my watch, bid them make haste.

Enter HORATIO *and* MARCELLUS.

Fran. I think I hear them.—Stand![a] who is there?
Hor. Friends to this ground.
Mar. And liegemen to the Dane.
Fran. Give you good night.[b]
Mar. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath reliev'd you?
Fran. Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night. [*Exit* FRANCISCO.
Mar. Holla! Bernardo!
Ber. Say.
What, is Horatio there?
Hor. A piece of him.

[a] Answer *me*. I, the sentinel, challenge *you*. Bernardo then gives the answer to the challenge, or watch-word—"Long live the king!"
[b] *Rivals*,—partners, companions. Shakspere uses *rivality* in the sense of *partnership*, in Antony and Cleopatra: "Cæsar having made use of him in the wars 'gainst Pompey, presently denied him *rivality*,—would not let him partake in the glory of the action." The derivation of *rival* takes us into an early state of society. The *rivalis* was a common occupier of a river,—*rivus*; and this sort of occupation being a fruitful source of strife, the partners became *contenders*. Hence the more commonly received meaning of rival.
[a] In the quarto of 1604 (*B*). Stand, *ho!*
[b] This form of expression is an abbreviation of "may God give you good night;" and our "good night" is an abbreviation abbreviated. The French idiom has gone through the same process. In *L'Avare* of Molière, it is said of Harpagon, "*donner* est un mot pour qu'il a tant d'aversion, qu'il ne dit jamais, *je vous donne*, mais, *je vous prête le bonjour*." (Acte II. Sc. V.)

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ACT I. HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK. SCENE IV.

This heavy-headed revel, east and west,
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though performed at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.
So, oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As, in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose its origin),
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit that too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners; that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
Their virtues else (be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo)
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of base
Doth all the noble substance often dout,
To his own scandal.

Enter Ghost.

Hor. Look, my lord, it comes!
Ham. Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked, or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape,
That I will speak to thee: I 'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me:
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell,
Why thy canonised bones, hearséd in death,
Have burst their cerements! why the sepulchre,

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Fig. 4. Joseph Kenny Meadows. Illustrations of Act 1.1. *The Works of Shakspere,* edited by Barry Cornwall, London, William S. Orr and Co., 1846.

Where Austen's images depart from these examples, however, is that his illustrations not only portray narrative but are made more complex through symbolism and visual analogy, and thus demand to be 'read' alongside the text. Further, as mentioned, Austen's images are often positioned away from the text they represent, complicating the imagery's meaning and significance. From time to time I will point to the appropriateness of the location of an image in the text, but we should not expect this to be a consistent feature of the work, given that the images have a dreamlike quality that ignores the logic of chronology in favour of the conflation, displacement and transposition of events and perceptions.

Today, Austen's work is rarely given the scholarly attention it merits, although his drawings were popular for at least three decades in the early twentieth century. Dorothy Richardson (1930) describes his *Hamlet* as "a work which gained for the artist a name, a foundation membership of the Graphic Arts Society," and "the support of Haldane Macfall" who helped "in bringing about the exhibition of Austen's work [...] at the St. George's Galley in 1925" (20).[25] As evidence of a more general popularity, the Limited Editions Club of New York requested that he illustrate Vanity Fair in 1930 (23). His illustrations for books

[25] See "An Exhibition by Three Book Illustrators: John Austen, Harry Clarke and Alan Odle," *The Studio*, 15 May 1925.

continued to appear in gallery spaces, for example, in the fourteenth annual exhibition at Redfern gallery of the Society of Wood Engravers in 1933 (*Yorkshire Post and London Intelligencer,* 2 December 1933).

Richardson was married to Odle, a close friend (as mentioned) of Austen. She knew him personally and genuinely admired his illustrations, such that she produced a brief (twelve-page, not including Austen's preface) biography, claiming that "Austen is one of the very few illustrators of today who enhance the value of the text they illustrate" (17). Her publication was listed alongside the Edward Gordon Craig *Hamlet* in *The Bookman* ("The Collector," September 1930, 366), testament to its perceived importance. The pair's personal proximity is also suggested by the depth of detail with which she describes his appearance, mannerisms and personal pursuits. For example, she observes that "[t]o the end of his time in London he remained the perfect aesthete, precious, even in appearance, to the finger-tips; and a trifle cynical" (22). Upon returning to Kent, he was purportedly "restored […], the bronzed athletic swimmer who plants his own garden and runs his own car and can, at need, run his own kitchen" (22).

Austen illustrated more than fifty books in sundry styles, including such widely divergent classics as *Moll Flanders*, *The Pickwick Papers*, and *As You Like It*, and frequently contributed to major periodicals, such as *Eve, The Strand, Illustrated London News, Sphere* and *Radio Times,* etc., "either as pure decoration or in advertisements" (Steenson 34–44). Although initially, Austen's work resembled Beardsley's, as exemplified by *Hamlet*, it remained quite distinctive in style, in part because he used a less angular line and made the figures' bodies less abstract. Austen was also influenced by Harry Clarke, borrowing (or 'stealing' — see below) some aspects unique to his early work. As Nicola G. Bowe observes, "there [were] many similarities in the work of Clarke and Austen" during their early membership of the Graphic Arts Society, such that a black and white image *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (illustrated sometimes in the early twentieth century), ostensibly by Clarke, is more reminiscent of Austen (164).[26] Clarke himself was broadly inspired by Beardsley, as evidenced by his 1926 edition of Goethe's *Faust*. This included Clarke's swathes of black, inclusion of spindly fingers, and what we would now recognize as manga-style faces (cartoonish in appearance, with small chins, large eyes and mouths — possibly owing to the

[26] This drawing is held in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

orientalist aesthetic popular in the *fin de siècle*). However, Austen's faces are more naturalistic than Clarke's. Despite sharing a similar degree of naturalism with Beardsley's, they are less pinched in appearance. Austen's imaginative take on the texts he illustrated is undeniably his own.

T.S. Eliot (Austen's contemporary) famously points out in *The Sacred Wood* that

> One of the surest of tests [of the superiority or inferiority of a poet] is the way in which a poet borrows. Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different than that from which it is torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion.
>
> (1928a, 125)

In the modernist era, ideas of artistic originality were in flux; intertextuality and borrowing had become part of artistic invention. Typically, young artists are influenced by their precursors, particularly those with a captivating idiosyncratic style, like Beardsley or Yeats. Weaker artists capitulate to such influences: stronger artists absorb them. Philip Larkin's early poetry was deeply influenced by Yeats — and then Auden — before he finally developed his own, extremely distinctive, poetic style, but his early work is strengthened rather than vitiated by that energising appropriation. We see the same in Austen. As he remarks: "[r]emember that past achievement in art is as potent a fertilizer as any of the modern 'isms'" (69).

It is worth noting that Beardsley did not invent the Symbolist motifs which are so apparent within his work. Consequently, their appearance within Austen's does not necessarily constitute a part of the latter's 'stealing.' Chris Snodgrass finds a "plethora of icons the Victorian middle class associated with diseased satanic evil" to be present within Beardsley's illustration titled "Of a neophyte and how the black art was revealed unto him by the fiend Asomvel" (1995, 55; fig. 5). This image was made to "accompany [… a] story about the making of the philosopher's stone […] that appeared in […] the *Pall Mall Magazine*" in 1893 (Zatlin 199). In the image, a "detached, intruding head," a diabolical "fiend," hovers over "a provocatively androgynous neophyte" (Snodgrass 55). 'Satanic icons' include "a fecund hothouse flower, a glaring, bare-breasted femme fatale […] molten candles and candlesticks bearing demonic, horned grotesques [… and] the detached intruding head of

the fiend itself" (55). Each of these elements is found repeatedly throughout Symbolist art, Austen's (somewhat Symbolist) illustrations included.

Fig. 5. 'Of a neophyte and how the black art was revealed unto him by the fiend Asomvel.' *Pall Mall Magazine* I, June 1893.

Austen's agenda when employing Beardsley's style contrasts significantly with that of his predecessor. Beardsley provides generalised depictions of scenes, whether from poetry or plays: his illustrations do not significantly engage with or interpret the text, enriching our understanding of it. The images from his *The Rape of the Lock* are a case in point: highly stylised and intensely patterned, with limited gesture and expression, they attractively convey basic textual narrative. We see none of the rich symbolism, or meaningful gesture and expression, found in Austen's illustrations. Austen 'steals' and repurposes (or perhaps adapts) Beardsley's style, giving much attention to the complexities of *Hamlet*.

Austen's work is important to analyse in part because it marshals its conceptual and aesthetic characteristics from a demonstrably diverse array of contemporary forms and influences. While in some respects the style of Austen's *Hamlet* looks back to Symbolism, Art Nouveau and Aestheticism—led by Beardsley and James A. M. Whistler—in other ways it is radically of the moment, drawing upon a contemporary movement, Art Deco, and one that emerged toward the end of the Great War: Surrealism, with its eschewing of naturalistic representation, its deliberately absurd juxtapositions, and its disturbing evocation of the Freudian unconscious. Austen's dream-like illustration "Play upon this Pipe (p. 71/229), for example, reflects a strong Surrealist influence, as Hamlet is shown surrounded by a shapeless, chaotic vortex, while disembodied faces howl above him. A *putto* or cupid sits atop a skull, toying with a flower. Edward Lucie-Smith observes that "most of the standard

Symbolist properties [are] masks, snaky monsters, severed heads, *femmes fatales,* new interpretations of Classical mythology" (78). As I will discuss, all of these make an appearance in Austen's *Hamlet*. Nemesis, as a "new interpretation of Classical mythology," is a case in point. Symbolism is primarily concerned with interiority, providing a visually rich and emblematic aesthetic. This makes it an ideal choice for Austen's representation of Hamlet, where interiority, especially Hamlet's, is the primary focus.

D. Richardson and others welcome Austen's departure from a Beardsley-esque style. She remarks

> It is an earlier collaboration with Disraeli, in the decorations resuscitating the witty profanity of *Ixion in Heaven*, that he celebrates, in 1925, his final escape from the influence of Beardsley: an influence visibly waning in the work produced towards the end of his London period (19) [...]. From this date onwards there is no trace left in Austen's work—save perhaps the purity of line it served to foster—of the influence of the master whose genius overwhelmed the young carpenter coming up to town from rural remoteness [...]. In Beardsley's static vitality he felt his ideal fulfilled, spent arduous days and nights in imitative effort. [He produced] R. H. Keen's *The Little Ape* illustrated in a manner that suggests Beardsley modified by a certain wistful sadness [...] to be found in all of Austen's earlier work, [... including] in *Hamlet*
>
> (19–20)

But despite this criticism, she acknowledges the "quite splendid Beardsley effect [in *Hamlet*], a work which," as mentioned, "gained for the artist a name, a foundation membership of the Graphic Arts Society [...] and the unfailing friendship and sympathetic support" of like-minded artists (Harry Clarke, Austin Spare, Odle and Haldane Macfall) (20). "[D]uring this early period [...] Austen became for a while a member of the Royal Society of British Artists" (20–21). In her concluding statements, Richardson observes that "[Austen's] work on [*Don Juan* and *Daphnis and Chloe*] has the joyous vigour and freedom that heralded his escape from under the twin magics of London and of Beardsley" (23). Austen's preface at the beginning of this biography may represent a tacit endorsement of this remark, especially given his claim in his book on technique in illustration, *The ABC of Pen and Ink Rendering* (1937), that

> The student […] must concentrate on craftsmanship […] always on the watch for some new way of using his pen, […] playing the sedulous ape, until one day he finds he is no longer drawing like A or B, not hesitating or fumbling any more, but expressing his ideas as only he can express them. […] He has acquired a style.
>
> (x–xi)

However, Austen wholly endorses looking to other artists for inspiration: '[i]n his search for a style the student should not neglect to study the work of British artists' (xi). He as good as tells us his own influences:

> no student can afford to ignore that great body of work produced by such men as Hogarth, Blake, Rowlandson, Boyd Houghton, Keene, Sandys, Rossetti, Phil May, Beardsley, Sullivan, Griggs, Alan Odle, and Eric Fraser, to name but a baker's dozen. Inspiration can be sought in all great work, regardless of origin
>
> (xi)

In *The ABC,* Austen devotes greatest attention to Odle — devoting eight pages exclusively to his life — followed by Eric Fraser (one page). Defending the dwindling fashion of book illustration, he remarks

> If limitation of number is a virtue, then the pen and ink original is worthy of a place in the Holy of Holies—there is only one of each—while if artistic merit is considered, a drawing by Eric Fraser or Alan Odle is in every respect the equal of—but no names, no knocks.
>
> (ix–x)

He repeatedly refers to these artists with reference to the technicalities of illustration: "the pen drawing of such artist as Alan Odle, Eric Fraser, Rockwell Kent, F. L. Griggs, etc., will yield endless instances of the right use of pattern as a means of expressing vital form" (23). "My own method is pedestrian and methodical, that of Odle is emotional, wayward, and dictated by his restless imagination, while Eric Fraser's method may perhaps be considered intellectual. He seems to regard his designs as problems to be solved with the pen" (50).

Austen was averse to naturalism in book illustrations, claiming

> too often [Frederick Sandys'] contemporaries, led by their desire to present the illusion of reality, allowed their backgrounds to tail off into vague sketchy impressionism. They did […] by this means enhance the dramatic quality of their drawings, but nearly always at the expense of design. A book illustration, if it is to take its right place on the page, should be considered as a design in two dimensions, and should not entice the reader to look through the page, as through an open window, into a three, or four, dimensional world
>
> (74)

He points to the "decorative quality" of Sandys' works as making them superior to those illustrations identified by their "naturalism" (74). This accounts for the two dimensionality and "decorative quality" of Austen's *Hamlet,* and indeed, all his drawings. Victorian artists Gilbert, Selous, Meadows (among others), and twentieth-century illustrators such as Rackham, Heath Robinson and Dulac, were surely on his mind.

Austen's Contemporary Reception

Upon its initial release, Austen's *Hamlet* was met with a moderate number of (for the most part) favourable reviews. The *Daily Mail* called it a "[m]agnificent edition." The *Nottingham Shire Guardian* remarked: "[i]t is almost superfluous to say that the illustrations and decorative presentations [are] beautifully designed and drawn, and the work stands as one of the best illustrations of Shakespeare that has come from the press for many years." Encouragingly, both periodicals were quoted in the *Times Literary Supplement* in its new publications section ("Selwyn & Blount," 7 December 1922).

In *The Studio,* Herbert B. Grimsditch observed that "[Austen] has […] boldly essayed a 'Hamlet,' and emerged from the ordeal with conspicuous success" (1924, 49). *The Era* spoke praisingly of *Hamlet*: "the 'decorations' by John Austen […] show not only rare artistic skill, but a fantastic imagination in the drawing of the scenes and leading characters" ("An Illustrated Hamlet," 2 November 1922). The *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* titled its review of Austen's edition "A Sumptuous 'Hamlet'" and described the work as "a very

remarkable and distinguished piece of bookmaking”; “[s]uch distinguished work in black and white one very rarely sees” (1 November 1922). Praise heaped on praise.[27]

Within the first week of publication, the edition was among the most popular books purchased from the Selfridges book department in Oxford Street, London.[28] *The Scotsman* wrote that

> A wealth of imagination and artistic draughtsmanship has been expended by Mr John Austen on the illustrations and decoration with which he has accompanied […] *Hamlet* […]. They [are] bold, free, and delicate line drawings. The delineations of the spirit and action of Shakespeare’s immortal tragedy are symbolically suggestive rather than realistic; they are, first and last, decorative, but decorative with inward meaning and with grace and strength of line. The notes of tragedy and comedy, of satire, pathos, humour, and profound philosophy, broadly and fully expressed in the larger drawings, are echoed and repeated in these numerous minor figures and devices […]. Altogether, the volume is a gift book that, while claiming high appreciation for its artistic qualities, awakens thought and stimulates fancy on themes and characters that, although endlessly worked over, have never become outworn.
>
> (“Selwyn & Blount,” 7 December 1922, 2)

Less perceptive reviewers, baffled by Austen’s somewhat oblique methods of interpretation, seized upon the ‘de luxe’ nature of the book’s publication to dismiss it as a merely decorative ‘coffee-table book,’ a consumerist accessory for the rich to display their taste and refinement. “Mr John Austen’s Hamlet is precisely what Mr Armfield’s book is not — a Gift Book” remarked one reviewer: “[f]or him Hamlet is the excuse for a series of decorations, both small and full-page” (*The Outlook* 1922, 470). *The Bookman* agreed that

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[27] The *Western Mail* remarked that the “volume, alike on the literary and artistic side, cannot fail to give immense satisfaction” (1 December 1922). *The Stage* observed that Austen’s edition is “[a] most artistic and sumptuous production […] Austen’s illustrations of scenes and characters, as well as his head-pieces and tail pieces and his marginal drawing [sic] are all delightful” (“Chit Chat,” 19 October 1922, 14).

[28] According to their recommended books section in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 November 1922, 7.

> [t]he book is certainly one of the handsomest of the season. It is extremely well printed, and Mr Austen has evidently given great thought to the arrangement of his page and the proper adjustment of the text to the illustrations [however, …] he has scattered all over the book little drawings, whose significance is not always apparent. [… the 'interludes'] drawings […] would be suitable to an edition of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream," to 'Hamlet' they are merely inappropriate.
>
> ("Belles Lettres," *The Bookman*, 178)

Since this reviewer perceives interpretation as the mere confirmation of conventional prejudices about — for example — a "simple" Ophelia, it is not surprising that he finds that

> Mr John Austen's illustrations to "Hamlet" make no attempt, except in two very powerful drawings of Polonius and the King, at interpreting the play realistically or accurately. He has preferred to give us a Hamlet and an Ophelia which are decoratively rather than imaginatively true. His Hamlet, for instance, does not suffer from an excess of flesh, and his Ophelia does not look at all simple, but rather ridden with the unease which Beardsley borrowed, and in borrowing intensified, from Burne-Jones.
>
> (178)

The critic seems opposed to the idea that a drawing's significance may not be immediately obvious, again demonstrating a lack of comprehension and blandly conventional expectations. Also alluding to Beardsley's influence, *The Outlook* was critical that "[Austen's] drawings have much in common both in spirit and method with those of Aubrey Beardsley" (1922, 470). It insinuates that Austen's work is merely derivative and therefore lacks meaning and complexity.

As shown by the above commentary, Beardsley's influence on Austen was framed in contrasting language, both positive and negative. The *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* observed that

> Austen is an artist who owes much to Aubrey Beardsley; there is the same sensitive refinement of line, the same infinite invention, that enables him to cover the surface of

> a garment with the most intricate and beautiful decorative designs, the same instinct […] for placing his subject, and of balancing his blacks and whites. On the other hand, there is hardly a trace of that peculiarly morbid and unwholesome quality that gave Beardsley's drawings such decadent feeling
>
> (1 November 1922)

The *Thanet Advertiser* wrote that "it is amusing to trace a development from a tight, crystalline style, suggesting the influence of Aubrey Beardsley to a looser more individual handling. But in all his work one feels that the design grows out of a sympathy in the subject" (13 August 1937, p. 4). According to *The Bookman,* Austen's work

> betrays […] the influence of Beardsley: and he has something of the master's skill in massing his blacks. He has, however, a personality of his own, as shown in the very dramatic pictures of Claudius and in the beautiful half-page drawing which opens Act V. […] His is the most promising work in this mode we have seen since Mr. Harry Clarke's […] illustrations to Poe.
>
> ("Hamlet," December 1922, 2)

In contrast, in recommending *The Golden Hind* (edited by Austin Spare), a periodical for which Austen was briefly a major contributor, one critic opined that "[t]he further Mr. John Austen gets away from Beardsley, the better are his pen drawings" ("Review of the Golden Hind," *A Quarterly Magazine of Art and Literature,* 1922). *The Scotsman* dismissed *The Little Ape* in one sentence*:* "[s]ome illustrations by Mr John Austen recall the art of Aubrey Beardsley" (17 March 1921). The *Daily Herald* framed its brief review of the same work in similar terms: "Austen's 'decorations,' which include five full page illustrations, furnish quite an amazingly good imitation of the technique of Aubrey Beardsley" (4 May 1921).

Austen's Modern Reception

The modern reception of Dover's reissued *Hamlet* (2010) has been generally welcoming. The bookseller Swan's Fine Books observes (on its website) that Austen's *Hamlet* is "a fine example of illustration from this period, by a major figure in English book illustration." On their websites, Dymocks bookseller and Book Depository claim that it

"remains unparalleled among all other treatments of *Hamlet* to this day […] one of the few artefacts of the early pinnacle of his creativity.[29] The MET Museum observes of its original first edition that "Austen devised striking black-and-white illustrations for this luxury edition of *Hamlet*."

Jeff A. Menges' coffee-table book *Shakespeare Illustrated: Art by Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac, Charles Robinson and Others* (2011) — another Dover publication — includes two full page illustrations from Austen's original *Hamlet*. Listing the collection's "[h]ighlights," Menges refers to "John Austen's *interpretations* of *Hamlet*" (my emphasis), while alluding to "episodes" from *The Tempest* by Dulac and Crane (127). This contrasting description suggests that the author deems Austen's work more literary-critical in nature than Dulac and Crane's, a distinction I discuss in my comparison of their illustrated works. Another contemporary collection which includes Austen's *Hamlet* images — one which Alan Young justly deems a "coffee table" book (2013a, 407) — is that by the art critic Peter Whitfield, titled *Illustrating Shakespeare* (2013). According to Sillars, although this book "is clearly not an academic study" (2014, 107), it deserves praise for being "aimed at a far wider readership than previous studies" and for containing "work [that] is interesting and not easily available elsewhere" (105–6). However, Sillars is critical of the book for a number of reasons, not all of which are justified. For example, he queries Whitfield's preference for Austen's *Hamlet*, but without providing justification, thus simply demonstrating his own "preferences":

> There are some odd comments […]: John Austin's [sic] 1922 *Hamlet* is not one that many would call "triumphant" (14), especially in comparison to Edward Gordon Craig's Cranach Press version of 1930 which […] is discussed with Eric Gill's version. That both emerge unfavourably in comparison to Austin's [sic] is one example of the preferences shown in the book.
>
> (105)

[29] The book manufacturer Courier Corporation shares an identical description (1 January 2010). Their description is probably the original given that they bought Dover Books, the publisher that reissued Austen's *Hamlet*.

Social media has taken fondly to Austen's *Hamlet*. Indeed, Austen's imagery seems to have enduring appeal as part of an "alternative" aesthetic. Retaining a populist profile but without wide distribution, the artist has become a sort of cult figure. "Open Culture," an online platform which brands itself "the best free cultural & educational media on the web," calls his *Hamlet* "A Masterpiece of the Aesthetic Movement" (16 September 2016). This particular entry has been shared 13.5 thousand times at the time of reading. On his online journal/blog "Feuilleton," artist and designer John Coulthart remarks, "Austen's *Hamlet* is often rated as his *chef d'oeuvre*, and with good reason, he manages to lend some visual splendour to a play whose concerns are a lot more introspective than the usual illustration standards of *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." Paraphernalia with Austen's designs include a dress by the Australian clothing brand "BlackMilk," sew on patches ("A Banshee in the Attic" shop on the online vintage retailer Etsy) and t-shirts ("Pixie Apparel" on Etsy).

Although infrequently referred to in critical literature, Austen's other works remain positively received to this day. Martin Steenson, in a three-page biography and detailed catalogue of Austen's works, confirms that the artist's "conscientious approach to illustration produced delightful books" (2004, 36).[30] Tim Killick considers that Austen's illustrated *Don Juan* (1926; published by John Lane, The Bodley Head) "reflects developments in academic criticism of [the play] by presenting densely layered, fluid visual references which match those of the text" (101). Austen synchronises image with text in an astute fashion, here and in other works, *Hamlet* included. Killick deems his images for the poem "sexually frank," with "a modern sensibility that incorporates the arch grotesquery of Aubrey Beardsley and the deco angularity of Tamara de Limpicka" (101). It is notable that this Beardsley-esque quality continues in Austen's work after *Hamlet* (1922), given that numerous other critics consider Beardsley's influence to have waned entirely not long after its production (see below). Austen's style may have changed, but the raw sexual tenor of Beardsley remains in situ.

There is considerable nudity in Austen's *Hamlet*: in the images of Ophelia's death, imagined scenes of Hamlet and Ophelia alone together, the femme fatale miniatures, and the frank exposure of Ophelia and Gertrude's breasts above their corsetry. According to Killick,

[30] In the Imaginative Book Illustration Society's *Studies in Illustration* journal. The critic published a similar article in 1982 titled "The Book Illustrations of John Austen" in the *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*.

in *Don Juan,* "Austen's image ["Haidée and Juan were not married—the fault was theirs, not mine"] confronts the sexual dimension of their relationship […] the picture […] gives Byron's description of his couple, 'Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek' (*DJ*, II. 194.8) its full licentious resonance" (101). Likewise, Austen's Hamlet and Ophelia are, it is openly implied, sexually active. They frolic naked together, and Ophelia is unabashed by her bared breasts despite wearing a dress.

Another similarity between Austen's illustrations in *Don Juan* and *Hamlet* is that he casts both protagonists more negatively than was usual in his era. His dark rendering of the prince will be addressed in the early chapters of this thesis. Killick points to the "somewhat cruel and cold version of *Don Juan*" Austen provides: the artist

> emphasise[es] the antihero's existential anxieties and self-destructive streak, rather than his seductive charm and good-humoured fatalism. […] Austen appears to be depicting quite a different character to Byron's mostly boyish and ingenuous creation: a much less sympathetic Juan, who embodies an iconoclastic, Modernist reaction to decades of Victorian disapproval of the Don's escapades. This is in part a recognition of the decadent, even gothic, potential of the text
>
> (101)

Despite Killick's claim, the general consensus at the time of publication was not wholly sympathetic. The *Gloucester Echo* was critical of Don Juan's character, claiming that Austen "has produced a careful, conscientious study of the legend and its sources, saying, I imagine, all that can be said on this […] somewhat unsympathetic subject" (15 February 1940, 4). It is significant that the editors both consider Austen's illustration to be Modernist, as this points to his increasingly up-to-date style, and the equivalent of speaking, suggesting the intellectual depth of his visual language. We see these sentiments repeated in other reviews, discussed below.

W. B. Gerard, in *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (2006), observes that "Austen's black-and-white depiction of [a] scene" from *Tristram Shandy* (1928; published by John Lane, The Bodley Head) "represents a stylistic departure from previous visualizations. Austen's abstracted characters are reduced to bold, sweeping curves, frequently manifested as

graceful arcs that combine into Hogarthian serpentine lines" (73); "the figures are similar, with bulky, nearly interchangeable limbs. Body language is the primary means of projecting character" (73). The critic concludes that "Austen's stark rendition deprives the reader of extraneous embellishment and naturalistic rendering" (75). We see the beginning of this in Austen's *Hamlet*, where the figures are far from naturalistic and often suspended in empty space. However, the artist's interest in carefully representing the details of the text remains: as Gerard observes, "[a]lthough he departs from more traditional styles, Austen closely adheres to Sterne's text" (75). Luisa Calè succinctly captures Gerard's longer point in her review of his book: "Stern left physical detail and a sense of the whole to the reader's imagination" (577). Austen's illustrative imagination loosely fills in the gaps while allowing significant interpretive freedom.

Contemporary Reception of Subsequent Works

With few exceptions, Austen's works post-*Hamlet* were received positively. The *Graphic* considered Austen's *Rogues in Porcelain* (1924; published by Chapman & Hall) to be "a very beautiful anthology peculiarly pleasing to the eye […] and perfectly printed […] his coloured designs are a sheer delight" ("The Art of Adventure," 2 October 1924, 32). Richardson describes them as a "massed gaiety of colourful decoration" and, in conjunction with their "shapely little poems," a "single artistic achievement" (19). Although these coloured illustrations are reminiscent of Austen's *Hamlet* images, critics do not seem to notice any debt to Beardsley. This suggests an unsubtle critical tendency to associate black-and-white drawing with Beardsley, regardless of the nuances of style.

Moving on from the influence of Beardsley, Austen adopted a style that Steenson describes as "best exemplified by *Daphnis and Cloe* [1926]" (published by Bles), influenced by "Greek vase painting and the new Art Deco" style (Steenson 35).[31] We can trace a similar effect in Austen's illustrations accompanying *Everyman and Other Plays* (1925; published by Chapman & Hall). *The Stage* determined that, "[a]s the publishers say of John Austen, his imagination spans the ages, and certainly […] his decorative skill and taste have been

[31] *The Era* described *Everyman* as "a joy to handle, […] Austen's illustrations have a virile strength and a fine sense of decorative beauty" (4 November 1925, 4). Both *Rogues in Porcelain* and *Daphnis and Chloe* were advertised in *The Times Literary Supplement* and in other periodicals ("Chapman & Hall: Rogues in Porcelain," Sep. 11, 1924; "Daphnis and Chloe," Jan. 28, 1926). This suggests that Austen was already beginning to make a reputation for himself.

employed to admirable purpose in illustrating the text of 'Everyman[…]"; "John Austen's decorations should be scrutinised again and again, with ever-growing enjoyment" ("John Austen Decorations," 29 October 1925, 2).[32]

Richardson claims of Austen's *Ixion in Heaven* (1925; published by Cape) that here, the artist "celebrates […] his final escape from the influence of Beardsley, an influence visibly waning in the work produced towards the end of his London period" (19). *Ixion* certainly represents a departure from the Beardsley-esque style of *Hamlet*. The figures' faces are eerily long and typically shown in profile. Their bodies and costumes are primarily curvilinear, without the angularity visible in *Hamlet*. These are Picasso-like figures.[33]

Austen's close adherence to the text yet independent creativity became obvious to critics. Reviewing *Don Juan,* the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* described Austen as "in the front rank of the younger illustrators" of The Bodley Head. "Boldly and imaginatively has he conveyed the sensuous romanticism and daring fancy of Byron's masterpiece of love and satire bringing out with a rather remarkable artistic intuition the very impression of these long sweeping stanzas […]" ("Illustrations de Luxe 'Don Juan' Pictorially Embellished," 25 November 1926, 3). Remarking on the same edition*, The Sphere* considered Austen an "admirable and diligent book-artist"; "in adapting himself to the poem, he has not, through weakness or inadvertence, adapted himself to other people's requirements. His drawings seem to me to be, on the whole, extremely successful. I have alluded to them exclusively because, although the volume is a handsome one, they really are the book" ("Perfection in Book Production," 13 November 1926, 13).[34]

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[32] *The Times* found that Austen brought his "versatile art and imagination to bear on the morality plays […] in '*Everyman* and Other Plays'" (10 December 1925, 10). They include discussion of Austen among those of well-known illustrators such as Rackham.

[33] The *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* claimed that "Disraeli's 'Ixion in Heaven' […] illustrated by Mr. John Austen […] becomes a volume of infinite delight. Mr. Austen, both in colour and black and white work, aptly joins his own style to its occasion. His drawings are not only illustrations in the strict sense, they are also in themselves witty executions which compel the responsive chuckle" (9 December 1925, 6). Reflecting on his drawings in *Ixion,* the *Graphic* considered that Austen "would probably be an ideal illustrator for a Balzac novel" ("The Christmas Reader,"19 December 1925, p. 44).

[34] With greater subtlety, *The Scotsman* observes of *Don Juan* that "in their sharply contrasted masses of light and shade, [Austen's drawings] have a powerful effect, which goes well with the rather sombre sense in which Mr Austen appears to have accepted the poem" (17 January 1927).

In 1930, Austen produced his second illustrated version of one of Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It* (published by William Jackson). Writing in *The Studio*, the critic D. W. Last considered that many illustrated editions of Shakespeare "are a thorough bore to those who like to view their Shakespeare through the untrammelled eyes of their own fancy. It will be a pleasure, however, to see more of Mr. Austen's work [beyond his *As You Like It*], especially in colour" ("John Austen's *As You Like It,*" 1930, 464). In 1939, Austen illustrated in colour from wood engravings for *The Comedy of Errors*.

Austen's contemporary originality became highly apparent to reviewers. According to *The Scotsman*, his illustrations in *Tristram Shandy* (published in 1928), "present[ed] a skilful adaptation of the methods of the eighteenth-century wood-cut, with a fine, vigorous line, and, in the full page-plates, rich blacks disposed in bold masses. The sentiment of the drawing is essentially modern" (29 November 1928).[35] In 1927, *The Graphic* described him as among those "modern artists of a highly individualistic turn" (qtd. *The Scotsman,* 12 December 1927, 2). Likewise, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* claimed that "newness […] pervades [Austen's *Tristram Shandy*] by reason of the original illustrations and decorations. His drawings are quite unlike the work of any other book illustrator" (11 September 1928).

However, despite all of this, Austen's work fell into partial obscurity. Howard Simon's *500 Years of Art in Illustration: From Albrecht Durer to Rockwell Kent* (1945), a visual rather than descriptive collection clearly aimed towards the general reader, includes thirteen illustrations of Austen's. John T. Windle's review of the book foreshadows the muted reception of Austen's work to follow. The critic (justifiably) condemns Simon's neglect of some well-known illustrators, but then laments "the author's undue emphasis on the works of two men, John Austen and himself" (1943, 252). Insinuating that Austen's illustrations aren't worth significant attention, this critique ignores his work's popularity and positive reception. This reflects Sillars' conviction (alluded to above) that Austen's work does not merit emphasis in an illustrated arts collection. The artist's rare inclusion in anthological works on Shakespeare in art is symptomatic of, and contributes to, the difficulty of tracing his influence on subsequent artists. Indeed, I have found no scholarship which alludes to his artistic legacy in this regard, despite that he was a popular artist with international appeal, a

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[35] The *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* described Austen's *Tristram Shandy* as "the latest and most beautiful edition of the work […]" (11 September 1928).

teacher at the Thanet School of Art in Kent for several years,[36] and wrote (as mentioned) *The ABC of Pen and Ink Rendering,* a guide on the technicalities of illustration aimed at new artists.

The Edition Described

Austen's 1922 edition is distinctive despite its loosely art-nouveau style. Buckram constitutes the spine of what is a quarto size (A4) hardback book with black paper-covered boards and an illustrated dust jacket.[37] The front cover has a pictorial stamp in gilt and green (sky-blue in the reprint; see fig. 6), while the capitalised art nouveau lettering and decoration on the (white) spine is gilt (the 2010 Dover reprint has a black spine to match the covers and blue and gilt print). The endpapers are white with grey illustrations. The fore and bottom page edges are untrimmed. There are fifteen full-page plates including pictorial title page, half-page illustrations; pictorial half-titles introduce each Act and there are numerous small decorations. The sheer abundance of imagery is one of the traits which serve to make this edition (and its Dover reprint) virtually unique. The organisation of text and image remain unchanged in the reprint. The edition is paginated to 175 (except for pp. 1 to 8). Its original printers were Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Ltd. (London and Aylesbury) and its medium: illustrated process prints.

[36] "Another distinguished artist who widely appreciated in America where he has illustrated a great number of books is Mr. John Austen, of the […] Thanet school of art, who is a perfect master of engraving and drawing" ("The exhibition," *Thanet Advertiser,* 19 March 1937, p. 4).

[37] Buckram is a stiff cloth composed (nowadays) of cotton, although previously this was more often horsehair or linen. It was used as a cover to shield books from damage.

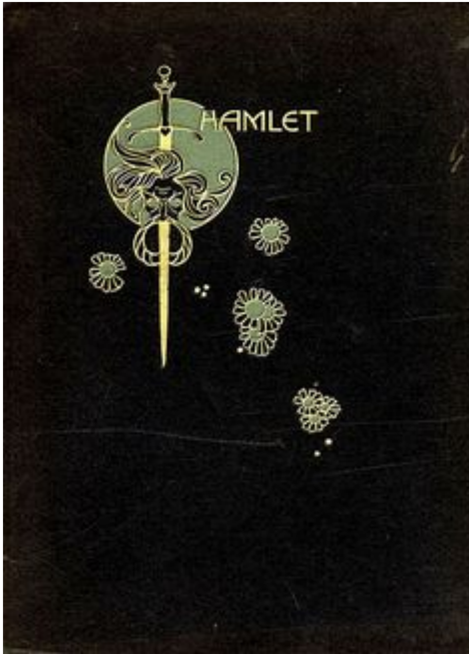

Fig. 6. John Austen. Front cover of *Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. 2nd ed., Calla Editions series, Dover Publications, 2010.

The detail of the original front cover has outlines all in gold. A humanoid mask with long flowing hair, furrowed brow and gaping mouth penetrated by a sword, rests within a green moon. To its right, seven daisies with black leaves and green centres descend. The moon — symbolising madness, a regularly occurring motif in Austen's edition, discussed in the following chapters — and the daisies resemble one another. In conjunction with the love heart on the hilt of the sword, the green evoking nature, and the falling flowers, the decoration calls to mind Ophelia's drowning; this anticipates the fact that she plays a prominent role in these illustrations. Resembling an aged man, the mask represents Claudius or the Ghost, while the sword alludes to revenge. The impaled mask motif repeats itself in the preface image ("Seated Hamlet"; p. 8/224) which faces the opening to 1.1, implying that revenge, Claudius and the Ghost precipitate the events of the play.

The original (and only) dust-jacket (fig. 7), abandoned in the Dover reprint despite its impressive detail, allowed Ophelia greater prominence. The dust-jacket resembles a title page, dominated by Ophelia's face. Her youth and the abundant daisies surrounding her make clear her identity. In contrast, the actual title page (present in both the original and new editions) depicts Hamlet in isolation, staring intently ahead. That Ophelia dominates the original dust-jacket and that this is the first image the reader sees implies that her significance equals that of Hamlet. Also — indicating her importance — her face takes up far more of the book jacket cover than Hamlet's does in the corresponding image.

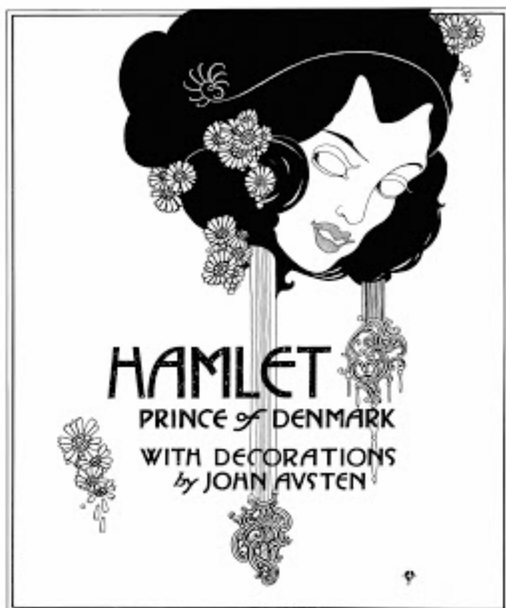

Fig. 7. Austen. Dust-jacket of *Shakespeare's Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. 1st ed., Selwyn & Blount, 1922.

In the 2010 Dover reprint, the omission of this drawing diminishes the initial impact of Ophelia's presence, rendering its removal a significant editorial choice. Ophelia's face as shown on the dust-jacket is disturbing, as she wears a scheming, even vindictive, expression; she is eerily disembodied and her eyes are almost entirely white, anticipating the first edition's emphasis on the supernatural. This simultaneously suggests Ophelia's psychological agency and Hamlet's anxiety about that agency, and his consequent perception of women as fundamentally dishonest and embodying a sinister sexuality. Hamlet's appearance in the illustrations is equally disconcerting, often casting him as malignant. In these chapters, given that the differences between the two printings, dust-jacket excepted, are effectively negligible, I will be using the more conveniently accessible Dover reprint as a reference.

The costuming in Austen's edition is historically eclectic, as in many modern productions, suggesting that costume is used for effect rather than accurate historicization. In some cases, the characters are dressed in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century fashion from Northern Europe, such as in the "Dramatis Personae" ("DP") image (p. 5/224). The men are shown wearing richly patterned long tunics, robes and leggings, while the women wear long dresses with generous drapery and sleeves. The costuming in the "Play upon this Pipe" image (p. 71/229) and "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" (p. 37/226) drawings is similar. Medieval

periodisation recalls the Victorian nostalgia for an imaginary Middle Ages.[38] Actor/director Charles Kean was the perfect embodiment of this drive, employing medieval (rather than contemporary) costume and props for his 1850 production of Hamlet at the Royal Princess Theatre, thus reflecting its ultimate source in a medieval narrative. Victorian illustrated editions of Hamlet often lend the play a medieval setting: examples include the illustrations of Selous, Gilbert and Meadows.

However, Austen's Hamlet is sometimes dressed like a Regency buck, as on p. 46/228 ("Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost"), p. 51/229 ("Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure") and p. 8 ("Seated Hamlet"). These portrayals point to the emotionally sensitive, intellectual Hamlet of the Romantic period, before the Victorians formed an idea of Hamlet as dignified and "stately" (see below). In the "Seated Hamlet" image, his brooding expression while sitting in thought calls to mind a Romantic prince. Meanwhile, the figures on p. 9/225 ("The Ghost and the Guardsmen") and p. 78/231 ("Puppeteer Death") wear early modern attire. Nemesis is typically dressed in hooded robes with swathes of fabric, resembling a Renaissance statue of a saint.

In the "Ophelia Hallucinates" image (p. 116), Ophelia's garments eclectically combine the sartorial style of two different periods: the tapered gaping sleeves and ridged neckline are medieval, while the bustle of her dress dates to the late nineteenth century. The vast size and expense of the latter emphasises her aristocratic standing, while the medieval elements of her attire evoke simplicity and beauty. Taken together, these suggest Ophelia's physical beauty and ingenuousness—her unstained morality, despite her social station. That she is shown fully clothed contrasts with her dominant mode of representation (partially or wholly nude) in the edition. Similarly, in Ophelia's "Sane Portrait" (p. 29/225), her costuming is suggestive of medieval and late nineteenth-century fashion, (again) due to her gaping sleeves and bustle, but also recalls 1920s evening attire. Elsewhere, she is dressed as an eighteenth-century courtesan. The significance of these costumes is discussed in the chapter "Austen's Ophelia: A New Autonomy." To explore the distinctiveness of Austen's interpretation, I will now

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[38] Stuart Sillars observes that "[w]hether perceived as a consolatory refuge from industrialised society or a moral signpost towards regeneracy, history was essentially a dialogue in which the present anxiously examined the past and sought its own identity" (2012, 5).

briefly survey the predominant approaches to *Hamlet* within which Austen's can be contextualised.

Historicising Hamlet: His Culturally Evolving Persona

Because of their close acquaintance, D. Richardson is the best (and incidentally, only) source we have for uncovering what kind of theatre (and which performances) Austen attended. She observes that, before returning to Kent and while still living in London, "he devoted the scant leisure he allowed himself to amateur theatricals" (20). Based on this remark, he may not actually have seen any of the critically reviewed, more professionally acted *Hamlets*. However, Austen moved in educated, middle-class circles where the theatre would have been discussed, and probably would have seen performance reviews and the exhibited artworks which it inspired: he is thus likely to have been influenced by major performances of Shakespeare, if only indirectly.[39]

Austen's portrayal of the darker facets of Hamlet's implied interiority was partly anticipated by a strand of literary, theatrical and (implied) visual artistic criticism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which provided an increasingly sinister depiction of his character. However, Austen's darker interpretation also departed from this discrete shift in the popular imagination of that time, exceeding the degree to which Hamlet was cast negatively. To situate the reading implied by his *Hamlet*, and to show how Austen offers an atypical, thought-provoking reading of Hamlet's character compared to his artistic contemporaries and forebears, this thesis primarily will survey critical responses to Hamlet's character from the time when visual depictions of Shakespeare's plays began to gain ascendency.

It remains necessary, however, to address the early modern conception of a 'dark' Hamlet, given that this inevitably feeds into later incarnations of a 'dark' prince. *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy. According to Fredson Bowers, Elizabethan playwrights presented their

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[39] I have made numerous attempts to find out more about Austen's relationship to the theatre. The British Library archives do not possess any of his letters, and none have been published. Dorothy Richardson makes no mention of his theatre going in her letters (nor Harry Clarke in his) and explicitly precludes the idea in *John Austen and the Inseparables*. Given the current global pandemic, I am prevented from travelling to his hometown in Kent to undertake *in situ* research.

heroes as "normal persons caught up by demands often too strong for their powers and forced into a course of action which warps and twists their characters and may even lead to the disintegration of insanity" (110). In *Hamlet and the Acting of Revenge* (1987), Peter Mercer claims that "[d]elay, and the pretence of madness that almost always goes with it, are such prominent features of revenge tragedy that it seems likely that they are crucial to its meaning" (2).

"The clergy and moralists of the sixteenth century make it clear that [revenge] was unequivocally abhorred, and treated under the law—at least in theory—as severely as murder" (4). However, as he observes, "this knowledge cannot, by itself, tell us what the *drama* of the day made of the theme" (4). There are contrasting views on this: Bowers claims that an early modern audience made "the customary compromise between a formal set of religious and moral ethics and an informal set of native convictions," otherwise known as "personal justice" (40). "That Hamlet cannot secure legal justice forces him to rely on personal justice; this distinction would be recognised by the audience which would thereupon approve his ends and await with interest his procedure" (90).

In contrast, in *Hamlet and Revenge,* Eleanor Prosser imagines a different kind of contemporary audience which unequivocally believed revenge "illegal, blasphemous, immoral, irrational, unnatural, and unhealthy, not to mention unsafe […] it was also thoroughly un-English" (20). Mercer, however, takes the middle line: "no audience of tragedy recoil[s] in moral outrage or [simply] approves the hero's ends and then 'await with interest his procedure'" (5). Rather, "[i]ts experience is both more ambiguous and more disturbing, a matter, as Aristotle insists, of both fear *and* pity" (5) "Tragedy persistently gnaws at the certainty of faith. That is why it so disturbs" (6). For "the hero of tragedy," "revenge" is "morally inescapable, but […] also morally suicidal." "[I]ts execution forces the revenger to strip himself of every vestige of nature, to destroy his own humanity" (6). It can be surmised from these comments that early modern audiences could have recognised the disturbing quality of Hamlet's behaviour and actions. The degree to which early modern audiences would have condemned him for them, including his quest for revenge, is another matter, one for which the present investigation (thankfully) does not require an answer.

Lewis makes the assessment that "[n]ext to nothing is known of the ways in which Hamlet was initially regarded. […] the later seventeenth century has little of note, and almost

nothing positive, to say about the play" (3). He points to the third Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, as "the first, or one of the first, to delineate an approach to *Hamlet* that has held the field since the second half of the eighteenth century" (1). Although Shaftesbury professed to dislike Shakespeare due to his "natural Rudeness, his unpolish'd Stile, his antiquated Phrase and Wit [etc.]," he conceded *Hamlet*'s virtues as "almost one continu'd *Moral*: a Series of deep Reflections, drawn from one Mouth, upon the Subject of *one* single Accident and Calamity, naturally fitted to move Horrour and Compassion. It may be properly said of the play […] that it has only ONE *Character* or *principal Part*" (1:144). Lewis observes that, "[w]ithin this, the emphasis is placed squarely upon Hamlet the morally and philosophically significant character at the expense of *Hamlet* the ambiguous and frequently bewildering work of drama (1). However, while "Shaftesbury may have laid the egg, […] it took the Romantic sensibility for it to hatch" (2).

When Shakespeare took the story of Amleth from Saxo Grammaticus and Belleforest as material for that popular new genre, the Revenge Tragedy, he (or possibly the author of the mysterious Ur-Hamlet) complicated his task by moving the action of the play from pagan Denmark to its Christian successor. For Amleth the Viking, avenging his father's murder is a clear and simple duty; for Christian Hamlet, from the University of Wittenberg (1502), it represents an intractable moral conundrum, since revenge in Christianity is explicitly forbidden. Shakespeare invited his original audience to see Hamlet as deeply compromised in moral terms by the task he faces and its temptations to self-righteous cruelty and an assumption of moral exceptionalism, a tendency taken even further — to the point of parody — in Vindice, the 'hero' of Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606). This savage early modern Hamlet came to be strikingly re-imagined, however, in the Romantic period, as a slightly effeminate, melancholy victim.

Literary character study began with eighteenth-century neoclassical critics, as scholars (such as Margreta de Grazia in '*Hamlet' Without Hamlet* (2007)) demonstrate. The Romantics, rejecting Samuel Johnson's less favourable view earlier in the eighteenth century, rarely acknowledged that Hamlet's behaviour was sometimes cruel and even malicious. Remarking on the prayer scene, Johnson claims that Hamlet's "speech [… that] contrives damnation for the man that he would punish, is too horrible to be read or to be uttered"

(1765, 236, n. 7). Since the Romantics, there has been a reluctance to acknowledge the malice which forms part of his fictional personality, as suggested by the following lines:[40]

> I have heard of your paintings well enough. God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and you lisp, you nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.
>
> (3.1.144–47)[41]

Hamlet's misogyny is made apparent by his conviction that all women are deceptive and manipulative, veiling their corruption in pretended naiveté. Despite his ugly behaviour in these and other moments, neoclassical critics focused on praising the prince's intellect, and the Romantics, his emotional sensitivity. Henry Mackenzie claimed that the prince "throws around him, from the beginning, the majesty of melancholy, along with that sort of weakness and irresolution which frequently attends it" (*The Mirror*, 1780). Goethe said of Hamlet that his behaviour was symptomatic of "a great deed laid upon a soul unequal to the performance of it" (1824, 29). Hazlitt described him as marked not "by strength of will or even of passion, but by refinement of thought and sentiment" (1838, 80). Coleridge considered him to possess "great, enormous, intellectual activity, and a consequent aversion to real action" (qtd. Foakes 72). These critics buried their criticism in praise.

Nineteenth-century Victorian criticism extended this tendency, preferring to sentimentalise Hamlet the "sweet prince." The theatre in both this and the preceding century did the same, censoring lines which were incompatible with an idealised Hamlet; for example, during the prayer scene, if Claudius' lines were not excised to hinder audience sympathy (Rosenberg 627), then Hamlet's almost certainly were — that is, if the scene was not cut altogether. Charles Kemble, William Macready, Edmund and Charles Kean each excluded the scene, while David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, Samuel Phelps and Edwin Booth (albeit only late in the role) instead elided Hamlet's speech. Irving's decision to incorporate the speech in an 1864 production stunned critics, such that one provided the entire speech in his review, as if convinced that readers would not know it (Glick 24–25).

[40] Or however his character might be framed, as per, for example, New Critical discourse.

[41] All references to the text are from the Arden *Hamlet,* edited by Harold Jenkins (Methuen, 1982). References to other texts are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

Hamlet's apparent immunity to critical censure may have owed something to the fact that Romantic and early Victorian intellectuals tended to perceive his character as a moody artistic or intellectual type with whom they could identify. Coleridge believed himself to have a "smack of Hamlet" in him (89), while Hazlitt observed that Hamlet's "reality is in the reader's mind. It is we who are Hamlet" (80). This sentimentalised perspective had been anticipated by earlier views of the prince, outlined above. Having been taught to identify and sympathise with Hamlet, educated audiences could not help but see him in a flattering light. Romantic criticism had planted the seed for an enduring reluctance, from critic and reader alike, to criticise the prince's character. In 1849, putting his finger on one of the leading questions of my present inquiry and departing significantly from the Romantic (and Victorian) approach, Charles Knight wonders "[…] why is it, when we think upon the fate of the poor storm-stricken Ophelia, that we never reproach Hamlet? […] we blame him not; for her destiny was involved in his" (328).

Writing at the end of Victoria's reign and seventeen years before Austen's *Hamlet* was released, A. C. Bradley summarises what he calls the "most popular view" of Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia:

> Hamlet's *love for Ophelia never changed*. On the revelation made by the Ghost, however, *he felt that he must put aside all thoughts of it*; and it also seemed to him necessary to convince Ophelia, as well as others, that he was insane, and so to destroy her hopes of any happy issue to their love. This was the purpose of his appearance in her chamber, though he was probably influenced also by a longing to see her and bid her a silent farewell, and possibly by a *faint hope* that he might safely entrust his secret to her. If he entertained any such hope his study of her face dispelled it; and thereafter, as in the Nunnery-scene (iii. i.) and again at the play-scene, he not only feigned madness, but, to convince her that he had quite lost his love for her, he also addressed her in bitter and insulting language. *In all this he was acting a part intensely painful to himself*; the very violence of his language in the Nunnery-scene arose from this pain; and so the actor should make him show, in that scene, *occasional signs of a tenderness which with all his efforts he cannot wholly conceal*. Finally, over her grave the *truth bursts from him* in the declaration quoted just now ["I loved Ophelia"], though it is still *impossible for him to explain* to others why he who loved her so profoundly was forced

> to wring her heart
>
> (1904, 154; emphasis mine)

It is difficult to find evidence of this remorse and "tenderness" in the text. Bradley's own view is more nuanced, but equally exculpatory:

> This man, the Hamlet of the play, is a heroic, terrible figure. […] If the sentimental Hamlet had crossed him, he would have hurled him from his path with one sweep of his arm [… . This view] ignores the hardness and cynicism which were indeed *no part of his nature*, but yet, in this crisis of his life, are indubitably present and painfully marked […] his cruelty to Ophelia was *partly due to misunderstanding, partly forced on him, partly feigned* (my italics)*;* still one surely cannot altogether so account for it, and still less can one so account for the disgusting and insulting grossness of his language to her in the play-scene […] .That this embitterment, callousness, grossness, brutality *should be induced on a soul so pure and noble is profoundly tragic*
>
> (104)

Even an intellectual like Bradley is seduced by a "feminine" Hamlet.[42] Although traditionally feminine attributes — coded as such in a heroic warrior culture like that of Hamlet's father — such as being attentive and caring, never appear in the prince, the Victorians still try to attribute them to him.

It seems reasonable to suppose that patriarchal preconceptions had prompted critics to be more forgiving of Hamlet (and the Ghost — this is the subject of the second chapter "Diabolical Influences: Nemesis, Death and the Ghost"). The late nineteenth century, however, saw an increasingly dark depiction of Hamlet in criticism, theatre and illustration. This seems to be associated with the rejection of gendered subservience among educated women in the West, represented by the "New Woman" movement. This suggests also a championing of Ophelia — a questioning of the patriarchal simplification of her

[42] I acknowledge that "femininity" is a problematic term due to its association with often antiquated, problematic cultural assumptions, but cannot find a superior substitute for conveying my intended meaning in this and other contexts throughout this thesis.

representation and/or a growing interest in her "experience" at the hands of Hamlet. As I will demonstrate, we see this reflected in Austen's imagery.

Stage influences will inevitably have fed into Austen's depictions of Hamlet and Ophelia, even if only through their impact on public sentiment. The prince was generally cast in a benevolent light onstage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, largely due to the Romantic insistence on his sensitivity and intelligence. However, in general, the Victorians showed less interest in Hamlet's intellect than their predecessors, with the exception of Henry Irving's prince in the late nineteenth century. As I will show, reflecting the intellectuality of Hamlet's Romantic persona, Austen's prince is at times intensely cerebral, such as in the "Seated Hamlet" illustration on p. 8/224.

Irving was the first to present an intensely "psychological" and plausibly insane prince late in the Victorian era (*Academy*, 18 September 1897). To Yeats' child self, he provided a "lean image of hungry speculation" (Bk. 1). However, Irving was not an especially emotional prince, and consequently was criticised for the "entire absence of tragic passion" (Towse 1884, 666). Lacking emotional complexity, his Hamlet was not truly romantic in conception; instead, he appears to have been somewhat sentimentalised, in keeping with Hamlet's Victorian imago. Irving claimed of the nunnery scene that "through all [the prince's] bitter raving there is visible the anguish of a lover forced to be cruel" (*Notes,* no. 2, 530). However, there is little material in the text to support the interpretation that anyone forces Hamlet to be persistently "cruel" to Ophelia. Irving's exculpation of the prince was typical of Victorian patriarchalism.

Four of Austen's depictions reflect this sentimentalised perception of the lovers' enduring emotional proximity (examined at length in the chapter "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship"). These show the lovers naked together (pp. 44/227, 76/230, 145/235), and Hamlet grieving in the wake of Ophelia's death (pp. 144/235 and 145/235). The first mourning image ("The Graveyard") portrays the prince standing beside her grave, distraught and imploring the heavens for justice — he is so tormented that he appears almost inhuman — while the second ("Ophelia Drowned") depicts Hamlet kneeling beside Ophelia's corpse, his head lowered in ineffable misery. Also reminiscent of Irving's performances, Austen's prince, as I will discuss, conveys both feigned and real insanity. Charles Russell claims that the actor's performance in the nunnery scene

surpassed feigned lunacy and became a “real frenzy” (1926, 39). Several decades later, another critic remarked of Irving’s performance that the “psychical torment” of Hamlet’s inability to act brought “the threat of madness hovering nearer and nearer” (Phillpotts 1969, 85). Like other major actors of the period, Irving contributed to the cultural zeitgeist and influenced ensuing Hamlets, indirectly impacting Austen’s artistic imagination.

Irving’s successor Johnston Forbes-Robertson lacked the unstable quality of Irving’s Hamlet. Some considered him too cheerful, preferring a more morose and/or disturbed prince, while others were highly satisfied with his more upbeat rendition. The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* was pleased: “Mr Forbes Robertson’s embodiment has quite fulfilled the extremely high expectations of it”; he is as “eminently sane and loveable and pleasing” (18 September 1897). The *St James Gazette* was ambivalent, not minding that “Mr. Robertson speaks his first line, ‘A little more than kin and less than kind,’ not apparently in any spirit of bitterness but of sorrow.” “The pale intellectual face, the almost ascetic appearance, the nervous apprehensive look, constitute an ideal realization of the popular impression of the moody Dane.” However, “his ‘antic disposition’ is […] so obviously ‘put on’ that at times it seems to be in the nature of good-humoured chaff.” He was a “Hamlet who at no moment yields himself body and soul to the whirlwind of passion raging within him” (13 September 1897, 6). His prince was one of “celestial gaiety” (Shaw 1961, 93; 87). Austen’s Hamlet appears flippant and almost playful in the drawing of his intrusion into Ophelia’s chambers on p. 74/230 (“Ophelia’s Closet” — discussed below), possibly a reflection on Forbes-Robertson’s performance or a trend which it instated. The actor also played the part in the Gaumont-Hepworth *Hamlet* silent film of 1913, an extremely expensive production which was shown at cinemas in London. Austen may well have been familiar with it.

In contrast, Jean Mounet-Sully’s execution of the role in 1896 in France delivered the darkest reading of the prince to date. He and Irving delivered the only genuinely ‘dark princes’ to enter the public eye in the late nineteenth century. However, despite presenting an exception, Mounet-Sully’s Hamlet was imagined by Mallarmé to represent Hamlet’s defining qualities in the *fin de siècle* (1956, 60). Mounet-Sully imagined this “good and tender” prince as “born to love but devoted to hatred and scorn” (qtd. Jacquot 423; 421). Likewise, as explored below, there are moments in Austen’s drawings where we appear to (briefly)

glimpse a benevolent Hamlet corrupted by psychological turmoil. Hapgood deems Mounet-Sully's prince to be "[m]onomaniacally devoted to revenging his father's murder and compelled as well to hate his uncle, despise his mother, and suspect Ophelia, he had become a misanthrope" (1999, 46). There is an imaginative affinity between Mounet-Sully and Austen's Hamlets, as both cast the prince in a deeply unflattering light.

Mounet-Sully's disturbing prince anticipated an increasing number of manic, at times openly vicious Hamlets which emerged in the twentieth century. John Barrymore's Hamlet of 1925 was considered by some to "subdue[…] all" of the prince's "unreasonable elements" (*Time and Tide,* 27 February 1925). Orson Welles saw him as "tender, virile and witty, and dangerous" (qtd. Hapgood 60), while Margaret Webster, who performed a minor role in the London production, believed that "a glittering, lithe, demonic quality shone through like flashing steel" (1969, 301). Colin Keith-Johnston possessed "youth at odds with the universe turned ugly in its anger" (*Manchester Guardian*, 26 August 1925), while John Gielgud's Hamlet was admired for "never understressing the quick bitterness and brutality of this crawler between heaven and earth" (*Graphic*, 14 June 1930). This language still reflected admiration, but admiration for a Byronic hero. However, as I will show, there is little trace of this sentiment (or archetype) in Austen's illustrations.

Seeming to more closely reflect Austen's Hamlet, criticism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries portrayed Hamlet in a still more troubling light than the stage. In *Hamlet et Fortinbras* (1896), Mallarmé wrote that "[t]he black presence of the doubter spreads poison, so that all the principal characters die, without his always taking the trouble to stab them behind the arras." D. H. Lawrence was equally condemnatory, describing the prince as a character "repulsive in its conception, based on self-dislike and a spirit of disintegration" ("The Theatre," *Twilight in Italy*). In *The Wheel of Fire* (1930)*,* G. Wilson Knight called Hamlet an "ambassador of death," in juxtaposition with "the healthy and robust life" of Denmark's inhabitants (35; 48; 35). But this grimmer Hamlet did not yet please public audiences.

Recent critical scholarship more closely reflects Austen's dark reading of Hamlet, pushing in the opposite direction to the more positive interpretation visible in stage and film productions. Lewis makes no attempt to excuse, as per nineteenth-century criticism, or ignore, as per much of late twentieth- and early twenty first-century critique, the prince's

cruder traits. "Just as directors have felt compelled to cut—and sometimes to rearrange—in order to stage *Hamlet* successfully, so scholars and critics have neglected those aspects of the play that have threatened to hinder their interpretations of its central character" (1). "Hamlet is emphatic but unconvincing, given to philosophising but philosophically incoherent, conscience-stricken but capable of the utmost cruelty without a second thought, and self-interested without being able to determine where that interest, or that self, might lie" (9).

To expand on a previous point (made on p. xxv), Lewis considers the prince's character to be suitably explained by "psychological, rhetorical and moral-political theorising that lay at the heart of sixteenth-century humanism" (6). In contrast, in '*Hamlet' Without Hamlet*, De Grazia argues that his dismal behaviour is primarily an artefact of his role as a Vice figure (179–193). Unable to vocalise his disappointment at being cheated of his political inheritance, without being condemned for treason, Hamlet manifests Vicelike behaviour in expressing his anger. Although these critics approach accounting for Hamlet's actions differently, they share an understanding that he is often cruel, even malicious. Their assessments reflect the reading implied in Austen's imagery.

Historicising Ophelia: Not So "Pathetic"

Austen's revisioned Ophelia is more subversive than his Hamlet because the idea of a docile, compliant, submissive Ophelia is more central to the Victorian patriarchal reading of the play. This is evidenced by the fact that despite sophisticated developments in the representation of Ophelia at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the infantilised and sexualised Ophelia persisted up until the most seen *Hamlet* in cultural history, discussed below. I will now offer a brief survey of Ophelias within which to situate Austen's own depiction of her. These evolve in such a way as to partly anticipate his portrayal of her character.

By the late nineteenth century, Ophelia had become, like her princely male counterpart, a cultural icon. But where the prince was a type of the complex brooding intellectual, Ophelia was thought to embody simpler, less cerebral qualities, such as grief, heartbreak, and estrangement, as demonstrated by contemporary theatre reviews (see below). Popular depictions like John Millais' *Ophelia* of 1851–52, the most iconic representation of her

character to date,[43] and Mary Cowden Clarke's collection of tales entitled *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850), containing an invented childhood for "Ophelia, The Rose of Elsinore," were symptomatic of the powerful hold Ophelia had on the cultural sensibilities of Victorian England. Many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British artists found inspiration in Shakespeare, and in Ophelia in particular. The Pre-Raphaelite obsession with Ophelia is typified by Millais' painting.

For the most part, nineteenth-century representations of Ophelia were sentimentalized and sexually objectifying, with one or two interesting exceptions in which Ophelia is granted sexual autonomy. One Pre-Raphaelite, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, produced a quietly controversial illustration of Hamlet and Ophelia (1858–59), in which Ophelia is shown with unaccustomed agency, but the disruptive possibilities of Rossetti's representations seem to have gone unnoticed (see Moore). Images in cheap illustrated editions, keepsake portraits and popular artworks reflected the theatrical tradition of representing her as a docile, infantilized figure, reflecting the patriarchal ideal of the Victorian woman.[44] As I will demonstrate, Austen's representation of Ophelia seems to deliberately subvert these stereotypes.

The New Woman movement of the late nineteenth century was pivotal in encouraging a series of assertive stage Ophelias, anticipating Austen's depiction of her. A further contributing factor was the increasing inclination of actors and directors to draw on an unbowdlerized text, causing Ophelia's 'problematic' sexual awareness to regain its textual prominence.[45] Responding to this incipient disruption, Austen presented Ophelia with

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[43] Consider, for example, the 2018 spin-off Hollywood film *Ophelia*, directed by Claire McCarthy, portrays its protagonist (Daisy Ridley) as a "a dead-ringer for John Everett Millais' classic portrait of Ophelia" when "she decides to act insane" (*Variety,* 23 January 2018).

[44] In her chapter '"Pretty Ophelia": Mid-Century Ideals in the Parlour,' Rhodes describes keepsake books as "illustrated gift volumes featuring sentimental poems and stories and steel engravings of wholesomely beautiful women and gallant men" (25).

[45] In the nineteenth century, lines found in the play scene (3.2) and the mad scene (4.5) were cut in performance and excluded from reading editions. This practice remained common until the 1940s (Glick 24–25). The first unexpurgated stage version of Hamlet was performed in Stratford in 1899, followed shortly by London in 1900. Frank Benson directed both (Glick 20). Forbes-Robertson (1897) and Irving (1879) excised bawdy lines from the play which Edwin Austin Abbey can be seen to visually reference in *The Play Scene in "Hamlet" (Act III, Scene ii)* (1897). Hamlet is shown lying down, his head proximate to Ophelia's lap.

Bowdler's *Family Shakespeare* (1843) seamlessly (and without indication) elides 'problematic' lines. Hamlet's crudely punning request of Ophelia in the mousetrap scene ("Lady, shall I lie in your lap?") and the obscene equivoqués this prompts ("Do you think I meant country matters?" (3.2) are excluded. Similarly, Ophelia's bawdy singing when mad is

pronounced autonomy in his illustrated *Hamlet*. He was among an increasing number of contemporary artists to produce readings of Ophelia which reflected a direct influence from a 'complete' conflated text rather than the stage.[46] However, the prominence (twelve appearances, five of which are individual portraits), agency and complexity afforded to his Ophelia trumps contemporary and preceding stage and visual artistic depictions.

Showalter's landmark essay 'Representing Ophelia' demonstrates that Ophelia's transformation in the popular imagination mirrors cultural changes pertaining to women, but as Kaara L. Peterson and Deanne Williams observe, Ophelia is not merely the "*effect* of […] culture" but the "generator" of "cultural shift" (5). Had Austen's Ophelia been exposed to a much larger audience of readers, she could have discreetly impacted the early twentieth-century zeitgeist in England. The critics add that Ophelia's "character's representational life" has since then "witnessed even greater expansion" (1): for example, "[s]ince the mid-1980s, Ophelia has […] acquired an emancipated, Western-style sex life" (1). Cases in point are Branagh's (1996) and Michael Almereyda's (2000) films, which show her in bed with Hamlet. Spin-off novels and plays have incorporated the same motif, such as Steven Berkoff's *The Secret Love-Life of Ophelia* (2001), *Ophelia* (2008) by Lisa Klein and *Falling for Hamlet* (2011) by Michelle Ray. As I will demonstrate, Austen's Ophelia is a manifestly sexual being; in this respect, her appearance contrasts significantly with comparatively conservative (preceding and contemporary) depictions, while anticipating modern-day, sexually more adult Ophelias.

Despite Ophelia's vastly expanded role in various cultural media, major modern-day Ophelias of English-language onscreen productions of *Hamlet* are granted half the screen time, dialogue and singing allotted to her character in Laurence Olivier's (otherwise textually eviscerated) film of 1948. Branagh's is the only exception, with 1233 words rather than the

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mostly excised: "Let in the maid that out a maid / Never departed more"; "Young men will do't/ If they come to't" (4.5). For Victorian audiences, the 'complete text' typically meant a conflation of Q2 and F1, abridged in whatever way actors and directors considered appropriate, although these changes followed an identifiable pattern, the likes of which Hapgood explains (6–7)).

[46] Rhodes discusses this in her chapter "Performance Anxiety: Pictorial and Theatrical Representations at the Fin de Siècle," especially on p. 160. As she observes, Abbey's painting *The Play Scene* exemplifies the way in which visual artists increasingly relied on textual evidence rather than memories of performances, as demonstrated by the proximity of Hamlet's head to Ophelia's lap.

803 of Laurence Olivier, the 456 of Franco Zeffirelli's or the 447 of Michael Almereyda's (Leonard 101).[47] Austen's Ophelia is afforded far more prominence.

In Olivier's 1948 film, Ophelia is "highly sexualised" but also "immature" and thus child-like. She is ignored more than even the play's text seems to suggest. For example, Ophelia's (Jean Simmons) upper thigh is ostentatiously bared while she thrashes on the floor, crying with the high pitch of a child, and the camera frequently focuses on her breasts during the mad scenes. During her singing, Horatio is speaking as if without interference. In general, the other characters find her madness regrettable but insignificant. Meanwhile, in Zeffirelli's 1990 film, Ophelia (Helena Bonham Carter) is made to appear sexually inexperienced. As Kendra P. Leonard notes, her lewd singing loses its implication of sexual awareness because she sings 'Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day' while sewing in her chambers before Hamlet intrudes, instead of during the mad scene (112). Conveniently, her singing during the mad scene is too far away to be heard, as she is observed from a window while outdoors. The flowers with their implied judgements are given to the wrong characters, negating their significance and consequently her apparent insight.

In Almereyda's 2000 film, Ophelia (Julia Stiles) repeatedly transitions between being "babyish" and "independent" (113). She listens to her family with an air of petulance and her father does up her shoelaces, yet she is unabashed when warning her brother of sexual hypocrisy and largely stands her ground in conversation with her father regarding Hamlet's advances. Despite the encouraging sign of her occasional independence, her severely reduced part means that she is barely heard relative to other Ophelias. Unlike these Ophelias, and despite her sometimes child-like appearance, Austen's is not disempowered by an infantilised representation of her sexuality. For reasons I will explore in the "Ophelia: A New Autonomy" chapter, this facet of her depiction is (subversively) made sinister. I will now provide an outline of the chapters into which my discussion of Austen's representation of Hamlet and Ophelia is divided.

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[47] Kendra P. Leonard details these changes at length in her essay 'The Lady Vanishes: Aurality and Agency in Cinematic Ophelias' (2012).

Reading John Austen's *Hamlet*

The sequencing of ideas in this thesis reflects its core aim: to clearly and convincingly demonstrate Austen's unparalleled interpretation of *Hamlet*. Further, by dividing the chapters in the following way, the thesis places equal emphasis on Hamlet and Ophelia. Chapter One, titled "Austen's Dark Prince: Demonic and Deranged," begins with Hamlet both because Austen's illustrations foreground his disturbing behaviour, offering a surprising contrast with contemporary and preceding depictions in visual art and onstage, and because the manner of Hamlet's portrayal impacts on the reader's impression of Ophelia, the other focus of this investigation. As mentioned, Austen makes explicit the disturbing reading of the prince captured by Mallarmé's profoundly negative interpretation of his character in the *fin de siècle*. Part of my discussion of Hamlet entails examining his relationship with the Ghost, as this instigates the plot and ostensibly motivates his behaviour. This will comprise Chapter Two, entitled "Devil with a (Dis)pleasing Shape." A bridging chapter (Chapter Three) "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship: You Did Love Me Once" scrutinises his relationship with Ophelia; it ties up the dark reading of Hamlet gleaned from Austen's illustrations, while introducing Ophelia's portrayal in the same imagery. Chapter Four, titled "Ophelia: A New Autonomy," will proceed to analyse her character's depiction in-depth, developing a more-complete picture of her surprising agency. The concluding chapter (Chapter Five) "Austen's Terrifying Feminine" will venture beyond Austen's portrayal of Ophelia herself, investigating his visual inclusion of the supernatural themes tied to her in the play's text. A more detailed outline of the chapters' configuration is as follows:

Chapter One analyses the dark reading of Hamlet foregrounded in Austen's illustrations, originating in the play's text but often absent from the art of his predecessors. As mentioned, his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forebears preferred a sympathetic portrait of Hamlet's character. For the Romantics, this meant a prince in the possession of profoundly intellectual and feminine qualities. For the Victorians, this meant a princely, dignified, well-meaning Hamlet. Austen's images appropriate the Romantic 'feminine' prince and transform him into a dangerous figure with *femme fatale* attributes: for example, in one illustration, Hamlet closely resembles Caravaggio's *Medusa*(s) (1596; 1597). The images polarise Hamlet's persona, implying that he is initially unwilling to give in to the Ghost, but then comes to delight in destruction, indiscriminately harming innocent bystanders whom he deems guilty by association. Wilson Knight takes a somewhat similar viewpoint in *The*

Wheel of Fire. He imagines all the play's characters, excepting Hamlet, to be "creatures of the earth"; Hamlet he considers "inhuman." Knight deems Claudius to be a capable king, Gertrude a noble queen, Ophelia a sweet and good lover, and Polonius a decent, albeit tedious, advisor.

Seeming to reflect that Hamlet harms others unnecessarily, Claudius warns Laertes that injuring others is a common corollary of seeking revenge:

> If you desire to know the certainty
> Of your dear father, is't writ in your revenge
> That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
> Winner and loser?
>
> (4.5.140–43)

Austen's drawings also suggest that Hamlet's madness may be genuine and that it partly precipitates his increasingly cruel, at times frenzied, behaviour; further, that his thwarted ambition — something generally downplayed by critics — is a contributing factor. Austen's *Hamlet* visually points to the play's repeated references to bad dreams, beggars and starvation, all of which are tied to this theme. His images provide the surprising interpretation that Hamlet's death represents an act of divine justice, Nemesis demanding retribution for his murdering of innocents. Contributing to this discussion, this chapter also outlines the differences between depicted and acted Hamlets from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, addressing Austen's repurposing of these traditions. In particular, it investigates his sometimes epicene prince, comparing it with Delacroix's depictions of an androgynous Hamlet dating to the nineteenth century, and a filmed Hamlet contemporary with Austen (1921), directed by Svend Gade and Heinz Schall, and starring Asta Nielsen.

Chapter Two builds upon Chapter One, exploring Austen's dark Hamlet in terms of the latter's ambiguous and problematic relationship with the Ghost. I argue that the imagery interrogates Hamlet's agency but on the one hand, suggests that the Ghost is diabolical and possesses Hamlet, driving him mad, and that the prince is helpless in the face of supernatural forces; on the other, it implies that Hamlet desires to perform the Ghost's bidding. These co-existing, conflicting readings render the interpretation on offer in Austen's illustrations unique. The implication that the Ghost is "the devil" anticipates Wilson Knight's claim that this is the case, reflecting that art and art criticism may influence one another indirectly.

Depicting the Ghost as demonic and feminised, Austen's imagery again draws on the *femme fatale* topos, amplifying the more ominous and troubling aspects of the spirit made evident in the play's text. This is contrary to sentimentalised Victorian depictions in which the Ghost is a benevolent, paternal figure.

Here, I also compare Austen and his Romantic predecessor Henry Fuseli's radical reinterpretation of the Ghost, to demonstrate the impact of influences other than Beardsley on Austen's imagery, but also, irrespective (or partly because) of this, the unique perspective on the play which his illustrations provide. I examine Austen's illustration "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" (p. 37/226) alongside Fuseli's renderings of the same (1780–85; 1789; 1785).[48] Although their interpretations differ in that Fuseli underscores the Ghost's sublime masculinity and supernatural power, while Austen produces a far more sinister and decrepit spirit, implying that the Ghost infiltrates Hamlet's mind, their depictions also share some significant likenesses: for example, Austen's portrayal of the Ghost subtly alters the ambiguous moon/halo symbol as found only in Fuseli's Boydell painting, ironically implying that the Ghost delivers unholy tidings. Although the depiction of Austen's Ghost in the "Seated Hamlet" image contrasts significantly with its representation in the "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" illustration, appearing far more dignified and impressive, it evokes a seductive and yet menacing atmosphere. In summary, despite that Austen and Fuseli's artistry differs in terms of chronology, style and designated audiences, it is beneficial to compare their works because of their unusual similarities and Austen's seemingly having been influenced by Fuseli. This chapter also touches on the Ghost and Hamlet's depictions as the agents of Nemesis in Austen's illustrations, while examining Death's associated symbolic function.

Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia is the subject of Chapter Three. I argue that Austen's illustrations suggest that Hamlet's dismal treatment of Ophelia is symptomatic of his misogyny. Austen's imagery investigates the dynamics of their relationship, shedding

[48] Fuseli produced two images of Hamlet's initial encounter with the Ghost (Scene 4). In both, it directs the prince out of the frame while his companions attempt to hold him back. The first anticipated the composition of Fuseli's famous *Hamlet* contribution to the Boydell Gallery, and was entitled *The Ghost and Hamlet* (1780–85). The second was a painting, and No. 8 in the Boydell Collection. The original (1785–90) is lost. However, it was subsequently engraved by Robert Thew (1758–1802; fig. 20) and published by the Boydells in 1796 (the Boydell family sought to establish a permanent gallery for which well-known artists would be commissioned to provide works pertaining to Shakespeare. The venture lasted from 1785–1805). Fuseli later painted the closet scene: *Gertrude, Hamlet, and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father* (1785; fig. 26).

equal light on Hamlet's troubled psychology and Ophelia's response to it. It amplifies Ophelia's three-dimensionality as shown in the text, placing a spotlight on Hamlet's wrongdoing in mistreating her, while amplifying her complicated response. Austen's illustrations do not portray her as a merely functional character: a two-dimensional figure whose only narratorial purpose is to suffer at Hamlet's hands, demonstrating his implied inner conflict. The artist's drawings underscore Hamlet's harsh treatment of her, abusing and then disregarding her until discovering that she has died. In the "DP" image (p. 5/224), a Hamlet absorbed in his hatred of Claudius fails to notice a kneeling Ophelia at his side, offering him flowers; in the "Tree-climbing" image, a distressed Hamlet witnesses Ophelia falling, reminding us (by means of a technique that might be called "foregrounding absence") of the fact that Hamlet shows no tenderness or concern for her in the play.

In a further instance of "foregrounding absence," in the "The Graveyard" and "Hamlet Mourning" images, he is portrayed as isolated, grieving over her corpse (something we do not see — but should expect to — in the play). Meanwhile, in the "DP" image, Ophelia's gaze is ambiguously directed: if at Nemesis, her psychological autonomy is amplified, as she is shown imploring the goddess for retribution for Hamlet's cruelty. She is presented not as a weak victim but a heroine, deserving of admiration. Nemesis frequently appears in Austen's drawings, highlighting the fact that schemes of revenge and justice drive the play's narrative. She is also involved in Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship, observing and judging Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia, while driving the couple's separation.

Chapter Four focuses entirely on Ophelia, investigating the degree to which Austen's illustrations counter the sentimentalised version of her character prevalent in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century public imagination. His imagery develops the increasingly autonomous Ophelia which began with the New Woman movement in the late nineteenth-century, foreshadowing major developments in late twentieth-century adaptations and criticism. It dismisses the Victorian perception of Ophelia as tenderly pathetic and lacking in autonomy, giving her space to determine her self-image. Her misery and hardship dominate the spotlight, while Hamlet's suffering loses the emphasis typically granted it in criticism and adaptation. Austen's illustrations insinuate that Ophelia's victimisation does not negate her strength of character, as the Victorians tended to imply, suggesting Ophelia's death to be — as the grave-diggers and the priest suspect — voluntary. On the one hand, this suggests that Ophelia fits the trope of the spoiled maiden whose sexual innocence is only restored after

death; on the other, this suggests that Ophelia has adopted Horatio's Stoic philosophy, choosing self-determination and dignity in death rather than suffering in an increasingly untenable life. Austen's *Hamlet* amplifies her sexual autonomy and barely contained insanity, rejecting the objectified and voyeuristic images of Ophelia that dominated earlier depictions.

The final chapter is dedicated to supernatural themes in the play, particularly as they relate to the feminine and the influences of Symbolism and Decadence in Austen's work. It contends that the artist's illustrations provide an unprecedented reading of *Hamlet* by overtly emphasising the feminine. This emphasis counters the play's ostensibly downplaying of the feminine: female characters are given few lines in comparison to their male counterparts, while male characters, Hamlet and Laertes in particular, resist feminine tendencies (such as crying). Instead, the feminine is foregrounded through Austen's depiction of Ophelia's volatile madness, one of the most poignant and memorable aspects of *Hamlet*. Nemesis' frequent appearance in Austen's drawings likewise implies a powerful feminine presence, apparent in the play as an ostensibly malign mother nature. Symptomatic of Symbolist and Decadent artistic influences, *femmes fatales* pervade the edition. While this resonates with Hamlet's misogynistic claim that women are inherently dishonest and use their sexuality to exploit men, and that sexuality itself is inherently base and corrupting, it is interestingly complicated by Austen's representation of Hamlet himself as a *femme fatale*. In addition to evoking a *memento mori* motif, a topos which emerges in the play, the "Death and the Maiden" imagery in Austen's illustrations (prominent in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries), particularly from a twenty-first-century point of view, seems to fit Hamlet's troubled perception of female sexuality as well as Ophelia's drowning.

This chapter will address Austen's representation of Ophelia and Gertrude as courtesans. Their depiction points to Hamlet's disquiet when faced with feminine agency. However, one way of interpreting this is not as an anti-feminist jibe but as a reflection of Hamlet's misogyny. The *femmes fatales* in Austen's illustrations more generally evoke Hamlet and the Ghost's disturbing descriptions of the Queen, Ophelia and Claudius. The presence of these creatures can also be taken to imply that Claudius', and perhaps Hamlet's, malignant influences infiltrate the natural world, and by extension, Ophelia's sexuality and selfhood. Also denoting Ophelia's (and women's) innate connection to nature, Austen's illustrations depict Ophelia as a nymph or mermaid. Further, suggesting the influence of

strong Shakespearean female characters as performed in the late nineteenth century, she is portrayed as a prophetic sacrifice, but yet also as a sorceress.

Viewed altogether, the powerful thematic narratives which underpin Austen's illustrations, as set out in each of these chapters, explain why his edition maintains such a powerful hold on its reader's attention. Further, by imaginatively and transgressively interpreting the implied psychological interiors of Hamlet and Ophelia, Austen's images reflect concomitant developments in performance and (in particular) literary criticism. His images instil the overwhelming impression that visual art can convey nuanced interpretations, capable of contributing valuable insights to critical debate. It is worth repeating here Austen's glowing description of Odle's artistic achievement since it applies equally to Austen himself: he took *Hamlet*

> and expound[ed] it with his rhythmic fantasies; explaining and interpreting his author in terms of pen work. A hint, even a word, enable[d] him to create, to the volume's enrichment and the reader's delight, an epic aside. [...] [A]t times, such is the power of his imagination, he will take his author by the scruff, and hurl him into realms of wonder unimagined by any literary scribe

The detailed study of Austen laid out in this thesis is unprecedented, not only due to its focus on this particular illustrator, but because it is a sustained, literary-critical investigation of a single Shakespearean artist. Critics of Shakespearean character depictions in visual art have mainly taken an anthological approach, charting the patterns of influence of one artist on others. However, by engaging in a more concentrated and detailed focus, this study enables an extended and analytical insight into one artist's unique reading. Austen's work lends itself to extended critical engagement, on account of its subversive, imaginative qualities, the complexity of its visual motifs, and the sheer quantity of visual material available specifically on the one play. His imagery tests the reader's imagination and intellect by challenging our assumptions about the text, inviting us to reconsider and re-evaluate our inherited patriarchal simplifications of the characters of Hamlet and Ophelia. His illustrations contrast with a recent return to more traditional interpretations of Hamlet (onstage) and Ophelia (on film). This reminds us that the vindictive attributes of Hamlet's implied personality can be muted or amplified by an artist's creative vision, and that the same can be said of Ophelia's psychological autonomy. Arguably, Austen's illustrations demonstrate that

Hamlet's character is at its most interesting when its savage qualities are realised in performance and visual art. Likewise, they show that a psychologically autonomous Ophelia is more intellectually stimulating than a "flibberty-damsel."

Austen's Dark Prince: Demonic and Deranged

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that Austen's illustrations create a much darker depiction of Hamlet than those provided by his nineteenth-century predecessors. His images offer an uncomfortably (for his contemporaries and forebears) dark interpretation of the character's implied interiority, presenting a largely unprecedented reading of Hamlet in visual art. They appropriate the amiably feminine version of the prince which took root in the Romantic era and subvert it, transforming Hamlet into a *femme fatale* figure. They polarise Hamlet's personality, implying that, at first, he reluctantly complies with the Ghost's demands, but then comes to relish the opportunity for arbitrarily attacking other characters. At times, the illustrations portray Hamlet as vicious and even diabolical, while insinuating that genuine madness and frustrated ambition may partly be to blame. Particularly inventive, they even cast Hamlet's death as an act of divine retribution exacted by Nemesis for his murderous acts.

In this and following chapters, I will draw on methodologies adumbrated in the Introduction. During this chapter's discussion of the prince in particular, I will engage with adaptation theory when comparing the visual qualities of Austen's *Hamlet* with the contemporaneous, filmic version of the play directed by Gade and Schall (1921) and starring Asta Nielsen. I will historicise Austen's *Hamlet,* illuminating the artist's appropriation and (often) reinvention of depicted and performed Hamlets of the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. I will critique the formal qualities of Austen's illustrations while relying on iconological analysis to draw out additional meaning. Finally, I will engage in character study with reference to Hamlet's implied interiority, in particular his increasingly disturbing behaviour as suggested by the imagery. Here, I intend to prioritise Austen's depictions of the prince in isolation, as these place particular emphasis on his inner thought-world.

The images I will discuss in this chapter include the following.[49] The "DP" image (p. 5/224) shows all the characters on stage together, Nemesis looming ominously. On p. 8/224, Nemesis stands behind a melancholy, intent Hamlet ("Seated Hamlet"). On p. 9/225, the

[49] I have invented their titles.

Ghost appears before the guardsmen (“The Ghost and the Guardsmen”). P. 42/227 shows Hamlet departing from his first encounter with the Ghost (“Hamlet Leaves the Ghost”). P. 51/229 portrays Hamlet possessed by a hooded figure, probably the Ghost (“Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure”). P. 71/229 depicts an unstable-looking Hamlet holding musical pipes (“Play upon this Pipe”). P. 74/230 shows his intrusion into Ophelia’s closet, Nemesis looking on (“Ophelia’s Closet”). P. 95/231 (the “Mousetrap” illustration) depicts Claudius watching the play. P. 103/232 (the “Prayer Scene”) portrays a Medusa-like closeup of Hamlet’s face. In the image on p. 105/232, Hamlet has just murdered Polonius (“Gertrude’s Closet”), while on p. 113/233, “Hamlet Drags Polonius’ Corpse” depicts the murder’s aftermath. P. 149/236 portrays Horatio grieving over a dying or dead Hamlet (“Horatio’s Grief”), and p. 173/237 depicts the play’s tragic conclusion (“The Rest is Silence”).

I will first look at those images which ostensibly cast Hamlet sympathetically, such as “Hamlet Leaves the Ghost” and ‘Seated Hamlet.’ I will then explore images which cast him in the opposite light; in particular, the “Play upon this Pipe” portrait insinuates that ‘bad dreams’ and starved aspirations motivate Hamlet’s behaviour, while the “Prayer Scene” image casts him as a Medusa-like figure. I will then examine the disturbing, unsympathetic elements of his representation both during and in the wake of Polonius’ murder (“Gertrude’s Closet” and “Hamlet Drags Polonius’ Corpse”).

Austen’s illustrations are important to analyse in part because they marshal their conceptual and aesthetic characteristics from a demonstrably diverse array of contemporary forms and influences, including artistic depictions, onstage performances and cinema. Accordingly, this chapter will begin by comparing the femininity and even androgyny of his prince with that found both in Delacroix’s depictions of Hamlet, and in Nielsen’s contemporary filmed *Hamlet*, with which Austen may have been familiar (see pp. 55–56). As Tony Howard observes, the play “throws theatre performance conventions and notions of gender into question more thoroughly than in Shakespeare’s other tragedies […] and the main focus of confusion is ‘sweet,’ ‘gentle,’ ‘piteous’ Hamlet himself” (18).

Austen's "Feminine" Prince

Delacroix is the only artist before Austen to depict overtly feminine rather than merely epicene Hamlets, principally in the 1830s and 40s (Howard 17) — his lithograph *Hamlet and the Corpse of Polonius* (1835) (fig. 8) is an example.[50] Howard observes of these depictions that "[t]hough capable of sternness, Delacroix's Hamlet is usually a fragile dreamer, a stranger in a late-medieval world of brazen masculinity and violence. All the other men, even Horatio, might have burst from Raphael canvases" (14). Helen Bailey likewise remarks that "[Delacroix's] Hamlet was always very much the same: rather slight of figure, with a fine head, long and oval, thick dark hair, swept toward over delicately arched brows; a slender Grecian nose; a straight sensitive mouth" (62). Partly explaining the "effeminacy" of Delacroix's princes, the artist asked that his friend Marguerite Pierret sit for many of these works (14).

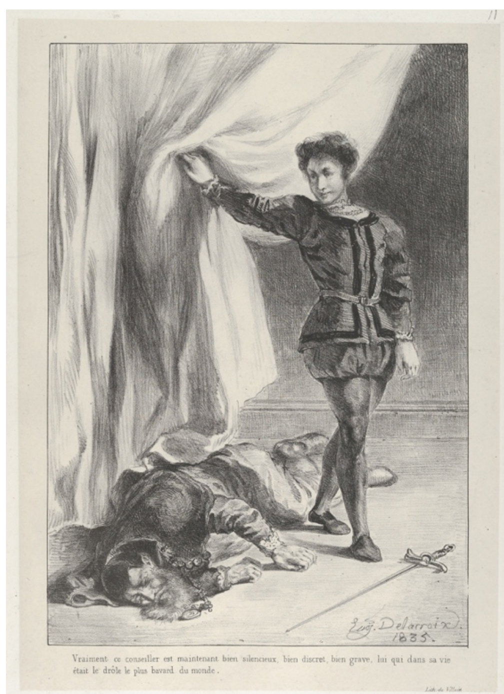

Fig. 8. Eugène Delacroix. *Hamlet and the Corpse of Polonius*. 1835, High Museum of Art, Georgia.

Delacroix was strongly influenced by, among other things, Charles Kemble's and Sarah Siddons' (*née* Kemble) performances as Hamlet, purportedly drawing Kemble at the same time as watching him in the theatre (Howard 16).[51] Sir Thomas Lawrence's paintings of Kean and Siddons elicited from Delacroix the following remark: "[n]obody has ever made eyes,

[50] He published a set of thirteen lithographs in 1843 based on the play, three of these became paintings, while three additional lithographs were added over time.

[51] He attended the play (performed in English) in Paris in 1827; Charles Kemble and Harriet Smithson were in the lead roles (Howard 16).

especially women's eyes, as Lawrence does, and those mouths, partly open and perfect in their charm" (55–56). The artist's Hamlet portraits were widely disseminated after their (re)publication in 1854, entering the public imaginary. Austen was probably influenced by them, even if only indirectly. Baudelaire was so taken with Delacroix's lithographs that he positioned copies throughout his home so as to constantly admire that "delicate, pallid Hamlet […,] slightly hesitant," the "exquisite ideal," "the fusion of drama and dream" (705–9).

However, Delacroix also portrayed a "masculine"-looking version of the character, such as in *Hamlet Comes Across the King at Prayer* (1834) (described below; fig. 9), an ostensible inconsistency which mirrors that found in Austen's illustrations.[52] Yet, outside the artists' shared interest in Hamlet's feminine qualities, there is little overlap between their respective works: frequently, in scenes where Delacroix presents a masculine Hamlet, Austen presents a feminine one, and vice versa. This points to Austen's appropriating or 'stealing,' rather than slavishly copying, this motif. Austen's (and arguably Delacroix's) frequently stereotypically feminised depiction of Hamlet reflects Romantic criticism and ensuing performance tradition, while remaining (like these traditions) fundamentally rooted in the text.

Fig. 9. Eugène Delacroix. *Hamlet Comes Across the King at Prayer*. 1834, Norton Simon Museum, California.

[52] I acknowledge that "masculinity" is a problematic term due to its association with often antiquated, problematic cultural assumptions, but cannot find a superior substitute for conveying my intended meaning in this and other contexts throughout this thesis.

In some onstage performances, a prominent facet of Hamlet's character was his femininity. The perception of the prince as deeply feminine emerged from the Romantic belief in his emotional sensitivity as being inseparable from his intellect. Hazlitt considered "effeminacy of character" to be the "prevalence of sensibility over will," encompassing "self-love" and "want of energy"; even more disparagingly, he considered Hamlet "as little of the hero as a man can well be" (1838, 248–55). Coleridge was adamant that "a great mind must be androgynous" (1835); similarly, later, Tennyson also considered the "Artist" and "Christ" to be "androgyn[ous]" (qtd. Howard 14).

Actors' incorporation of femininity into the role was met with varying success. Edmund Kean's Romantic Hamlet was praised for "a cry of nature so exquisite that it could only be compared to the stifled sob of a fainting woman" (Buell 22; 51). The *Atlantic Monthly* could not help but admire Edwin Booth's "lithe and sinuous figure, elegant in the solemn garb of sables [...] the pallor of his face and hands, the darkness of his hair, those eyes that can be so melancholy-sweet, yet ever look beyond and deeper than the things around him" (May 1866). This would have pleased Booth, who claimed, "I have always endeavoured to make prominent the femininity of Hamlet's character [...] I doubt if ever a robust and masculine treatment of the character will be accepted so generally as the more womanly and refined interpretation. I know that frequently I fall into effeminacy, but we can't always hit the proper key-note" (Booth to William Winter in 1882; in Watermeier 81). This feminine Hamlet persists as late as Olivier's 1948 film, possibly the most seen *Hamlet* in history. The femininity of Olivier's Hamlet lay in his refined, attractive features, fair hair, silvery voice and tendency to position himself languidly when deep in thought.

Austen's adoption of this motif shows awareness of its complex, ambivalent history. Some eighteenth and nineteenth-century critics were deeply disturbed by Hamlet's apparent femininity. Although popular, Garrick's prince was also criticised for lessening the "dignity, solemnity and manhood of the character, by giving a kind of feminine sorrow to it" (Buell 22) (incidentally, this demonstrates that the feminine Hamlet was actually an innovation of the late eighteenth century, and thus pre-Romantic). Barely masking his contempt, Carl Rohrbach designated the prince "a weakling"; "[w]hen he says, 'Frailty thy name is woman,' he might have used his own name" (1859, 49). Edward Vining, author of the 1881 publication *The Mystery of*

Hamlet, was nonplussed by the character*:* "Hamlet lacks the energy, the conscious strength, the readiness for action that inhere in the perfect manly character […] how comes it that humanity will admire him?" (46). Vining proposed that the prince's actions and traits were best accounted for by his being a woman; the critic is likely to have been inspired by actresses routinely performing the role.

The late nineteenth-century penchant for having actresses, both professional and amateur, play Hamlet, complicated the cultural reception of Hamlet's feminine qualities, such as emotionality and indecision.[53] The androgyny which they brought to his character would also have provided psychological complexity and ambiguity. Cross-gender casting affected Hamlet more than any other Shakespearean part. Sarah Siddons was the first, performing the prince nine times during her career, first in 1777, in Manchester. In 1851, American actress Charlotte Cushman played a famously flamboyant Hamlet. In the 1890s, Millicent Bandmann-Palmer was widely known for acting the role in British provincial towns. Among the most famous female Hamlets, Bernhardt played the prince in a self-directed production at the Adelphi in 1899; she was first to be filmed when acting the part.[54]

Despite what critics may have expected of a woman playing the male character Hamlet, Bernhardt's prince was not the delicate, faltering and emotionally sensitive Romantic of an earlier era; nor was she the brooding, misanthropic, at times disturbing and even genuinely insane, prince that had come before.[55] Bernhardt considered that the abundance of aging male Hamlets could not "combine the light carriage of youth […] with mature thought," as they lacked the "ready adaptability of the woman" (44; 142). It appears that she successfully realised her perception of the role. The *Daily Telegraph* praised her "effervescent youthfulness" as Hamlet, her "impulsive and occasionally boisterous" rendition; Bernhardt's prince was "volatile," "impulsive and irrepressible — a torrent that must be let loose"; "[h]is nobility of character, his love of truth and hatred

[53] Jill Edmonds in *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre* delineates the role's transformation in a single chapter, while Howard devotes an entire book to the topic.

[54] One critic observed of her performance that: "[t]his elegant, fair haired, pleasant Prince of Denmark will affect different people in different ways. But no one who appreciates novelty and fine acting can fail to be interested" (*The Times,* June 1899). Gerda Taranow provides a holistic overview of Bernhardt's performance.

[55] Bernhardt found the aging appearance of contemporary male Hamlets ridiculous: "He wants to play Hamlet when his appearance is more suitable to King Lear" (137).

of falsehood, are ever pronounced" (qtd. Howard 100). As I will show, while Austen might visually emphasise Hamlet's "volatil[ity]," he does little to represent the prince's "nobility of character."

As discussed in the final chapter, Austen at times portrays Hamlet as if he were a *femme fatale*. It is possible that some form of cross-gendered casting of Hamlet is to thank for this: regardless of whether Austen saw any cross-gendered Hamlets (we do not know), this was a well-established, widely known, tradition. In conjunction with Austen's seeming desire to represent a darker prince, these performances could easily have prompted him to transform the Romantic perception of the prince as emotionally sensitive into something darker and still more feminine.

Film, Illustrated Editions and Adaptation

Austen's early career coincided with the rise of silent film, and its relation to his work may be explored in terms of their shared process of adaptation. Shakespeare on silent film fits Sanders' definition of adaptation, as "the transition from one genre to another," and as "an amplificatory procedure" which simultaneously entails "trimming and pruning" (26). As touched upon in the Introduction, illustrated editions also feature these same qualities, suggesting that they too are adaptations.

Silent film, as a form of adaptation, is instructive for the analysis of illustrated editions, because both are a translation from the linguistic to the visual, using symbols and imagery to stand in for words and dramaturgy. Shakespearean silent film greatly condenses both dialogue and action, of necessity it involves a narrowing and simplification of the play's themes and characters. Austen's illustrated edition, as a translation into a different kind of visual medium, undergoes a different process. Far from narrowing and simplifying, its rich symbolic economy may open out complexities and ambiguities that are more the domain of reading than performance. However, silent cinema certainly does not entirely lack such an economy. Silent cinema shares with paintings and illustrated editions of Shakespeare's plays the ability to evoke dialogue through visual cues. Austen's work also resembles silent cinema because both consist of soundless, consecutive images which tell a story in stark black-and-white and in (often but not always) exaggerated gestures and expressions, arguably limiting

their mode of expression. In this regard, early silent film had more in common with illustration than with (typically more nuanced) stage performances.

Nielsen's famously androgynous prince from the 1921 film by Gade and Schall (see figs. 10 & 11) likewise bears comparison with Austen's depiction of him, such as the 'Hamlet seated' image. It is entirely possible that Austen saw and was directly influenced by the film, given that it became internationally famous and was shown at cinemas in London. The *New York Times* described it as an "extraordinary work," claiming that "[i]t holds a secure place in the class with the best" ("The Screen," 9 November 1921). Similarly, the *Times* called it one of the ten best films of the year (qtd. Rothwell 22).

Fig. 10. Film still of Asta Nielsen as Hamlet. "Thy name is woman: female Hamlets from Sarah Bernhardt to Cush Jumbo – in pictures," *The Guardian (UK)*, https://www.theguardian.com/stage/gallery/2014/sep/26/female-hamlets-sarah-bernhardt-maxine-peake-in-pictures. Accessed February 2020.

Fig. 11. Film still, close-up of Nielsen as Hamlet. "The Female Gaze," *Hamlet, A Woman?*, http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/commentaryguides/hamlet_a_woman5.htm. Accessed February 2020.

The film's opening title credited Vining with its central idea: Nielsen's playing the part of a cross-dressing prince. A girl from birth, her mother had hidden her real identity to protect the Danish throne. Judith Buchanan remarks that "Nielsen's fame […] was in part justly derived from her huge, expressive eyes. As Hamlet, she deftly maximises the dramatic impact both of her eyes and of her languid bodily grace to produce a hauntingly memorable performance finely poised between pathos and comedy" (2005, 60). Austen

also routinely portrays Hamlet with eerily large, feminine eyes, as exemplified by the "Prayer Scene" portrait on p. 103/232.

Film and illustration both permit the kind of closeup of a character's intense gaze that theatre cannot. Austen's illustrations reproduce the startlingly direct gazes and close-ups present not only in the Gade/Schall film but in silent cinema in general. The common cinematic trope whereby characters glance significantly at one another before speaking appears to stem from trends in *fin de siècle* directing which permeated the silent movie. Bernhardt's *The Art of the Theatre* (*L'Art du Théâtre*) (1924) encouraged the actor to glance before offering either word or gesture. Taranow offers a more detailed analysis of this (70). Nielsen's ability to capture an audience with her intense gaze and large, intelligent eyes partly accounted for her special fame (Seidl; see fig. 11). Citing her onscreen acting as an example, Béla Balázs praises cinema for its unique ability to produce instantaneously, via a close-up shot, "the unity between spoken word and hidden thought" (264).[56]

Likewise, Austen's figures have eyes which often achieve a similar effect. The characters are often positioned front-on, looking directly at the viewer (as in Ophelia's "Midnight" portrait on p. 127/234), or another character while (sometimes) in close perspective (see pp. 9/225 and 47/224, showing the Ghost and Ophelia respectively). Austen's "Prayer Scene" image (also the "Medusa" portrait) of Hamlet showcases both elements (a direct gaze and close perspective) simultaneously. The exaggerated eye makeup worn in the film is suggested in Austen's depiction of the prince on pp. 8/224 and 47/228 ("Seated Hamlet" and "Hamlet Knocking"); this likewise amplifies his gaze.

According to Buchanan, directors of Shakespearean film were particularly aware of the range and variety of acting techniques — more so than directors of other films. This enabled viewers to experience "each emotional vicissitude through the thought just behind [the actor's] eyes" (2009, 250). Throughout her book *Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse* (2009), Buchanan repeatedly emphasises the developmental impact that distinct onstage acting-styles had on silent cinema. Nielsen's preferred acting-style in silent film was naturalistic — or at least, less stylized than that of many of her predecessors and contemporaries. This allowed audiences "privileged

[56] Reprinted in Mast, Cohen and Braudy (260–67).

access to the intellectual energy and wit of her implied thought life through a range of gestures and facial flickers that [...] communicated emotional impulses that were precisely felt and thought" (228). In contrast, Forbes-Robertson maintained "a decorous resistance to cinematic possibility," preferring to mouth the dialogue and retain a distinctly stagey, British acting-style (172).

During the film, Nielsen's character often sits in a way that is both boyish and feminine: for example, delicately propping up one knee in contemplation. Likewise, Austen's Hamlet possesses a "languid bodily grace," both in the "Seated Hamlet" image, in which he tucks his knees together while sitting, elegantly winding one foot behind the other, and in the "DP" image (p. 5/224), in which his legs are also pressed tightly together, creating a sensual tilt in his hips. Contributing to an impression of femininity in the former illustration, his eyes are exaggerated by what looks like eyeliner while his lips are dark as if wearing colour on them — contrasting with the pale lips of Nemesis. Overall, Nielsen's and Austen's Hamlet are both androgynous in aspect: extremely lithe, with hair of roughly equivalent length, large, prominent eyes in an extremely slender face, and feminine bodily movements. Both exist within mediums of adaptation that permit new 'close up' emphasis on these traits. That the "Seated Hamlet" image prefaces the opening scene on p. 9/225, dominates the entire page, and creates an immediate impression of Hamlet's femininity, suggests that this impression is intended to remain with the reader throughout the edition.

Austen's prince is, in one image, represented somewhat satirically like Nielsen's Hamlet. His entry into Ophelia's "closet" on p. 74/230 reflects the comedic side of the play (2.1.77); his outstretched arms and backward gaze, although they fit Ophelia's disturbing description:

> And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
> He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
> For out o' doors he went without their helps,
> And to the last bended their light on me
>
> (97–100)

seem vaguely ridiculous. Ostensibly, the artist also portrays Hamlet sympathetically at times, such as in the illustrations where he grieves over Ophelia's corpse (see below). Thus, as in Nielsen's filmed performance, and indeed, like many subsequent productions of *Hamlet*, Austen's prince is seemingly poised between "pathos and comedy." However, unlike Nielsen's Hamlet, Austen's prince is unexpectedly dark for his era.

Despite Austen's imagery showing signs of visual influence from the Gade/Schall film, their treatment of the text is very different. Unlike Austen's illustrations, the film is not genuinely text-based, suggesting that artist and director(s) had different attitudes towards showing "faithfulness" to the text. Although titled *Hamlet,* the film includes numerous changes to script and plot, such that it and Nielsen's prince are only partially related to Shakespeare's play — however, the similarities between play and film are stark enough that the latter may still be considered a form of adaptation. As to the differences between them, the film's intertitles provide non-Shakespearean fragments of dialogue and show throughout the occasional line from various characters and plot synopses. Partly due to the demands of silent film, components of the story left ambiguous in the play's text are filled in: Nielsen's Hamlet is expressly female, to account for the prince's feminine traits and cold treatment of Ophelia (Lilli Jacobson) — supposedly denoting heterosexual indifference — while (as in Q1) the extent of Gertrude's (Mathilde Brandt) wrongdoing is made explicit: infatuated with Claudius (Eduard von Winterstein), she helps plot her husband's death. Collectively, these changes have the effect of cultivating sympathy for Hamlet, reflecting the Victorian tendency towards indulging the prince's flaws. This contrasts with the unsympathetic reading provided in Austen's imagery, explored in this thesis. In keeping with the Victorian obsession with Medievalism and historicised costume, largely initiated by Charles Kean's Shakespearean productions, Austen and the Gade/Schall film include a Gothic mise-en-scène.

While it appears that Austen's inspiration as sourced from the film was limited to visuals, rather than plot and characterisation, it is important to remember that both silent film and illustrated editions are visual mediums, rendering these influences significant regardless. At the same time, this film — and Austen's other likely influences — only partly explains his unique evocation of Hamlet. An artist's independent engagement with the text, as a reader, is an often overlooked but important way of understanding their work.

Austen's 'Sympathetic' Prince

The play allows the interpretation that Hamlet is unwilling to enact revenge but resigned to the fact that he must: "O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!" (1.5.196–97). Likewise, Austen's illustration of Hamlet abandoning his encounter with the Ghost (p. 42/227; 1.5) seems to portray him sympathetically both as the victim of the Ghost's merciless demands, and as instinctively averse to the supernatural. Making this textual link explicit, the illustration is situated immediately at the end of this scene, directly beneath these lines. It is also positioned opposite a blank page as if for dramatic emphasis. Austen's drawing contrasts with nineteenth-century pictures of the scene where Hamlet is shown speaking with the Ghost, pursuing it, or telling his friends to swear upon his sword in the wake of its departure (Young 2002, 147).

In his depiction, Hamlet is leaving the scene hunched forward, his right arm shielding his head defensively, his right hand — fingers extended and palm facing outwards — pressing the side of his head. This physical attitude recalls his pose in the previous image in the edition, "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" (p. 36/226; discussed in the following chapter), in which he masks his face as if blinded by the sight of the spirit. In both images, he seems to shield his face from the Ghost's demonic aura — appropriately, Hamlet describes the Ghost as "Making night hideous." However, "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" also goes further, implying that Hamlet is in despairing denial: covering his ears with one arm, he seems to resist the news he has received. Despite this, Hamlet carries a sword, grasping it purposefully beneath the handle as a crucifix. This recalls both his insistence that his friends "Swear by my sword [...] / Never to speak of this that you have seen" (1.5.161–62) and his intention to carry out the Ghost's demand ("Let not the royal bed of Denmark be / A couch for luxury and damned incest" (82–83); "thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain" (102–3)). Cowering miserably as he departs, Hamlet seems sympathetically portrayed as if emotionally overcome, burdened by the Ghost's revelation and dangerous injunction.

Austen's portrayal of Hamlet in this image partially evokes Beardsley's illustration of the prince in pursuit of the Ghost ("Hamlet Patris Manem Sequitur" (1891; fig. 12)), suggesting that Beardsley's image may have influenced him. Both princes possess a youthful, attractive, feminine physicality; they are extremely tall and slender, with straight hair several inches in length. Indeed, these men could be brothers, or one man shown at two separate moments in time. Similarly, they are both in profile, stepping forward with neck protracted.

In other ways, however, these princes are quite individual. Their overall physical attitudes are different, partly accounted for by the illustrations' contrasting narratives. Beardsley's Hamlet seeks the Ghost among the trees, while Austen's departs from his encounter with it (against a treeless backdrop). The men are attired differently: from the waist downwards, Beardsley's wears a long winding sash of material; his arm is likewise banded with cloth. His appearance is loosely medieval, whereas Austen's Hamlet is dressed in a Renaissance style, wearing a doublet and cap sleeves. The figures are drawn differently: composed of fewer lines, Austen's Hamlet is stylised and abstract, whereas Beardsley's figure displays chiaroscuro and consequently is more three-dimensional. The latter is visually distinct from the Beardsley-esque style to which we are accustomed.

Fig. 12. Aubrey Beardsley. *Hamlet Patris Manem Sequiiur*. 1891, British Museum, London.

In short, both present a feminine, youthful, monochromatic Hamlet, but Austen's Hamlet is conspicuously different from Beardsley's. Unlike Beardsley's isolated depiction of Hamlet, Austen's equivalent forms part of a larger interpretive whole. Consequently, the viewer compares and contrasts this Hamlet with other images in the text, a process for which there is no equivalent in regard to Beardsley's illustration. Both Hamlets facilitate a different form of reading, Austen's encouraging a visual form of textual critique due to its intense symbolism

and complex gestures, and Beardsley's, a much briefer sort of contemplation. Arguably, the composition of Austen's illustration "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" also reflects this.

The illustration creates an atmosphere of suffocation, mirroring how Hamlet might feel in the wake of the Ghost's news. The dark space and claustrophobically adjacent daybreak (or moon) negate an impression of compositional depth. A moon recalls the Ghost's visit at night-time ("Revisit[ing] the glimpses of the moon" (1.4.53)); breaking light, its departure when "The glow-worm shows the matin to be near" (1.5.89). This accounts both for the spirit's vanishing downwards at the orb's base, departing for purgatory as per the play, and Hamlet's exiting the image (signalling the conclusion of the scene). The Ghost seems bedazzled by the light, its eyes vacant space punctuated with small black dots. Hamlet's shielding of his face suggests that he may be equally affected by this unnatural brightness.

The figures are extremely confined: Hamlet's collar and shoulder graze the top border despite his being bent double, while Nemesis' cloak spills downwards past the bottom frame. A skull topped by a candelabra seems to teeter on the outermost edge of the bottom border, hanging over precariously as if about to fall into the viewer's space. Austen's representation of Hamlet provides a telling contrast with Bernhardt's performance of this scene. Her prince was one of action, while Austen's appears defeated. The actress was frustrated at being "reproached with not being sufficiently astonished, not sufficiently dumbfounded, when I see the ghost. But Hamlet comes expressly to see it; he awaits it." She considered the prince's "words": "'I'll speak to it though Hell itself should gape [/ A]nd bid me hold my peace'" as "not [those] of a weak or languid person" (qtd. in Howard 101). In contrast, the hunched pose of Austen's Hamlet seems to imply that he is cowering and "weak," in accordance with Rohrbach's contemptuous description of the prince (see above).

Nemesis' appearance in Austen's image ironically signals Hamlet's abandonment of a scholarly life in favour of a self-compromising role as an avenger. Calmly watching the prince's departing back, she seems to expect his pursuit of revenge, in accordance with her agenda. She extends one arm horizontally, gripping a staff adorned by two masks, one grotesque male and one attractive female. Perhaps, these are Claudius and Gertrude, the objects of Hamlet's intended vengeance — even though the Ghost exhorts the prince to "Leave [Gertrude] to heaven" (1.5.86). Nemesis wears a laurel wreath, also interpretable as apple branches, her traditional symbols. In conjunction with her ample flowing robes, this

also causes her to resemble the weary angel in Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514; fig. 13); a Hamlet-like figure, the angel emblematises intellectual melancholy. Austen is likely to have seen one of the many reproductions of this image, given its universal fame.

Fig. 13. Albrecht Dürer. *Melencolia I*. 1514, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Hamlet's melancholic appearance in the "Seated Hamlet" illustration speaks to his, in early modern terms, femininity. According to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1628), melancholia "turns a man into a woman" (1932, vol. 3, 142). Burton considered Dürer's Melancholia to be "a sad woman leaning on her arm with fixed looks" and "neglected habit"; "my mistress melancholy" could effeminise some unfortunate intellectual men "of a deep reach, excellent apprehension," turning them "soft, sottish or half-mad" (vol. 1, 392). Likewise, Juliana Schiesari contends that early modern melancholy signified the "feminine within man" (253). Partly reflecting this, Hamlet considers "my weakness and my melancholy" to render him susceptible to the Ghost's "potent," damning "spirits" (2.2.597–98) and the "madness" of which Horatio warns (1.4.74). Using misogynistic language, the prince describes himself as a woman (specifically, a prostitute) more than once, such as when distressed after the player's rousing speech: "That I, the son of a dear father murder'd, / […] / Must like a whore unpack my heart with words / And fall a-cursing like a very drab, / A scullion" (2.2.579–583). "He dismisses his intuition before the duel as 'such a kind of gain-giving as perhaps would trouble a woman' and speaks of himself as a battleground contested by female forces — 'my dear soul' ('mistress of her choice') versus Fortune (playing on blood and judgment like a pipe 'to sound what stop she please')" (Howard 18). Casting

Nemesis as Dürer's melancholic angel, and more than once depicting a feminine, melancholic Hamlet, Austen appears to intuit this trope of feminine melancholy in the text.

Hamlet's ambiguous costuming in "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" (p. 42/227) allows two juxtaposing readings of his morality, complicating the ostensibly sympathetic reading outlined above. He retreats from the bright sphere of white light into a wall of darkness, suggesting the moral ambiguity and miserable isolation which accompany his intended course of action. The right-hand page opposite is entirely blank, echoing and thus exaggerating the searing white of the globe in the image opposite. On the one hand, Hamlet's ostensibly white attire is interpretable as the light of the breaking dawn (or the moon) reflecting off his body, suggesting that he covers his face to block out the blinding glare. On the other, this could indicate that he has dutifully performed Gertrude's bidding and "cast [his] nighted colour off" (1.2.68). The first reading suggests that, shunning the dawn like the Ghost, Hamlet has become a creature of the night, evoking his fantasy of "drink[ing] hot blood, / And do[ing] such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on" (3.2.381–83). Alternatively, if his attire is indeed stark white, the contrast between it and the shadows may signify his inner purity, as yet unsullied by the path laid out before him. This example demonstrates that illustration permits the ambiguity and complexity in interpretation that we normally expect from literary texts.

Austen also portrays Hamlet ambivalently in the "Seated Hamlet" image (p. 8/224). He grasps a dagger while appearing, as I will explain, emotionally affected. Suggesting the prince's preoccupation with vengeance, his small sword resembles a dagger; the use of either also points to Hamlet's emasculation by Claudius and his mother. If regarded as a dagger, the weapon specifically recalls his intentions for Gertrude: "I will speak daggers to her, but use none" (3.2.387), and her pained response: "These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears; / No more, sweet Hamlet!" (3.4.95). This dagger/short sword motif in Austen's image can be interpreted as providing an unsympathetic reading of his character, because it recalls the fact that Hamlet terrifies and intimidates his mother, perpetrating a non-physical form of violence. However, allowing a more favourable interpretation, his right hand is pressed to his chest, fingers curled as if in pain; his narrowed eyes suggest that he is wincing. His troubled posture with hand pressed to his heart evokes Hamlet's lamentation: "But break my heart; for I must hold my tongue" (1.2.159). Coupled with the dagger and his defensive body language, chest and knees drawing inwards, the prince's gesture also suggests that he is contemplating self-

slaughter. Implying that Hamlet's death approaches, a large skull with a burnt-down candle, with its signification of mortality, occupies the foreground. The fact that Hamlet wears white fencing attire, a spilt goblet lying near his feet, anticipates the final scene, thus neatly bookending the play. That this illustration is facing the opening to the first act suggests that it expects the reader to comprehend its various references, reflecting the adult and culturally literate audience for whom the edition was intended.

Seated while thinking intently, Hamlet's physical attitude evokes late nineteenth-century performances of the opening of 2.2, when he reappears after his encounter with the Ghost and decides to feign insanity.[57] He is alone, his eyes fixed on some distant object, his relaxed posture denoting an extended period of contemplation. A recurring symbol in paintings of Renaissance and medieval scholars, the skull and candle may likewise signify inner reflection. Hamlets in nineteenth-century performances were spiritual, philosophical and scholarly in aspect, appearing sane. Contributing to this impression, Hamlet would be shown onstage holding a book in 2.2, as in the First Folio stage directions wherein he "Enter[s …], reading on a book." An engraving from the 1870s of Henry Irving by Richard F. Armytage is characteristic (fig. 14).[58] He throws a dignified gaze to his left, an open book balanced in his palm. By the close of the century, this trend had resolved into his being seated, book in hand. A portrait of Sarah Bernhardt in the role of Hamlet (in 1899; fig. 15) shows her thus, anticipating the soliloquy which follows at the scene's close, during which Hamlet is either contemplative and philosophical, emotionally agonised and possibly suicidal, or perhaps (fervently) anticipating the mousetrap scene. Although Austen's prince shows signs of being contemplative, he clutches a sword rather than a book, and his emotional disturbance is particularly apparent. His appearance amalgamates these three traditions.

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[57] For example, in a wood engraved portrait of Edwin Booth dating to 1872, Hamlet marks a place in his book with one finger while lost in thought. The portrait was designed by William John Hennessy and engraved by W. J. Linton. See Young 2002, 176, for further discussion.

[58] See also previous footnote.

Fig. 14. Richard F. Armytage. Engraving of Henry Irving as Hamlet with a book (Act 2.2); the caption below reads “to be honest as this would goes, / to be one man picked out of ten thousand.” c.1870–78. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 15. Photograph from the Lafayette Studio depicting Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet with a book in her hand (Act 2.2). 1899. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Nineteenth-century depictions rarely portrayed Hamlet as mad in this scene, despite his claim that this is how he means to act. However, Ducarme’s (first name unknown) lithograph of Charles Kemble (probably based on his performance as the prince in 1827, Paris) is a rare exception to this rule. The actor’s eyes are wide open and stare in an ambiguous direction, suggesting psychological turbulence (Young 2002, 182). Several depictions of a mad Hamlet ensue in Austen’s edition. It is these images which create an impression that genuine insanity influences his behaviour throughout the play.

Austen's Hamlet: Mad and Bad

How (and whether) artists depicted Hamlet's madness changed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Partial physical undress, in particular a loosened garter and tellingly absent hat, was a defining characteristic of eighteenth-century portraits seeking to depict his feigned insanity.[59] However, as mentioned, the following century shunned any such visual cues, preferring to depict a dignified Hamlet engrossed either in a book — as in the First Folio direction where he enters "reading on a book" — or in his own thoughts. One of the decorative miniatures in Austen's edition (p. 57) portrays Hamlet with a book in his hand, paying tribute to this tradition. Appropriately, the image is included on the same page as the stage direction.

Twentieth-century performances placed renewed emphasis on Hamlet's ostensible instability with an astonishing variety of costumes and props. Hamlets were portrayed shoeless, face dirtied, barking, crawling, clucking like a chicken, chewing a book's pages, grasping an umbrella, dragging a cart of books, attired in women's clothing, bedclothing, rags, jester's bells, mask or a straitjacket (Rosenberg 390–91; Hapgood 157). Some modern-day performances continue this theme: "Michael Sheen's triumphant take on the Prince of Denmark [directed by Ian Rickson in 2011] ratchets up the madness to the point of paranoid schizophrenia and it could all be in his warped, deluded mind" (*The Mirror,* 10 November 2011). The setting for this performance at London's Young Vic theatre was a psychiatric institution, part hospital, part prison. Austen's drawings partially adumbrate this change in Hamlet's representation in the twentieth century, as several of the illustrations provide strong visual indicators of madness — whether real or feigned. Wilson Knight (1930) claims that Hamlet is quietly insane, but regardless, sometimes feigns wild insanity. Published only eight years beforehand, Austen's *Hamlet* illustrations anticipate this verdict.

The minor decorative image on p. 51/229 ("Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure") is the first of two portraying Hamlet's wild entry into Ophelia's closet, although unlike the second illustration ("Ophelia's Closet"; p. 74/230), it depicts him alone, save for the Ghost which looms ominously behind him. The image is situated immediately beneath the concluding lines of 2.1., when Polonius resolves to tell the king of Hamlet's madness, having just heard Ophelia recount his deranged invasion of her closet. Consequently, it revives in the

[59] Johan Zoffany's 1757 oil portrait of David Ross as Hamlet, located in the Garrick club, characterises this tendency.

reader's mind the most disturbing and memorable component of this scene: Ophelia's description of Hamlet's behaviour. Nineteenth-century artists portrayed events in the play described as well as shown; Ophelia's ekphrastic account of Hamlet's incursion provided excellent visual material for this. In traditional depictions of the scene (of which there are approximately twelve (Young 2002, 288)), Hamlet is not shown isolated but with Ophelia, as in the play. This contrasts with Austen's representation of the prince in this image. Also countering traditional representations, the artist depicts him as genuinely deranged in appearance, his expression vacant and his arms held out in front like a zombie.

The women's faces situated around Hamlet provide an ambiguous interpretation of his sanity. Their heads appear among what look like twisting sheathes of wheat overlapping with daisies. Most observe Hamlet with benign expressions, although one gapes as she leans in towards him, as if calling to him or alarmed by what she sees. Many of these women smile, while in contrast, the majority in the mad portrait of Ophelia on p. 116/233 ("Ophelia Hallucinates"; anticipating 4.1), wear empty expressions as they gaze at her, their lips parted as if calling out — curiously, one glares. Given that in the early modern period, madness was particularly associated with women, and that these women appear in both illustrations of the characters' insanity, they are presumably a motif accompanying mental instability.[60] Their cheerful aspect in Hamlet's portrait may imply that his madness is insincere fun-making; their partial hostility in Ophelia's, that madness is literally attacking her.

Alternatively, given that he and Ophelia share the same vacant expression, Hamlet's unstable aspect, contrasting with his playful appearance in Austen's second illustration of this scene, may imply that here, he really is insane. Horatio warns that the Ghost may "tempt (Hamlet) toward the flood" (1.4.69) which

> [..] puts toys of desperation,
> Without more motive, into every brain
> That looks so many fathoms to the sea

[60] In *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture*, Carol Thomas Neely outlines how (related) notions of hysteria, witchcraft and the 'wandering womb' were prevalent in societal discourse in the early modern era.

And hears it roar beneath

(75–78)

Horatio associates drowning with madness, unconsciously anticipating Ophelia's death. Austen's drawing reproduces the "roar" and eddying motion of the sea in the twisting stems of wheat resembling seaweed; these, in turn, reflect the swirling pattern found throughout the edition, such as in the Ghost's and Nemesis' robes (although not in this particular drawing), and on the back of Claudius' throne in the "Mousetrap" illustration (p. 95/231). The pervasiveness of this swirling motif suggests that insanity pervades the play, and that Hamlet and Ophelia are fellow sufferers. Thus, although these depictions seem to offer diverse interpretations of Hamlet's sanity, they amount to Hamlet's being, like Ophelia, genuinely insane.

Although Hamlet's pipes and mad appearance in the image on p. 71/229 suggest that this image represents 3.2, when he takes the recorders from the players and challenges Guildernstern: "'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?" (360–61), Austen shows him in isolation. This may be partly due to the image existing opposite Hamlet's bitter soliloquy after the duo have departed ("O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I"). However, there is a curious mismatch between the misery evident in this soliloquy and Hamlet's somewhat blissful, albeit sinister, expression. This seems intended to shock the reader by contrasting his melancholy with the vaguely manic satisfaction pictured opposite, suggesting that this soliloquy anticipates a growing madness.

Alternatively, the image refers back to his entry earlier in the scene, when his mood is (ostensibly) light. Austen's illustration focusses exclusively on the prince and his implied interiority, rather than the characters' exchange. Nineteenth-century artists tended not to favour this scene, although an exception to this is a lithograph by Delacroix entitled *Hamlet and Guildernstern (Act III, Scene II*) (1834/43; fig. 16). Wearing a benign expression, Hamlet offers his recorder to Guildernstern, who raises one hand in polite refusal while reaching out to touch the prince's arm.

Fig. 16. Eugène Delacroix. *Hamlet and Guildernstern (Act III, Scene II)*. 1834/43, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Another significant difference between nineteenth-century depictions of this scene and Austen's is that his is heavily symbolic and non-literal. A *putto* sits atop a large skull adorned with a wreath of flowers. With its back to the prince, it is either shying away or turning back to look at him — either startled by his wild appearance, or, having been temporarily distracted, returning to its current enterprise of fashioning (or extracting flowers from) the garland. The combination of *putto*, skull and daisies symbolise the dangers of romantic love, its impermanence or even its death.

If the *putto* is defensively turning away from Hamlet, its pose may symbolise romantic love — and by extension, Ophelia — turning its back on him or being repelled. If taken to represent Ophelia, the *putto*'s action recalls her alarm when confronted with Hamlet's seeming madness and genuine cruelty. Hamlet's revocation of his affection towards both Ophelia ("I did love you once" (3.1.115)) and Rosencrantz ("My lord, you did once love me / And do still, by these pickers and stealers" (3.2.326)) are echoed in the startled putti. Situated in the scene immediately before 3.1. and 3.2., this illustration anticipates these exchanges.

The ghoulish male faces fantastically suspended in the air suggest that this image represents Hamlet's mental interior and/or dream-like state. They emerge from the vortex surrounding him, resembling billowing wind. Their horns and gaping mouths evoke the grotesque stage masks which permeate the edition. However, complete with eyes, their faces are more individual and human. Staring at Hamlet as they hover uncomfortably close to his shoulder, they appear to signify the play's courtiers, their open mouths denoting gossip and surprise at Hamlet's appearance; this recalls his scathing assessment of courtiers and court

politics (the former, a "bevy that […] the drossy ages dotes on" with merely "fanned and winnowed opinions" (5.2.185–86; 189)). Given that this surreal image may signify Hamlet's implied psychological interior, its content may denote his attitude towards, rather than the reality of, the court — Osric is the only courtier with "fanned and winnowed opinions" that we actually encounter. At the same time, the disembodied faces' similarity to stage masks recall the players, ready to perform "the mousetrap" at Hamlet's directive.

Like the disembodied women in Austen's depictions of Hamlet's and Ophelia's madness (those described above), the male faces surrounding the prince imply that he is genuinely insane. In each of these drawings, an assembly of faces, several of whom gape as if calling, surround a character who is otherwise isolated. In the images on pp. 71/229 and 116/233 ("Play upon this Pipe" and "Ophelia Hallucinates"), Hamlet and Ophelia have closed eyes, as if listening attentively to the voices around them, instilling them with madness. This emphasis on Hamlet's insanity intersects with the eighteenth and nineteenth-century preoccupation with it. William Richardson believed Hamlet's feigned madness to be "an insanity which in part exists" (1784, 368). W. S. Gilbert's parody *Hamlet*, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* (first performed in 1891) relied on the audience's awareness that the nature and extent of Hamlet's sanity was central to critical and public debate.

Hamlet's tumultuous surroundings in the "Play upon this Pipe" image match the winding hair of the women in depictions of Ophelia. Suspended as if in water, their tresses evoke her drowning. In the scene portrayed, Hamlet, fatigued from verbally sparring with Rosencrantz and Guildernstern, claims "I cannot reason" (2.2.265). An inability to "reason" characterises insanity; if taken literally, his assertion suggests that he is mentally unstable. Similarly, in a later conversation he tells them that "I cannot […] Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased" (3.2.311; 313–14). In the sparring scene, he claims that his "madness" has "wrong'd" Laertes (5.2.233; 229). Austen's image gives new emphasis and nuance to Hamlet's remarks and this particular aspect of the text.

In the same illustration, Austen amplifies the disturbing quality of Ophelia's description of Hamlet's unhinged and dishevelled aspect when in her chambers, as if to imply that the prince is genuinely insane. This renders him less sympathetic. Hamlet has become ugly, his forehead grotesquely bunched, his hands clenched and resembling talons. He is emaciated and sleep deprived; his eyes are sunken with dark bags underneath, stubble covers his upper

lip and jawline, his cheekbones protrude, and his hands are thin and gnarled. Incidentally, on the page following this image, Hamlet curses the (hypothetical) challengers of his masculinity: “Who / Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face” (2.2.567–8). The absence of a bearded Hamlet in any of Austen’s illustrations partly seems to reflect the vacuity of this “manly” posturing. That Austen’s Hamlet lacks a beard also emphasises his youth and perhaps femininity relative to older male characters such as Claudius, who will not “let our beard be shook with [Hamlet’s] danger” (4.7.32), and who Austen portrays with a beard throughout.

Resembling Austen’s prince in his dishevelled appearance, Roger Rees played “an intensely neurotic Prince” in the Ron Daniels 1984 production (qtd. Croall 56). Critics described him as “‘haunted’, ‘sunken-cheeked’ [...,] ‘a haggard hollow-eyed figure’; a ‘neurotic living on the edge of his nerves’; ‘a psychotic case’” (56). Despite this, Rees’ Hamlet remains intensely sympathetic. The critic Irving Wardle claimed that “you are never allowed to forget for long his inner torment and breaking heart, as emphasised by an insistent tearful catch in the voice” (qtd. Croall 57). Austen’s prince is too sinister in appearance to remain sympathetic, however.

Hamlet’s starved aspect in Austen’s drawing reflects that he considers himself the proverbially starving horse. This accords with De Grazia’s insight in ‘*Hamlet’ Without Hamlet*, that the prince is incensed by his dispossession, and that this frustration constitutes the heart of the play (1–5). His appearance recalls his sly claim to Claudius that like the “chameleon [… ,] I eat the air, promise-crammed” (3.2.93–94), openly implying that his succession has been thwarted. Likewise, Hamlet later scathingly observes that the king “hath kill’d my king and whored my mother, / Popp’d in between th’ election and my hopes” (5.2.64–65), telling Rosencrantz and Guildernstern that “I lack advancement [… ,] while the grass grows—The proverb is something musty” (3.2.331; 334–335).

Bad Dreams and Starved Aspirations

Austen’s “Play upon this Pipe” illustration reflects that sleep is a pervasive theme in the play, including with respect to Claudius and Hamlet’s preferred, stereotypically feminine, methods of murder. While Hamlet’s closed eyes in the image recall Ophelia’s description of his blind departure from her room (“He seem’d to find his way without his eyes, / For out o’

doors he went without their helps" (2.1.98–99)), they also suggest that he quietly enjoys his mad dance, or alternatively, that he sleepwalks. The particularly surreal imagery surrounding him reinforces the impression that he is in a dream-like state. Old Hamlet dies while "Sleeping within my orchard" (1.5.59), the players re-enact the king's death onstage in 'the mousetrap,' after which Claudius flees and Hamlet threateningly responds "Why, let the strucken deer go weep, / [...] / For some must watch while some must sleep" (3.2.265; 267–68). During the prayer scene, Hamlet contemplates killing Claudius unheroically, "When he is drunk asleep" (3.3.89), and later, thwarts the sleeping Rosencrantz and Guildernstern by planting a replacement writ on their person, instructing England's king to have "those bearers put to sudden death" (5.2.46). Both characters use passive (indeed, cowardly) means to defeat their enemies by attacking them when they are physically helpless — compare Laertes' bold frontal attack on Claudius in his attempt to avenge Polonius' death.

The image ironically reflects Hamlet's grim assessment of his situation. He tells Rosencrantz that "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space—were it not that I have bad dreams" (2.2.254–56). Signifying the "infinite space" the prince longs for, the swirling mass around Austen's Hamlet has no identifiable boundary save for the frame of the image. However, paradoxically, the composition is also claustrophobic; the tumultuous swirls hem him in as if he were "bounded in a nutshell." Their mouths wide open as if screaming, the faces which encompass him suggest the dark interior of those "bad dreams." Indeed, disturbed dreams and sleepless nights plague Hamlet in the play. Thomas Nashe (1594) designated melancholy "the mother of dreams" and "terrors" (155); this condition may be what contaminates Hamlet's sleep. As Howard points out, reflecting this possibility, Claudius worries that Hamlet's "melancholy sits on brood" hatching "danger" (3.1.167; 169, qtd. Howard 18). Austen's illustrations emphasise this facet of the text.

Austen's decision to portray Hamlet with closed eyes, in dreamlike surroundings with an adjacent *putto* (symbolising physical love) seated on a skull, is also meaningful given that the prince unconsciously sexualises death while drawing on dream imagery. The *putto* sitting astride the skull suggests that Austen intuits Hamlet's morbid fascination with death. Initially confident that "To die—to sleep, / [...] / 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished" (3.1.60; 63–64), he then balks at the prospect of dreaming in death: "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, / [...] / Must give us pause" (66–67). Whether waking or in death, dreaming is a source of anxiety. Disturbingly, however, "Consummation" and "die" both

carried a sexual undertone, especially when paired together. The soliloquy in which Hamlet utters these remarks takes place several pages after the illustration, in the following Act. However, as in early twentieth-century illustrated colour editions (discussed in the Introduction), image and text need not be adjacent in order to 'talk' to each other in the reader's imagination. We read a complex text like *Hamlet* not just as a linear unfolding from minute to minute, but also as a discursive structure of memory.

If the *putto* and skull allude to the death of love in Hamlet, coupled with his closed eyes, this ensemble underscores the idea that the "fighting" in his "heart" entails a struggle between acts of hatred and kindness. The prince begins his tale of escape from the ship by claiming that "in my heart there was a kind of fighting / That would not let me sleep" (5.2.4–5) but leaves unexplained what this "fighting" entails — the same is true of his "bad dreams." However, "fighting" in one's "heart" suggests internal conflict (itself almost a translation of *psychomachia*, 'soul-fighting'). Given that he initially laments the cruel task laid out before him ("O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right" (1.5.196–97)) but then begins to relish the role set out for him by the Ghost, acting as a "scourge and minister" of the whole of Denmark ("Now could I drink hot blood"), he may describe his initial struggle between acts of hatred and kindness.

Austen's illustration evokes the textual connection between Hamlet's "bad dreams" and frustrated ambition. Although Hamlet disagrees with Rosencrantz's suggestion that he considers "Denmark" a "prison" because of his "ambition" (2.2.243; 252), claiming instead that his "bad dreams" are to blame (256), toward the end of the following scene he remarks that he "lack[s] advancement" (331), finally conceding that the pair are right, but on his own terms. His childhood friends are more perceptive than he cared to admit. While it is interpretable that Hamlet is simply humouring them, his later speech again reinforces the idea that his "bad dreams" largely revolve around ambition. Hamlet condemns Claudius because he has "Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes" and tells Ophelia that he is "ambitious" (3.1.125), although critics adhering to a sympathetic view of the prince tend to call this an exaggeration. When he tells Horatio that, one night aboard the "voyage" towards England, "in my heart there was a kind of fighting / That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay / Worse than the mutines in the bilboes" (5.2.4–6), Hamlet again associates imprisonment with bad dreams, as when discussing ambition. This suggests that he believes his political

aspirations as well as his person are fettered. Hamlet's identification with "The mutines in the bilboes" is telling, as they are guilty of rebellion and ambition.

After he receives the Ghost's news and realises that his father's murder undermines his future succession (why would his father's murderer desire him as an heir?), he enters Ophelia's closet wearing "down-gyved" stockings, 'gyves' being fetters. Claudius instructs Rosencrantz and his friend to "Arm you […] to this speedy voyage, / For we will fetters put upon this fear / Which now goes too free-footed" (3.3.24–26). Given that the king also claims — somewhat obliquely — that "The terms of our estate may not endure" the "Hazard" that "doth hourly grow / Out of [Hamlet's] brows" (5–7) ("fear[ing] that the prince will usurp him (25)), Claudius evidently intends that the prince's ambition be "fetter[ed]," recalling Hamlet's description of his dream in which he is shackled. When Hamlet tells Ophelia that he is "ambitious," he suspects (it would seem) that Polonius and probably Claudius are listening;[61] this claim may partly be intended to unsettle the king, as indeed it seems to.

Austen's image alludes to the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildernstern describe ambition as composed of shadow-like dreams. This occurs several pages before the illustration but still within the same scene, suggesting a connection. Guildernstern claims that "dreams [...] are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream (2.2.257–59). Hamlet partially counters this: "A dream itself is a shadow" (2.2.260) to which Rosencrantz responds, "I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow" (261–62). The word "shadow" is repeated five times during their exchange, suggesting not only humour through absurd repetition but that the prince's ambition lies at the heart of their conversation. Given that, in the illustration, Hamlet's eyes are closed as if he is "dream[ing]," the dark, shapeless void surrounding him give emphasis to this dream's "shadow," while its sinuous rolling waves, resembling billowing wind of "so airy and light a quality," recalls Rosencrantz's description of "ambition." The "shadow" of "ambition" could also partly account for the prevalence of darkness in Austen's illustrations in general, suggesting that the artist intuits the significance of Hamlet's frustrated ambition within the play's narrative. This suggests his close and readerly engagement with the play's imagery more than theatrical imagination.

[61] His rebuke of Ophelia becomes far more vindictive and personal after she claims that her father is at home ("I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry" (3.1.136–7)), suggesting that he considers this to be a lie.

Hamlet's tendency to associate thwarted ambition with starvation also reflects his frequent allusions to beggars, suggesting that this is how he perceives himself. Not long after his conversation with his childhood friends, Hamlet (as mentioned) tells Claudius that, like the "chameleon [… ,] I eat the air, promise-crammed." Echoing Rosencrantz, the prince evidently appreciates his assessment of ambition, privately agreeing that its frustration plagues him. In the illustration, his face and hands are gaunt, his fingers gnarled; this evokes both his claim to "eat the air, promise-crammed," and his ironic declaration in 1.5 to be a "poor […] man" (192); "Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks" (2.2.272). Ostensibly, his claim to be a poor man is merely intended to secure his friends' trust, encouraging them to "Swear […] / Never to speak of this that you have heard" (1.5.167–68). However, its timing — in the wake of discovering his father's murder — suggests that Hamlet realises that his succession has been compromised: he "eats air," as it were. De Grazia discusses his thwarted ambition in depth in '*Hamlet' Without Hamlet*.

Hamlet repeatedly returns to the motif of poverty. Debating over ambition's meaning with Rosencrantz and Guildernstern, he obstinately responds to the former's claim that "ambition" is a "shadow's shadow" that "Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows" (2.2.263–64). Given his propensity for painting himself as "poor" and starved (of his inheritance), Hamlet may think himself a "beggar['s] bod[y]" rather than its "shadow." He knows that, despite his father's death and his desire for vengeance, he is neither a monarch nor a hero, principally because he intends to commit regicide. He repeats the pauper motif when slyly confessing to Claudius where he has hidden Polonius: "Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service—two dishes, but to one table" (4.3.23–24); "a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar" (30–31). Deeming himself a "lean beggar," Hamlet implies that he and the king are equals. Describing himself as actually ingesting Claudius, the prince's metaphor is not only macabre but menacing. Because Austen's illustration draws our attention to the prince's starved aspect and his dream-like ambition simultaneously, it is arguable that the drawing points to Hamlet's fixation on starved ambition.

Now Might I Do It Pat: The Prince as Medusa

Meanwhile, the “Prayer Scene” portrait also depicts Hamlet as both feminine and threatening, resembling the Ghost as pictured in the “Seated Hamlet” image. With one shoulder raised and elbows bent, his legs effeminately arranged — knees pressed together and hips cocked to one side, as shown in the drawing introducing Act I — and eyes closed as if in quiet enjoyment, Hamlet seems to dance to music. Although his delicate forward step resembles Victorian illustrations of fairies tiptoeing among flowers (Austen also includes a fairy in a small decorative image directly preceding Act 1), his gaunt aspect, including his clawed hands, make him appear sinister. Austen revisits this later by casting Hamlet as Medusa in the “Prayer Scene” image (see below). Likewise, in Delacroix’s lithograph *Hamlet and the Corpse of Polonius*, Hamlet takes an equally delicate, dance-like step past Polonius’ body. Because of this prince’s fairy-like, feminine features, and vindictive, satisfied expression, the image disturbingly evokes folktales in which fairies cast spells on those who lay sleeping.

Austen depicts the prayer scene, in which Hamlet infamously contemplates how best to send Claudius’ soul to hell. Critics since Dr. Johnson have struggled to incorporate Hamlet’s damning, and damnable, indictment of Claudius into a favourable reading of the prince’s character. Johnson claims that “this speech [… that] contrives damnation for the man that he would punish, is too horrible to be read or to be uttered” (1765, 236, n. 7). Late eighteenth-century critic Thomas Robertson considers this passage “the most difficult to be defended in the whole character of Hamlet” (1788, 486) — curiously, these critics seem unconcerned by Hamlet possessing the same intention for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: “Not shriving-time allow’d” (5.2.47). Modern day critics remain in consensus about the disturbing enormity of the soliloquy. De Grazia observes that according to “tradition dating back to the early church, the desire belongs exclusively to devils; consigning souls to eternal damnation is their business in this world was well as the next” (188); “[t]he 18th century scholars who saw his resolve as fiendish are exactly right. His wish is pure diabolism” (191). Indeed, “Hamlet’s desire […] to damn a soul to eternal pain is the most extreme form of evil imaginable in a society that gave even its most heinous felons the opportunity to repent before execution” (188).

Although (or because) it was somewhat controversial, this scene was among those favoured by nineteenth-century artists. The prince usually is shown with a sword, standing

somewhere behind the oblivious king who may or may not be pictured (Young 2002 205). In contrast, Austen provides a head-only portrait. Few nineteenth-century directors included the "Now might I do it pat" speech; those that did were Irving, Booth and Bernhardt. Consequently, having also starred as Hamlet in these productions, they frequently appear in artistic depictions of the scene (Young 2002, 205). Young describes the "effect" of Bernhardt's portrayal of this moment during a 1899 performance in Paris, when her proximity to the king with a sword in her grasp was unprecedented, as "emphasiz[ing] Claudius' vulnerability and by contrast the power Hamlet possesses at this moment" (2002, 206). Likewise, Austen's illustration suggests psychological complexity and casts Hamlet as intimidating and even frightening in aspect, suggesting that Claudius is genuinely in danger. In contrast, however, showing Hamlet's head only, it emphasises his implied interiority more than the tense relationship between these "mighty opposites" (5.2.62).

In Austen's drawing, Hamlet's face almost fills the available pictorial space, amplifying the emotional intensity of the image. He has large, exaggerated eyes, refined brows, generous lips, and long winding hair, half-piled on top of his head in a stereotypically feminine arrangement. Despite his haggard aspect, his youthful features, patched stubble included, indicates that we are looking at the prince rather than Claudius, whom Austen (on pp. 84 and 95/231) portrays as much older and stockily built. Delacroix's lithograph of this scene provides an informative contrast with Austen's depiction. In Delacroix's image, Hamlet's expression is troubled, suggesting indecision, while his physiognomy and posture are overtly masculine. His face is rectangular in shape with a prominent jawline, and his chest is broad. His pose suggests dynamism and physical power; he stands with legs apart (these are athletic-looking), while he unsheathes his sword as he moves into the room. His right shoulder positioned against the door, he appears to have entered only moments before. This prince is more sympathetic than Austen's; he has a worried rather than murderously intent expression and lacks the same reptilian femininity.

Adding an aura of malignancy to Hamlet's depiction, this illustration resembles Caravaggio's paintings of *Medusa* (1596 & 1597), the influence of which can be seen in neo-Gothic and Symbolist art. As mentioned, Austen presents the prince as a kind of *femme fatale* figure, subverting the Romantic conception of him as emotionally delicate, while evoking a stereotypically Symbolist motif. As in Caravaggio's paintings, Hamlet's head is shown within a spherical portrait. In the Italian artist's depictions of Medusa, she has been beheaded

by Perseus, while the circular composition recalls the gorgon shield. Like Medusa, Austen's Hamlet is androgynous-looking, with large, dark eyes, and a winding mass of thick, dark hair strands — snakes in Medusa's case. However, their expressions differ. Hamlet's is pinched, while his forehead tilts forward, intensifying his angry gaze; in contrast, Medusa's is one of surprised horror. Incidentally, the Medusa motif in Austen's drawing also seems to reflect Austen's Symbolist influences: for example, Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer produced a pastel and charcoal on paper *Méduse* (1897). We also see the same motif in Beardsley (discussed below). As Lucie-Smith observes, "snaky monsters" number among the "standard Symbolist properties" (78).

Fig. 17. Beardsley. "J'ai baisé ta bouche lokanaan." 1894, *Salome, A tragedy in one act*. Translated by Lord Alfred from the French of Oscar Wilde Douglas, London, Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894.

Fig. 18. Caravaggio. *Medusa*. 1597, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Due to Beardsley's depiction of Medusa and Medusa-like figures, and his overwhelming influence on Austen's early work, it is sensible to compare the artists' respective employment of this motif. Beardsley's 'Perseus' (1891) and 'Perseus and the

Monstre' (1891)[62] portray the hero grasping Medusa's severed head. There is little aesthetic similarity between Beardsley's Medusa and Austen's corresponding Hamlet, save perhaps, for Medusa's angular face and prominent chin. Beardsley's illustration 'J'ai baisé ta bouche lokanaan' (1894; fig. 17) in his illustrated *Salome*, portraying Salome holding the head of John the Baptist, also recalls Medusa, due to the severed head's snake-like tendrils of hair. However, there is little or no recognisable similarity between this and Austen's Medusa-Hamlet either. Despite (or because of) this, it remains instructive to observe how Austen has reworked Beardsley's use of the motif. His application of this motif to Hamlet (in particular) is significant and interesting, because it underscores Hamlet's deeply troubling and at times, even disturbing, behaviour.

Commenting on Henry Irving's performance as Hamlet in 1874 during "the mousetrap" scene, John Mills observed that "there was an unaccustomed intensity in the 'basilisk' gaze he fixed on the guilty king, 'a serpent-like fascination of look and manner'" (*London Morning Post*, 2 November 1874). Austen's Hamlet likewise has an unflinching 'basilisk' stare, emphasised by his forward-tilted head, while his resemblance to Medusa implies a connection with snakes. Claudius claims that the prince's "melancholy sits on brood" hatching "danger" (3.1.167; 169), suggesting that Hamlet is a reptilian *femme fatale*. The Ghost invites Hamlet to "stir in" his revenge, as if he were a snake (1.5.34). Hamlet constantly entertains double meanings, calling to mind a serpent's forked tongue. His unsettling depiction in Austen's imagery arguably reflects — at least in part — his serpentine qualities in the text. Melancholy has not only made him feminine, as per Burton's description, but monstrously so. De Grazia echoes this sentiment, claiming of the prayer scene that "[i]n uttering the devil's sentiments, Hamlet crosses the divide between the natural and the unnatural, the human and the monstrous" (193).

It is significant that Austen's illustration casts Hamlet as ruthless and deadly, given that this portrait is placed after the prayer scene, one of the most morally problematic scenes in the play. This amplifies Hamlet's disturbed thinking at this juncture, diabolically determined to damn Claudius. His sinister appearance contrasts with the genuine remorse and humility we see in Claudius in this scene. The king abandons the royal "we" for one of the few times in the play, highlighting his human vulnerability. Unlike Hamlet, he feels contrition and

[62] First shown in Aymer Vallance's article "The Invention of Aubrey Beardsley" in *The Magazine of Art* (May 1898).

makes confession, but cannot make restitution, the third requirement of penance: he cannot renounce “My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen” (3.3.55). His love for Gertrude prevents an entirely negative impression of his character. Austen’s illustration follows the king’s closing lines, moments after the prince has secretly departed: “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go” (97–98). Immediately confronting us with Hamlet’s disturbing visage after reading these lines, Austen’s image has the effect of making us fear Hamlet rather the king.

Polonius’ Murder: Panicked or Ruthless?

Another instance of Austen portraying Hamlet as a sinister being (although ostensibly as a simultaneously sympathetic one), on p. 105/232 (“Gertrude’s Closet”), the artist presents us with the moment of Polonius’ murder (3.4). Fittingly, the final line on the left-hand page opposite (p. 104) is Polonius’ panicked cry (“What, ho! help, help, help!”). That the image completely dominates its page underscores the harsh significance of this event. Hamlet is visiting his mother in her private chambers, having left a praying Claudius unharmed in hope of a better opportunity to damn him. Hamlet is condemning Gertrude for marrying his uncle, when an interruption from behind the arras causes him to murder Ophelia’s father in the ostensible belief that the hidden spy is the king.

In this image, Austen’s prince can be interpreted sympathetically as an attractive young man who is shocked, possibly horrified, by the scene before him, while also exhausted by the “bad dreams” which keep him from rest. Unlike in the “Prayer Scene” image, he is handsome rather than alien in appearance: his features are evenly proportioned, his nose straight and his chin stereotypically masculine. In keeping with drawings from the “Play upon this Pipe” illustration (p. 71/229) onwards, Hamlet appears unkempt, suggesting psychological turbulence. Shadows rest under his eyes and stubble covers his jawline, while his hair appears disordered, stringy and unwashed. Hamlet’s reprehensible actions in this scene contrast with his, at least in this respect, more positive, likeable representation in Austen’s image.

Polonius’ death was a popular subject for artists in the nineteenth century. Two equally favoured variations on the closet scene were the Ghost’s return and the prince forcing Gertrude to behold the contrasting portraits (Young 2002, 147). The moment of Polonius’

death was also retained in nineteenth-century performance (211), assumedly because it did not (necessarily) portray Hamlet negatively, unlike the prayer scene in which Hamlet expresses a diabolical urge to damn Claudius. In the closet scene, a conventional desire to exculpate Hamlet can find (like a clever defence lawyer) material to work with: his attempt on Claudius' life ("Is it the king?" (3.4.26)) can be construed as what Francis Bacon in "Of Revenge" calls "a kind of wild justice," is passionate, seemingly spontaneous and thus apparently unpremeditated (qtd. Barber 7). In nineteenth-century performance, Hamlet would either stab the old advisor directly through the curtain (Bernhardt and Booth) or move behind it to murder him (Charles Kemble and Samuel Phelps); in one unusual case, Irving raised the arras before thrusting the sword (211). In Austen's illustration, Hamlet's arms fly back behind him as he lurches backwards in shock, his sword and opposing arm at matching parallels. Recalling Bernhardt's and Booth's performances, he seems to withdraw his bloody sword from the curtain in haste. Eyes wide in alarm and lips parted, horror contorts the prince's features. Calling to mind his description of the spy as a "rat" (3.4.23), gazing diagonally at the ground, Hamlet may perhaps be focussing on the courtier's body which the arras (beyond the frame) has revealed.

The visual artistic depiction of Hamlet's physical attitude towards the Queen in this scene has significant bearing on whether he appears sympathetic. Austen's illustration defies visual tradition in this respect, casting him in a negative light. Some depictions of this scene include the Queen, as in Austen's illustration, while others merely imply it, such as A. H. Brown's engraving of Charles Kean (1838) (the image is likely based on the actor's initial, highly acclaimed performance of the role in 1838), and an engraving of Charles Dillon, who played Hamlet at the Lyceum in 1857 (Young 2002, 211).[63] Both images imply that Hamlet is addressing Gertrude. Brown's shows Hamlet moments after the murder, when he turns back to quarrelling with the Queen, while Dillon's engraving carries the quotation: "How now! a rat? / Dead, for a ducat, dead!," in reference to the moment of Polonius' stabbing.

Gertrude's inclusion afforded an opportunity for artists to portray Hamlet more sympathetically because he could be shown protecting her; for example, in Fuseli's c.1785 painting entitled *Gertrude, Hamlet and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father* (see fig. 26), the prince attempts to shield his mother physically. This is (probably unintentionally) ironic, given that

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[63] The image of Charles Kean is inscribed with "Presented [...] with No. 325 in *Figaro in London*." The engraving of Charles Dillon was published by the Printing and Publishing Company and is unsigned and undated.

Gertrude fears that Hamlet will murder her only moments before, and that the Ghost purposefully interrupts his brutal censuring of the Queen. Other depictions vary this trope by depicting Hamlet physically shielding the Queen from what lies behind the curtain; Delacroix's *Hamlet and His Mother* (1849; fig. 19) is an example. Contrasting with these images, Austen depicts the prince behaving, in this respect, crudely. He pulls back having delivered a fatal blow, but unlike in Delacroix's painting, the hand which he thrusts out behind him does not shield the Queen; instead, she stands at an elevated position behind him, out of reach. Contributing to an impression of Hamlet's mania, blood drips from the tip of his sword.

Fig. 19. Delacroix. *Hamlet and his Mother*. 1849, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Austen depicts a whip unfurling from Hamlet's leg; we also see a whip-like tassel in Ophelia's "Sane Portrait" (p. 29/225). In the former illustration, the whip and sword, as objects, form parallel lines. Nemesis is routinely shown carrying a sword and whip in popular imagery.[64] Given these ostensible references to Nemesis, Austen's illustrations seemingly reflect an awareness of Shakespeare's textual influences. Shakespeare would have been aware of the following sources which establish a connection between Nemesis, whips and murderers. The 1602 "additions" to Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592), one of the crucial precursors to *Hamlet*, explicitly refer to Nemesis punishing murderers with her whip:

> And there is *Nemesis* and Furies,
> And things called *whippes,*

[64] French Romantic painter, Pierre-Paul Prud'hon's *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime* of 1808 is a case in point. Sometimes she holds an hour glass, suggested by the skulls and candles (memento mori) which dominate Austen's images. See also Alfred Rethel's painted *Nemesis* (1837).

And they sometimes doe meete with *murderers*

3.11.[41-3] (my emphasis)

She also appears with her whip in Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar* (1594):

Say not these things are feigned, for true they are,
And understand how, eager to enjoy
His father's crown, this unbelieving Moor,
Murdering his uncle and his brethren,
Triumphs in his ambitious tyranny;
Till Nemesis, high mistress of revenge,
That with her scourge keeps all the world in awe,
With thundering drums awakes the God of War,

1.0.34–410

Now war begins his rage and ruthless reign,
And *Nemesis, with bloody whip in hand,*
Thunders for vengeance on this Negro Moor

2.0.1–3 (my emphasis)

Invoking the visual motif of a whip or "scourge" and sword, Austen symbolically unites Hamlet and Nemesis, suggesting that he acts as her erring agent. The whip evokes Hamlet's description of himself in this scene as a "scourge," implying that here, he performs this self-assigned role as a "minister" of deadly justice (3.4.177–78). Whether consciously or not, Hamlet is obliquely referencing Vengeance and her whip, and casting himself in her role as Denmark's "scourge." This line appears six pages after the image in question, towards the scene's conclusion: consequently, the whip motif effectively bookends the scene, reinforcing its significance. This self-description also echoes his earlier, ironic observation that "Use every man after his desert, and who should scape whipping?" (2.2.524–25). The echoing between these lines suggests that in 2.2 as well as the closet scene, Hamlet thinks that he himself will do the "whipping." Hamlet wears an "inky cloak" (1.2.77), despite donning white in preceding images. Save for his alarmed expression, his appearance suggests that he

has become a ‘Pyrrhus’-like avenger, with “sable arms / Black as his purpose” (2.2.448–49). The association between revenge (or Nemesis) and black is also evident in *Othello*: “Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow hell” (3.3.447). As described in further detail below, Nemesis haunts Hamlet in Austen’s images, staring down at him in the in the final scene as he lies dying. Ironically, this suggests that it is Hamlet himself who will be ‘whipped’ or punished, not the other characters (except, we assume, Claudius).

The whip/scourge motif also evokes Claudius’ worried deliberation about what to do with an openly murderous, rogue Hamlet. In other words, Austen’s “whip” reference also draws out the association between Hamlet and the “judgement” or punishment he deserves. After he has killed Polonius, Claudius doesn’t know what to do with Hamlet due to his popularity:

> He’s lov’d of the distracted multitude,
> Who like not in their *judgement* but their eyes.
> And where ’tis so, th’offender’s *scourge* is *weigh’d*,
> But never the offence.
>
> 4.3.4–7 (my emphasis)

Claudius, who doesn’t share the pro-Hamlet cultural bias, is not only justified in thinking that Polonius’s murder warrants “judgement,” but finds it a convenient pretext for bundling Hamlet out of the kingdom. In conjunction with Claudius’ employing the term “judgement,” “Weighed” calls to mind the scales of justice, which Nemesis carries in addition to her “scourge.” While the public might be lenient with the prince, weighing “th’offender’s scourge” rather than “the offence,” Nemesis is less likely to be.

The closet scene closes with Hamlet’s callous announcement that he will “lug the guts into the neighbour room” (3.4.214). This is represented by Austen’s “Hamlet Drags Polonius’ Corpse” illustration (p. 113/233). The image is situated immediately at the end of scene but does not take up an entire page, leaving space for text. Its final placement underscores the harshness of Hamlet’s concluding lines, laden with their ugly contempt. While these lines might ordinarily be overlooked or forgotten by an audience keen to exculpate their sweet prince, the illustration ensures that they make a lasting impression. Subverting the

comfortable sentimentalised reading it draws attention to an incident from which nineteenth-century artists generally averted their (and our) gaze.

This drawing also offers a revealing contrast with the illustration on p. 42/227 in which Hamlet abandons his encounter with the Ghost (1.5). In the "Hamlet Drags Polonius' Corpse" image, the prince is shown walking from a sphere of light on the right side of the composition into pitch black darkness on the left, Nemesis looking on. Although this mirrors the "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" image, linking the scenes symbolically and provoking a comparison, Nemesis replaces the Ghost. An additional difference between the images is the vertical and far less cramped composition of the illustration on p. 113/233. This is explained by the fact that the emphasis is no longer on psychological constraint and confinement, imposed by the Ghost's demands, but rather Hamlet's excessive satisfaction when faced with Polonius' death.

Hamlet's baleful aspect in this drawing reflects his mood in this scene more accurately than on p. 105/232. His tone is scathingly dismissive and sarcastic, punning on "grave": "Indeed this counsellor / Is now most still, most secret and most grave, / Who was in life a foolish prating knave" (3.4.113). Rather than miserably hunched forward with his face covered, as in the illustration on p. 42/227 ("Hamlet Leaves the Ghost"), he casts his head back over his shoulder, wearing an expression of disgust. Similarly, in Delacroix's lithograph *Hamlet and the Corpse of Polonius*, the prince wears a vindictive, satisfied expression as he gazes down at the old advisor's body, daintily stepping around it. In Austen's "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" drawing, where Hamlet previously carried a sword, denoting an intention to satisfy the Ghost's demand for vengeance, he now drags Polonius' corpse. This contrast recalls the spirit's stipulation that Claudius be the intended object of revenge (although "howsomever thou pursuest this act" (1.5.84) is somewhat ambiguous), underscoring Hamlet's having murdered the wrong man. Dressed in black instead of white, the prince no longer stands out from the darkness (as in the "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" image) but appears to merge with it, signifying his now compromised morality.

Except in the case of Bernhardt's prince, nineteenth-century directors excluded this moment from the play, concerned that Hamlet's nature would be 'unfairly' or perhaps inaccurately represented (Young 2002, 210). Instead, the actor as Hamlet would do one of three things: depart the scene after claiming "I must be cruel only to be kind / This bad begins

and worse is left behind," form part of a frozen tableau with his mother, or remain alone on the stage, gesticulating in silent regret (210). By including what the theatre purposefully excludes, Austen's imagery offers a contrasting emphasis, casting Hamlet in a more negative light by implying a relish for revenge.

The controversial nature of Hamlet's brute reference to dragging Polonius' remains is also reflected in eighteenth-century critical commentary. For example, in 1736, a critic now thought to be George Stubbes (Aasand 1998, 229) observed of Hamlet's concluding statement that "[i]t has too much Levity in it; and his [Hamlet's] *tugging* him away into another Room is unbecoming the Gravity [sic] of the rest of the Scene and is a Circumstance too much calculated to raise a Laugh, which it always does" (35). However, Bernhardt's Hamlet delivered this line despite its traditionally being excised in production. Her decision to prove an exception suggests a desire to portray the prince in a more problematic light than her counterparts, by highlighting his somewhat vindictive qualities. Given that Bernhardt had already become famous before Austen was born, and famously directed, and starred in, the first filmed *Hamlet*, it is credible that Austen knew of her daring departure from stage tradition. His adoption of the motif suggests that, like Bernhardt, he exploits the line's shock value, and includes it in order to present a more complicated, partly malicious prince. The final placement and consequent emphasis on this image are reflective of this.

In his illustration, Nemesis' cloak depicts an oscillating pattern punctuated by white glowing spheres, matching the white orb which monopolises the image background. As pictured elsewhere in the edition, she dwarfs the prince in size and dominates the image. The figures of Hamlet and Polonius partly frame the sphere, the black of their costumes merging with the surrounding darkness. The prince's black attire contrasts with the corresponding "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" drawing (with its mirroring composition; p. 42/227), where his garb is white. Likewise, unlike the "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" image, in which Nemesis' attire is mainly black, here it is predominantly white: the characters' costumes have reversed their contrast. This suggests that Nemesis is no longer a menacing figure, but instead Hamlet has become so; alternatively, it implies that the prince has adopted the symbolic mantel of vengeance.

The dots on the characters' faces are also suggestive, signalling Hamlet's misdeeds. On the one hand, they are interpretable as denoting flushed skin; Hamlet exerts himself dragging

the old man, while Nemesis' shock manifests in her blushing cheeks, recalling Gertrude's horror when confronted with Polonius' murder. In conjunction with Hamlet's black attire, the blood in his cheek dimly evokes the "more dismal" heraldry which "smear[s]" Pyrrhus "dread and black complexion" (451–52). The prince calls Pyrrhus' murder of Priam "damned" and "tyrannous" (446), yet himself goes on to murder a patriarchal figure, albeit a corrupted one. Hamlet's awareness that his task is potentially heinous is evident in his telling the Ghost, "thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain" (1.5.102-103), renouncing God's commandments. The butchery which ensues in the final scene, when all the principal members of the court are murdered directly or indirectly by Hamlet, is analogous to Troy's destruction. In Austen's drawing of Hamlet dragging a slain Polonius, the prince appears ready to conquer all of Denmark, having slain his first victim. As William Kerrigan observes: "Night becomes in [Hamlet's] imagination the figure of a true avenger, the blood-drenched killer he must impersonate in obeying the ghost's commandment" (47–48).

Nemesis' horrified response to the murder amplifies the appalling nature of Hamlet's crime, while mirroring the reader's response to his harsh concluding lines. She covers her mouth aghast, her other hand tensely outspread in an expression of shock; this is the only instance in which her demeanour is other than passively calm. That Polonius' butchery appals the goddess of vengeance reminds us that it is morally repugnant. Her manifest consternation as she watches the prince also amplifies the shocking crudeness of his proclaimed intention to "lug the guts into the neighbour room" (3.4.214). Her shocked countenance points to Hamlet's agency in perpetrating foul deeds. He acts independently from the Ghost and (it is implied) Vengeance herself; her alarm indicates that she does not expect Polonius' murder: it plays no part in the justice she anticipates.

The concluding illustrations facilitate the reading that the prince's death represents Nemesis' retribution and Hamlet's redemption. In the illustration of Hamlet's death ("Horatio's Grief"; p. 149/236), the prince wears white, while Horatio, draped over him in grief-stricken misery, is similarly attired. Likewise, in the concluding illustration carrying the caption "The Rest is Silence" (p. 173/237), the supine prince is wearing a white costume, the life ebbing from his eyes as he meets Nemesis' gaze. The first illustration is situated at the beginning of 5.1, above the text. It anticipates the deadly conclusion which takes place approximately thirty pages later. Its insertion here is most likely because 5.1 deals with

matters of death, principally Ophelia and Yorick's, anticipating the demise of the other characters. The "The Rest is Silence" illustration is placed opposite Hamlet's dying lines and Fortinbras' entry, with the plays' text continuing on the page following it; this undermines the importance of Fortinbras' arrival, and implies that Hamlet's relationship with Nemesis or Vengeance has dominated the play. Indicating that Hamlet's garb is symbolic and not simply fencing attire, Laertes, corrupted by Claudius, wears black, suggesting a contrasting morality. Hamlet's white attire points to his redemption in death.

The prince seems to stare up at Nemesis as she removes her mask, finally revealing her avenging presence, implying that she has delivered justice not only to Claudius but to Hamlet. In early modern belief, the moment of death brings with it a degree of moral clarity, accounting for the weight stereotypically attached to dying words. This partly stems from a medieval common law principle *Nemo moriturus praesumitur mentiri* ("no-one about to die should be presumed to be lying"). In Christian culture, it was a time for free confession without temporal consequences — indeed, "those near to death or weakened by old age, since they are less hindered by bodily sensation, are capable of divination" (Craig 45). Hardin Craig cites examples which demonstrate "weakened physical powers […] increasing the insight of the soul," such as John of Gaunt on his death-bed in *Richard II*.

Arguably, the image implies that Hamlet's sudden burst of moral clarity allows him to finally see Nemesis and the punishment which he deserves. Although Hamlet seemingly comes to believe that providence dictates his future ("There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (5.2.215–16)), Nemesis' frequent appearance in Austen's drawings, as if supervising the prince, insinuates that it is actually Nemesis who does so. In the vision Austen's depictions make available, Hamlet may consider himself the "scourge and minister" (3.4.177) of Denmark as if he were Christ or an avenging angel; however, his terrible deeds have nothing to do with divine judgement. Hamlet is not heaven's prince but Denmark's, a mortal at the mercy of vengeance and justice.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has examined Austen's depictions of Hamlet with regard to the darker aspects of his character, so often obscured by the sentimentalised reading that prevailed from the late eighteenth century and even into film productions of the present. It has compared his

illustrations with nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century depictions of the prince in visual art, silent film and theatre, and demonstrated, among other things, that Austen highlights the darker, more disturbing facets of Hamlet's personality, in particular his cruelty — in an original and insightful way — and presents a more disturbing prince than his predecessors. Some of the edition's images portray Hamlet ambivalently, while others unequivocally imply that he becomes a wicked *femme fatale* figure, with genuine insanity as a possible driving force.

Austen insinuates that Hamlet's motives are questionable — that thwarted ambition partly drives him, despite his claim to the contrary. The artist visually alludes to the play's (in particular, the prince's) repeated references to starvation, beggars and bad dreams, all of which are linked to the motif of thwarted ambition. Hamlet's increasing depravity is suggested by both his Medusa-like appearance in Austen's illustration of the prayer scene, and in his depiction of an imagined scene in which Hamlet ruthlessly drags Polonius' corpse. Demonstrating significant originality, Austen implies that the prince's death represents divine retribution. Anticipating onstage and filmic Hamlets to come, Austen adeptly illustrates a darker Hamlet than shown in Victorian criticism, transforming Hamlet into a partially demonic *femme fatale*, and developing on a tradition inaugurated by Mounet Sully's malignant prince.

Diabolical Influences: Nemesis, Death and the Ghost

Introduction

Austen's illustrated *Hamlet* portrays the Ghost as primarily demonic and depicts its relationship with Hamlet in an ambiguous light. This has direct bearing on whether we view his prince sympathetically. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, as in the case of Hamlet's character, Austen's illustrations present a dynamic unfolding, not a static interpretation, of the supposed phantom. This points to his detailed, readerly understanding of the play. The artist intuits the darker reading of the Ghost made available in the play's text, in contrast with its sentimentalised Victorian reception. The illustrations convey both an unflattering interpretation of Hamlet's attitude both towards a potentially demonic Ghost — implying that he is unperturbed by its potential malevolence — and his designated role as an avenger.

While the Ghost's depiction in recent film and stage productions of *Hamlet* ranges from paternal and benevolent to potentially demonic, this has not always been the case.[65] Until the mid-twentieth century, the Ghost was cast favourably (even if a little frighteningly), perhaps due to Victorian (and earlier) patriarchal assumptions whereby cold distant fathers — among

[65] The Ghost in Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) contrasts significantly with that of Doran's (2009) version starring Tennant. In Branagh's film, the Ghost (Brian Blessed) whispers to Hamlet from among the trees in an ominous wood, before descending out of nowhere and grasping Branagh by the throat. It continues to whisper with a harsh intensity, but its voice conveys little change in emotion and its expression is fixed. Its eyes are a shining pale blue, evoking the supernatural; it is easy to think that this Ghost might be demonic. In contrast, Doran's Ghost (Patrick Stewart) speaks and acts like a living person, alternating between distress, outrage and indignation, physically expressive and pacing about energetically. At one point it clutches Hamlet in a fervent embrace — after temporarily assaulting him. Doran's performance was consistent between stage production and its accompanying film released the following year.

whom *Hamlet*'s Ghost may, depending on the performance, number[66] — may have been coded as masculine (and thus admirable).[67]

This chapter proposes that Austen countered this widespread view. It showcases this partly by comparing his portrayal of Hamlet encountering the Ghost with Henry Fuseli's, John Gilbert's and Henry C. Selous' somewhat unorthodox depictions of the same subject. Similarities between Austen's image and these late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century ones suggest that they influenced him, while key visual differences suggest that Austen's is an even more controversial reading of the play.

Fuseli produced three images of Hamlet and the Ghost, one of which was put on display as part of the late-eighteenth-century Boydell gallery venture (see fig. 20), while Selous' (fig. 22) and Gilbert's (fig. 21) illustrations were widely available in popular editions of collected Shakespeare. This suggests that Austen would have seen them. However, despite the similarities they share with Austen's illustrations, his exceed them, offering a radical new reading of Hamlet's relationship with the Ghost, and by extension, the nature of their suggested interiorities. He provides an intriguingly ambivalent interpretation of Hamlet's agency. His illustrations imply that Hamlet is possessed and driven mad by the Ghost, underscoring the character's vulnerability. This suggests a sympathetic reading of the prince as unable to control his behaviour. Conversely, the images also insinuate that Hamlet intentionally acts as the spirit's agent.

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[66] In *Hamlet*'*s Absent Father* (2015), Avi Ehrlich notes that "King Hamlet was absent on the day his son was born. His ghost is also absent for most of the play […]. Imposing and imposed upon, terrifying yet pitiable, he is an ambiguous figure who both comes to renew his son's sense of purpose, and, ultimately, to crush him" (51). Patrick J. Cook observes of Almereyda's filmic *Hamlet* (2000), that "[t]he ghost [Sam Shepard] makes physical contact with his son [Ethan Hawke] in a way that conveys both menace and affection […]. When the ghost places his left hand on Hamlet's chest, Hamlet glances down at it, as confused as we are about whether his visitor wishes him good or ill" (179).

[67] John Tosh points to the existence of four types of fathers in Victorian England: distant, tyrannical, intimate and absent (95). Intimate fathers had to remain wary of appearing "effeminized" in the eyes of those around them or being seen to usurp the culturally-assigned roles of their wives (95). As Barbara K. Greenleaf observes, "[n]ot for nothing was the patriarchal Victorian father called 'the Governor'" (79). Natalie McKnight remarks in respect of Dicken's *Bleak House* that "[i]n the figure of Sir Leicester Dedlock, and his broader social deadlock in relation to the rest of a national infrastructure, Dickens encrypts the absent fathers of an entire nation" (145).

Fig. 21. Gilbert. Illustration of Hamlet encountering the Ghost. *The Works of Shakespeare, The Illustrations by John Gilbert, Engraved by the Dalziel Brothers*, Vol. 3, edited by Howard Staunton, London, George Routledge and Sons, 1867.

Fig. 20. Robert Thew. Engraving after a painting by Henry Fuseli, *Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus and the Ghost*. London, J. & J. Boydell, 1796. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 22. Henry C. Selous. Illustration of Hamlet encountering the Ghost. *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, edited by Charles Clarke and Mary Cowden, London, Paris and Melbourne, Cassell & Company Ltd., 1864–68.

Departing from nineteenth-century depictions, these combined readings comprise a unique aspect of Austen's vision. Likewise, Nemesis is a distinctive feature of his imaginary which has radical ramifications for how Hamlet's interiority is interpreted. The artist implies complicity between the Ghost and Nemesis, including her in numerous images observing Hamlet's actions. Evoking the trope of the *femme fatale*, he portrays the Ghost as feminized and demonic, anticipating Wilson Knight's insistence on the Ghost's diabolism in 1930. Austen's Ghost is even shown to personify death, visually realised as the Grim Reaper.

I will treat the following of Austen's *Hamlet* images as case studies, because each contains either the Ghost or Nemesis, a related figure. Some have already been discussed in the previous chapter, such as that on p. 5/224 (the "DP" illustration); p. 8/224 ("Seated Hamlet"); p. 9/225 ("The Ghost and the Guardsmen"); p. 42/227 ("Hamlet Leaves the Ghost"); p. 74/230 ("Ophelia's Closet"); p. 105/232 ("Gertrude's Closet"); and p. 113/233 ("Hamlet Drags Polonius' Corpse"). Images I will examine in this chapter which have not yet been addressed in detail include that on p. 37/226 ("Hamlet Encounters the Ghost"); pp. 46/228 and 51/*225* ("Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost" and "Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure") portraying him under its influence; and p. 78/231, where Death is puppeteering the

play's characters ("Puppeteer Death"). First, I will discuss Austen's depiction of Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost, comparing it to depictions of the same scene by his artistic predecessors, while drawing out informative similarities and differences. I will then examine Austen's illustrations of Hamlet which insinuate that he is possessed by the Ghost. Following this, I will explore his drawings which imply that the spirit is a subsidiary of Nemesis, before addressing images which point to Death's performing a corresponding role to these two figures, equally invested in the characters' mortality.

Austen shares with his Romantic predecessor Fuseli the decision to radically reinterpret the Ghost through visual imagery. As I will explore, while their interpretations differ in that Fuseli amplifies the Ghost's masculine and sublime power through its powerful physicality, whereas Austen depicts a far more sinister and even decrepit spirit, these images also feature some telling similarities, suggesting that Austen was inspired by the other artist. Austen's more sinister reading of the Ghost's influence on Hamlet's mind is revealed in four main ways: first, through its lack of armour and feminised appearance; second, through the eerily static impression which the figures convey; third, through the Ghost's gesture which, when paired with Hamlet's, communicates symbolic and abstract meanings, implying a shared agenda and its diabolical intent; and last, through the Ghost's disturbing Janus-face, hinting at covert intentions. While Austen's Ghost as shown in the "The Ghost and the Guardsmen" image (the preface to 1.1) differs from that on p. 37/226 ("Hamlet Encounters the Ghost") in that the Ghost is stately in appearance, it still conveys an aura of otherworldly, even seductive, danger.

Despite the differences in Austen and Fuseli's artistic styles, chronology, and intended audiences, a comparison of their works is illuminating. Fuseli painted in a Romantic, though somewhat idiosyncratic, style. His works were impressionistic, with soft lines and a strong use of shadow, and yet classical, with monumental figures. In contrast, Austen's illustrations are reminiscent of Beardsley's, with a monochromatic palate, hard lines, an art nouveau aesthetic, and stark, highly unrealistic figures. Fuseli painted his *Hamlet* images for the gallery, while Austen illustrated his limited-edition *Hamlet* for the select few readers who could afford it. The generational divide between the artists is likewise significant, resulting in broad differences in the cultural contexts and reception of their work; Fuseli began illustrating and painting in the late eighteenth-century — fuelled by a Romantic enthusiasm for what Keats called Shakespeare's "fierce dispute / Betwixt damnation and impassion'd

clay" — and Austen in the more cynical, world-weary wake of the Great War. One last factor influencing their works' reception was that Fuseli was one of the most famous painters of his generation while Austen was far less known and far less influential. These enormous distinctions make their shared agenda in creating unconventional Ghosts all the more noteworthy.

Like Austen, Fuseli was influenced by his imagination, appearing to have been informed more by his own (readerly) critical insights than contemporary performances. As Young observes of one of Fuseli's 'Hamlet and the Ghost' drawings: "like most of Fuseli's Shakespeare works, this is far from being a reproduction of what he might have seen in the theatre" (2002, 159). Similarly, Sillars notes that the artist "went and saw [Shakespearean plays] in London," however "he wrote no extended critical statement on the theatre as an interpretive medium […] Fuseli's main visual source was the close imaginative reading of the texts themselves" (2006, 100). Highlighting his artistic achievement, Sillars adds that Fuseli's "work [demonstrates] a deep knowledge of Shakespeare's texts […] produc[ing] an innovative and forceful critical reading of the plays" (98).[68]

First and Second Encounters: Early Visual Traditions

Before we examine Austen's representation of Hamlet's relationship with the Ghost, it is fitting to provide its context and influences. How are we to understand the Ghost, with its disturbing ambiguity? We may dismiss, to begin with, theories that (like Banquo's) the Ghost is to be interpreted as a projection of Hamlet's unconscious: Shakespeare goes to great lengths to provide three independent witnesses to its autonomous existence, one of them a card-carrying sceptic. Despite the fact that scholars like Brett E. Murphy attempt to confine the Ghost to a single source — in Murphy's case, Lewes Lavater's *Of Ghosts and Spirits Walking by Night* (1572),[69] the Ghost in *Hamlet* is a kind of palimpsest, drawing upon

[68] Similarly, Benton and Butcher explain of *Fuseli's Lady Macbeth Seizing the Daggers* (1812) that "such illustration is far removed from being a decorative response; it is an interpretive act of critical insight" (61). One of Fuseli's early biographers, John Knowles observed that "few men recollected more of the text, or understood better the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare [etc.]" (1831, 1:358). Fuseli himself noted (during one of his lectures on painting) that "by this radiant recollection of associated ideas, the spontaneous ebullitions of nature, selected by observation, treasured by memory, classed by sensibility and judgement, Shakespeare became the supreme master of passions and the ruler of our hearts" (qtd. Mason 343).

[69] See Brett E. Murphy, "Sulphurous and Tormenting Flames: Understanding the Ghost in *Hamlet"* (2014).

conflicting early modern traditions about revenants. Of course, the churches had their official positions: for Catholic theologians, something claiming to be a ghost might conceivably be a soul on temporary release from Purgatory, but for Protestants, for whom Purgatory was merely a Popish fiction, it was bound to be a devil. J. Dover Wilson claims that "the Ghost *is* Catholic: he comes from Purgatory," but he overlooks the ambiguity not only of the "sulphurous" flames of its "prison-house" (1.5.3; 14) but also the damnable nature of its mission, seeking not intercessory prayers but revenge (70).

Yet people heard about ghosts long before they encountered theology: think of Mamillius, Hermione's little son, and his 'winter's tale' that begins "There was a man … dwelt by a churchyard" (*The Winter's Tale,* 2.1.29–31). As Catherine Belsey observes, "there were other influences at work that were not so firmly under the control of orthodoxy, whether Catholic or Protestant" (3).[70] She pinpoints moments in the plays which point to Shakespeare's awareness of the oral transmission of ghost stories: "Macbeth's terrified reaction to Banquo's ghost 'would well become,' his wife scathingly insists, 'A woman's story at a winter's fire, / Authoris'd by her grandam' (*Macbeth,* 3.4.63–65)."

One obvious point of origin for the Ghost is the Senecan plot device through which the shade of a murder victim discloses his murder and seeks justice, like the ghost of Don Andrea in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Such 'informant' ghosts tend towards dignity and *gravitas* rather than supernatural horror. Shakespeare's ghost, however, whose "canonized bones, hearsèd in death, / Have burst their cerements" (1.4.28–9), reminds us a little of the more physical and terrifying avenger-ghost of folklore, as mentioned by the Duke in *Measure for Measure*: "Should she kneel down in mercy of this fact, / Her brother's ghost his pavèd bed would break, / And take her hence in horror" (5.1.432–34).

As I will argue, Austen's Ghost captures the play's fundamental ambivalence regarding its nature. Horatio, as an orthodox Protestant from Wittenburg, initially takes the Ghost for a devil pretending to be Old Hamlet, demanding of it "What [*not 'who'*] art thou that usurp'st […] / […] the majesty of bury'd Denmark"? (1.1.48; 51). Hamlet, on the other hand, seems to entertain the Catholic idea that it might be a soul on temporary release from Purgatory to solicit prayers to shorten its stay, as there are no other grounds upon which, in early modern

[70] She also argues along these lines in *Why Shakespeare?* (2007) and "Beyond Reason: *Hamlet* and Early Modern Stage Ghosts" in *Gothic Renaissance: A Reassessment*, edited by Elizabeth Bronfen and Beate Neumeier (2014).

thought, it could be considered an honest Ghost. However, the play problematises this perception of the Ghost, as the spirit sacrilegiously calls for revenge. Just as the Ghost's portrayal suggests contrasting strains of the supernatural, the play espouses conflicting moral, ethical and religious traditions: Senecan stoicism, the Norse revenge code, Catholicism and reformed Protestantism. Hamlet is unsure whether to follow the Senecan, but deeply anti-Christian, path of suicide, or to unhesitatingly pursue vengeance, like his literary predecessor Amleth. He does not properly follow any of these frameworks: the play refuses to decide between them.

While Austen intuits *Hamlet*'s darker Ghost, nineteenth-century critics largely viewed the Ghost as a benign father figure, preferring to overlook clues in the text suggesting otherwise. Their Ghost is solemn, justified, and dignified. Bradley, the spokesperson for nineteenth-century critical opinion on Shakespeare, gives us a typically Victorian view of the old King's ghost, "the messenger of divine justice," as "so majestical a phantom" with its "measured and solemn utterance," and its "air of impersonal abstraction" (174). Consider, for example, his benign reading of the Ghost's wishes for Gertrude. Bradley sees its intervention in the closet scene as coming to her rescue. Since "Hamlet has already attained the object of stirring shame and contrition in his mother's breast," his continued admonition of her "is agonising his mother to no purpose," especially since "the Ghost, when it gave him his charge, had expressly warned him to spare her; and here again the dead husband shows the same tender regard for his weak, unfaithful wife" (138–39). But Shakespeare's text contains clues that, for a reader less committed to a compliantly patriarchal reading, point to a darker interpretation.

If we look at the Ghost's "warn[ing …] to spare her," we find something more ambivalent. Its request to avenge murder ("If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not") is immediately followed by an utterly irrelevant (to the crime of murder) invitation for Hamlet to imagine his detested uncle and his mother thrashing about in "a couch for luxury and damned incest":

> O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!
> If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not,
> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damnèd incest.

> But, howsomever thou pursuest this act,
> Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
> Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven
>
> (1.5.80–86)

Worse, having deliberately 'tainted' Hamlet's mind with this image, it disingenuously counsels him both to forget it, and not to entertain ideas of revenging himself upon his mother. It is true that at the moment of the Ghost's intervention, the prince has succeeded in evoking "shame and contrition in his mother's breast," but, like Claudius in the preceding scene, the Ghost knows that these are not enough — that the sacrament of penance requires restitution and absolution, and that without these, contrition is of no avail. Bradley thinks it is "obvious" that the Ghost's intention, in not appearing to Gertrude, is to "spare" her. But if its aim is to damn her, then appearing only to the prince is a way of granting her the escape she wants: Hamlet's accusations have merely been "ecstasy," or temporary madness. It diabolically foils her possible salvation.

The increasingly eerie depiction of the Ghost during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shifting from solid, armoured, active figures in the late-eighteenth century,[71] to often transparent and/or impassive ones in the nineteenth,[72] probably stems from the Victorians' interest in spiritualism and their cultural obsession with the Gothic and macabre. The ghost novella with its interest in the Todorovian *fantastique*, such as Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* (1898), appeared toward the end of the Victorian period. Pepper's Ghost, a visual trick used onstage and during seances, whereby a mirror was used to create ghostly projections, accounted for the interest in transparency. Gilbert, Selous and Meadows, whose widely-disseminated illustrated editions show notable imaginative engagement with the texts, all produced transparent-looking Ghosts. Gilbert's Ghost of 1867, from *The Works of*

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[71] Fuseli's paintings as described in this chapter are a case in point. Charles Grignion's 1773 engraving of the closet scene after Francis Hayman's painting (located in the Garrick Club), found in Charles Jennen's edition of *Hamlet,* is another example. Its armour is clearly defined and its movements human: it strides forward, one hand extended and upturned, and the other holding a long cylindrical shape (possibly a truncheon) away from its body.

[72] For example, a wood engraving signed "A.H.," published by *The Graphic* in 1874, based on a production by Henry Irving at the Lyceum theatre in the same year, shows the Ghost (Tom Mead) as physically insubstantial, shyly looking back at Hamlet (Irving) (fig. 27). Meanwhile, in a photographic reproduction of an illustration (by Hawes Craven) of Forbes-Robertson's 1897 production, showing the closet scene, the Ghost is physically impassive and less visible than the living characters, while standing close to the tapestry as if having just emerged from it.

Shakespeare, is increasingly insubstantial from the waist downwards such that it doesn't visibly touch the ground. It appears to be levitating. Selous' Ghost (from the Clarkes' *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (c.1864–68)) is entirely transparent, while Meadows', as shown in 1.1 and included in *The Works of Shakspere* (1846), is an ambiguous-looking, airy phantasm. Gilbert's and Selous' Ghosts, despite their supernatural transparency, remain dignified, physically powerful and masculine-looking in appearance, adhering to the Victorian perception of the Ghost as patriarchal and benevolent.

In Austen's "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" drawing,[73] Hamlet is standing before the spirit against a backdrop of stars; the latter faces away from us, recalling its reluctance in the play to speak with anyone but the prince. A strip of fabric encircling Hamlet's right knee anticipates his "Ungarter'd" stockings (2.1.80) when adopting the antic disposition he anticipates after the Ghost's departure in 1.5. This illustration portrays one of two scenes in the play: whether the scene when Hamlet, accompanied, first sees the apparition (1.4), or the scene when he subsequently enters alone with it (1.5). However, suggesting that only Hamlet and the Ghost are present, the edition places the illustration immediately opposite the text containing the spirit's private conversation with Hamlet. The full-page size of the image points to the significance of this moment in the play.

Both scenes were popular choices for visual artistic depiction from the late eighteenth-century onwards. In depictions of either scene, the Ghost's pointing gesture is a common visual motif, signalling its desire that Hamlet follow it. In Fuseli's first two paintings of the prince and Ghost, the spirit prompts Hamlet to follow it, although his companions try to prevent him (see figs. 20 & 24). Featuring the same "pointing" motif (although depicting Scene 5), is a wood engraving of 1814 by John Thompson after a design by John Thurston (fig. 24),[74] and an engraving by Hollis after a painting by Reid (first names unknown) depicting Macready as Hamlet (fig. 23).[75] Both show Hamlet alone with the Ghost on the battlements, responding to its gesture.

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[73] Invented title.

[74] This is found in *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare,* published in London by C. Whittingham in 1814 and held in the Folger Shakespeare Library. There is a quotation underneath: "Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further."

[75] John Tallis published this engraving in 1849.

Fig. 23. (?) Hollis. Engraving of Act 1.5 depicting William Charles Macready as Hamlet, after a painting by (?) Reid. London, John Tallis, 1819. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

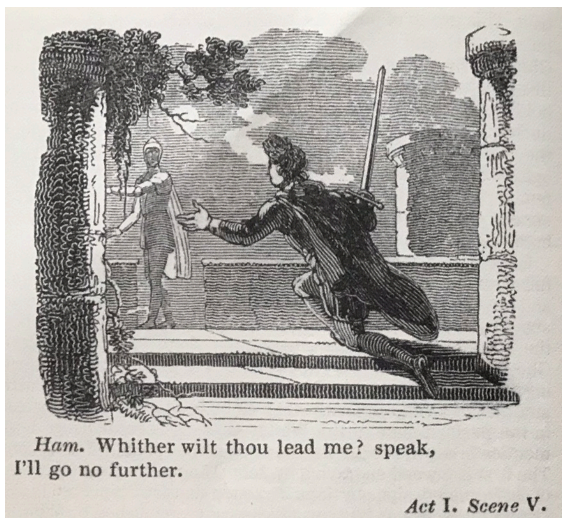

Fig. 24. John Thompson. Engraving of Act 1.5, after design by John Thurston. *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, Chiswick, Whittingham, 1814.

Fig. 25. Henry Fuseli. *The Ghost and Hamlet*. 1780–85, Zürich Kunsthaus, Zürich.

Austen's Ghost is also pointing. It is much closer to the foreground than Hamlet and consequently a much larger figure. It dominates the composition, lending greater emphasis to its ominous gesture. This in turn reinforces the impression, conveyed by its pointing hand, that the spirit is eerily commanding, recalling the trope in ghost stories whereby spectres make demands of those they haunt. This Ghost's signal hints at an additional significance than simply directing Hamlet to follow it, appearing to silently name the object of its vengeance.

While the suspended height of Austen's Ghost evokes traditional depictions of 1.5, the physical distance between the characters does not, opening up a space for alternative readings of their relationship. For example, their proximity, especially in conjunction with Hamlet's hiding of his face, communicates an increased impression of threat. In traditional portrayals, the Ghost is often physically elevated over Hamlet and at a distance; Thompson's engraving is a case in point. According to Young, the "visual effect" of the Ghost's distant removal is "expressive of the psychology of Hamlet's yearning to be reunited with his father" (2002, 167). Early nineteenth-century English theatre also tended to situate the spirit at a remove in an effort to produce this impression (2002, 167), such as in the case of Macready's *Hamlet* production at the Haymarket in 1849, where the Ghost (John Stuart) stood at the top of a "flight of steps," having "ascended from the ramparts" (qtd. Rosenberg 313). This implied emotional attachment remained a prominent trend in productions, Charles Kean "sinking slowly to his knees – as over-awed by the solemn presence – addresses [the Ghost) with touching and affectionate adjuration" (Merchant 111). This continued into the twentieth century. In Burton's 1964 *Hamlet,* according to Rosamund Gilder, Gielgud adopted a "tender tone," having realised that the Ghost was "a helpless pitiful thing" (111). In 1963, George Grizzard, in Tyrone Guthrie's directed play, conveyed "a real love and reverence" for the Ghost (Ken Ruta) (Rossi 15).

In Austen's illustration, the Ghost is still higher in the picture plane (than Hamlet). However, in contrast to most nineteenth-century depictions, it seems uncomfortably close to him; there is little reason to think that the prince covets its attention. Coupled with the diminution of Hamlet's figure relative to the Ghost, this emphasises his vulnerability and mortal insignificance. Gilbert's illustration produces a similar effect, suggesting a broadly similar interpretation, but he foregoes creating an impression of the prince's traditional emotional yearning. Instead, his Hamlet hunkers down, recoiling from the Ghost which

seems to tower over him, a hair's breadth away. However, Austen alters this 'looming' trope, as his Ghost is eerily suspended in space rather than situated on the ground. Consequently, despite standing, Hamlet is level with the Ghost's knees. In contrast, Gilbert's Ghost, although its lower body gradually fades into nothingness from the waist down, still appears to be standing since its head is a realistic height from the ground.

Gilbert, Fuseli and Austen share an emphasis on supernatural terror, also suggesting either their influence on Austen or a shared imaginative sensibility. Austen's Ghost sinisterly hides its face from the viewer (Austen's original initiative), while Hamlet shields his face protectively as if threatened. In Gilbert's image, he buries his face in the crook of his arm. This furthers an atmosphere of unease and emphasises the Ghost's disturbing, preternatural origins. Austen's, Gilbert's, and Fuseli's third (c. 1785) images of Hamlet interacting with the Ghost position the figures similarly and use comparable lighting effects, creating an atmosphere of tension and unease.[76]

Fuseli drew on stereotypical portrayals of the spirit's intrusion in Scene 4 for the purpose of depicting its arrival during the closet scene (3.4). In both Austen's and Fuseli's portrayals, the Ghost is positioned to the right, monopolising the foreground and towering over Hamlet, dominating the vertical space in the illustration. Gilbert arranges the figures similarly, although Hamlet is slightly closer to the foreground than the spirit. Reeling back in shock, the prince in these images resists the apparition (although in Fuseli's painting, this is because Hamlet simultaneously strives to protect the Queen; Fuseli's image portrays the moment when the Ghost appears in the Queen's private chambers and the prince speaks to it, much to Gertrude's alarm, as she cannot see it). The space around the characters is darkly lit and claustrophobic, contributing to an impression of Hamlet's vulnerability and terror. This suggests that his relationship with the Ghost is powered by fear, and that he is threatened with supernatural possession or lunacy (as Horatio had warned).

Since the eighteenth century, artists and stage directors have routinely portrayed Hamlet holding a sword defensively upon first encountering the Ghost and when in doubtful pursuit.

[76] Hapgood remarks that, "[f]rom the first, 'special effects' have been lavished on the appearances and disappearances of the Ghost. In Shakespeare's time, a trapdoor may well have been used for his descent into the 'cellarage'"; "[v]arious spectral lighting devices have been employed […] in modern productions all is often dark and obscure" (101). In Burton's Hamlet, the Ghost was "a great black shadow which suddenly took shape above the stage" (Gielgud 41). In Branagh's film, the Ghost literally "swoops down" on the guards (Hapgood 101), tearing it sword from its scabbard as if prepared to attack.

A wood engraving of 1874 signed "A.H.," showing Henry Irving as Hamlet and Tom Mead as the Ghost, is a case in point (fig. 27),[77] as are Hollis and Thompson's engravings. However, Fuseli, Selous, Gilbert and Austen eschew this motif, perhaps to imply that a weapon is ineffectual against an intangible spirit ("For it is, as the air, invulnerable, / And our vain blows malicious mockery" (1.1.150–51). In Fuseli's first depiction of the scene, Hamlet is without a sword; in the second, he wears an undrawn sword at his waist, while in the third, there is merely a glint of silver at his hip. In the first image, Hamlet's classical proportions counteract an impression of vulnerability which the sword's absence might imply; in the second, his athletic build and desperate attempt to reach the Ghost achieve a similar effect. It is only in the third image that Hamlet seems helpless, recoiling from the Ghost with an expression of horror absent in the preceding works. Fuseli's final painting places increased emphasis on the supernatural horror of the Ghost and the danger it represents. Hamlet's alarm is likewise evident in Austen's illustration. Paired with the sword's absence, this makes him appear more vulnerable than in Fuseli's series, and thus more susceptible to the Ghost's potentially malevolent influence.

Austen's Ghost is less masculine and more unnerving than its traditional counterparts. Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century depictions of the Ghost in 1.4. and 1.5. show it wearing armour. In some cases, its armour is partially or completely covered by drapery, as in the wood engraving signed "A.H" depicting Henry Irving as Hamlet (fig. 27). Mead's Ghost pulls a large cloak around itself protectively but remains a masculine figure with prominent beard and broad shoulders — suggesting, in conjunction with its "beaver," that it is in armour. Gilbert and Selous' Ghosts are similarly attired. The Ghost's war helmet remains visually prominent, despite its drapery. By contrast, Austen's Ghost, "in his habit as he liv'd" and not wearing armour (3.4.137), is endowed with an aura of seductive danger, lessening its masculinity while exaggerating its eeriness.

The unsettling, supernatural appearance of Austen's Ghost, exaggerated by its ethereal aspect, contributes to an impression of Hamlet's vulnerability, due to being faced with powerful, supernatural forces. The tendency to portray the spirit in military attire in performances, regardless of implicit stage directions, has continued up until the present, most likely because directors prefer to reflect Horatio's description of it as "Armed at point

[77] Published by *The Graphic* (14 November 1874), this was based on a production by Irving at the Lyceum theatre in the same year.

exactly, cap-à-pe" (1.2.200). However, Austen's Ghost is an exception, dressed in a way which anticipates its depiction in 3.4. Although it is not transparent, it is so physically insubstantial as to seem in danger of being swallowed up by the tasselled shawl and white, loose flowing robes that it wears, reminiscent of a nightdress. Save for a sheathed sword, its attire bears no trace of the military garb Horatio mentions. Along with refined hands and long, slender fingers, this Ghost appears unusually fragile; its fingers — absent of an armoured gauntlet — and shawl with its abundant, attractive patterning, render its appearance stereotypically feminine.

The Ghost's attire also evokes stereotypical depictions of spirits in nineteenth-century art. These tend to be vulnerable-looking, ethereal creatures. The more feminine they appear, the more they seem preternaturally dangerous. Accentuating their otherworldliness, these are portrayed in white, flowing, shroud-like garments, as if newly risen from the grave; Gilbert's and Selous' Ghosts are attired thus, although their garments hang over armour. Also contributing to an impression of the supernatural, the drapery of Austen's Ghost hangs in the air where we might expect to see feet. Combined with its levitation and physical frailty, this renders it shadowy and unsettling. In contrast, the physical solidity, classical forms and armour of Fuseli's figures emphasise their humanity, evoking Old Hamlet's life on the battlefield rather than his disintegration in a tomb.[78] Armoured and physically broad, Gilbert's and Selous' Ghosts are equally commanding.

Despite their similarities (see below), Austen's Ghost provides a striking contrast with Fuseli's decisively masculine version. Fuseli's two Ghosts grasp a "truncheon," while all three have a bulky, armoured body, underscoring their implied virility. Fuseli describes his second Ghost (*Hamlet, Horatio, Marcellus and the Ghost* (1785–90)[79] as "strik[ing] with majestic dignity, and look[ing] like a king" (May 1789, 112). His physicality and fury are overwhelming. A commentator remarked of the Boydell painting that "[t]he superhuman height of the figure, the frown fierce and ominous, like that which the living king wore, when 'in an angry parle / He smote the sledded Polack on the ice;' the compelling motion of the

[78] Alan Cunningham describes Fuseli's visit to the Sistine chapel as partly having inspired him to paint classical figures in the style of Michelangelo (1876, 460–61). Similarly, Sillars also refers to classicism and Renaissance painting as his influences (2006, 102).

[79] Which he submitted to the (famous) Boydell gallery exhibition.

truncheon which it seems impossible to resist, all are admirable" (A. Cunningham 1876, 461–62).

Fuseli's third Ghost (fig. 26) has an even greater body mass than its forebears, its solidity and height underscoring its masculine potency. According to Young, its "long cloak that drags upon the ground [...] emphasise[s its] forward momentum," contributing to an impression of physical power (2002, 161). Fuseli's Ghosts are more physically impressive than their eighteenth and nineteenth-century counterparts, visibly embodying the power implied by the spirit's description: its "warlike form" (1.1.50), its "stately" march (1.2.202), and its feats in "combat" — both when Old Hamlet "smote the sledded Polacks on the ice" and when he "Did slay [Old] Fortinbras" (1.1.89). In the play, the Ghost's potency is such that it symbolically emasculates the guards: "Within his truncheon's length" they are "distill'd / Almost to jelly with the act of fear" (1.2.204–5).

Fig. 26. Henry Fuseli. *Gertrude, Hamlet and the Ghost of Hamlet's Father*. c. 1785, Fondazione Magnani Rocca, Mamiano di Traversetolo.

However, despite the masculinity conveyed by Fuseli's third Ghost, it shares some feminized traits with Austen's. It conveys a more sinister air than its heroic forebears. The Ghost's masculinity is partially deemphasised in favour of its supernatural potency and the scene's intense psychological horror. In the artist's two initial drawings of the Ghost, it holds a truncheon, while the plates of its armour are clearly defined through lighting effects, evoking the muscularity of Michelangelo's figures. These additions are absent in the third

image.[80] Unarmed and wearing "a long cloak that drags upon the ground behind [it]" (Young 2002, 161), this Ghost partly resembles Austen's feminine one. The latter bears no trace of the "majestic dignity" Fuseli attributed to his second Ghost, dressed in a tapestry or shawl and carrying a sheathed sword rather than a "truncheon," a weapon feminine by comparison, particularly when passively resting in its scabbard.[81] Perhaps also accounting for the sword Austen's Ghost carries, Horatio describes it as "Armed at point" (1.2.200), evoking a sword. Arguably, the most clearly feminine trait of this Ghost is its hand, with its long, gracile, bejewelled fingers, echoed in Hamlet's equally feminine hands.

The spirit's hand is juxtaposed with Hamlet's as it only lengthens two fingers and a thumb; its smallest finger is barely visible. The Ghost's fingers are adorned with large rings, recalling "[Old Hamlet's] signet" (5.2.49) which the prince uses to seal a letter to the English king, fatally condemning Rosencrantz and Guildernstern. The rings foreshadow this event; the Ghost's imperative sets in motion these characters' demise and the fall of the court. Paired with the decorative pattern of its shawl, the spirit's jewellery also denotes its royal office when alive. Austen's Ghost is truly a "precurse of fear'd events" (1.1.124).

The Ghost's exaggerated but sinister femininity partly derives from the Victorian fascination with the predatory female character as exhibited in Gothic novels and ghost stories. This fascination reflected deeper masculine anxieties regarding female sexuality as something predatory and vampiric, capable of draining men of their vitality. This in turn accounted for the increasing interest in vampirism and the *femme fatale* during this period. The vampire novel *Carmilla* (1872) was the first of its kind — the vampire is a woman. The 'vamp' genre continued into the twentieth century, with famous examples such as Philip Burne-Jones' *The Vampire* (1897) — a painting portraying a woman descending on a sleeping male figure —, Kipling's poem of the same name (1897), and Theda Bara's breakthrough role as 'The Vamp' in *A Fool There Was* (1915), titled after a quotation from Kipling's poem. Suggestive of the seductive qualities of Austen's Ghost, not only is it

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[80] As art historians have repeatedly observed, Fuseli was inspired by the immense power of Michelangelo's figures, and sought to instil the same grandeur in his own. For example, Sillars notes that the artist was "hugely influenced by artists of the Renaissance, especially Michelangelo […] he also found their heroic universality in the writings of Homer and Shakespeare (2006, 99).

[81] 'Vagina' is the Latin for 'sheath' or 'scabbard.'

feminine in appearance (in the aforementioned and in other illustrations, shortly to be discussed) but it also appears to demonically possess Hamlet, as I explore below.

The Ghost's femininity seems due in part to the increasing social and artistic interest in androgyny around the *fin de siècle*. This in turn reflected the emergence of feminism (as we know it) as a social and political movement in this era, and increasing interest in the experiences of women and divergent expressions of femininity. Shearer West observes that "the androgyne or human with the qualities of both man and woman, was a crucial image in late nineteenth-century art. It stood as metaphor for the confusion stimulated by the 'battle of the sexes'," caused by the growing legal autonomy of women and the movement for female suffrage. It was an "oblique icon for homosexual love, and a symptom of a larger crisis in the construction of male identity at the turn of the century" (71). West explains that "if men became more "manly" and women more 'womanly,' the progress of society was assured; if men became more like women and women more like men, they were both [, according to prevalent patriarchal assumptions,] experiencing an atavistic regression to a state of primitive homogeneity or hermaphroditism" (69).

Androgyny effectively represented femininity invested with masculine power, or masculinity "weakened"; this was concerning to many because it confused the gender binary and, like female sexuality, threatened established patriarchal social structures. Consequently, androgyny was often perceived or cast in a disturbing and even sinister light. It appears that Austen was influenced by the increasingly unstable gender norms of the *fin de siècle*, norms which anticipated the androgynous, empowered, "flapper" woman.

The Great Outdoors: Hamlet and the Ghost

While the backdrop in Austen's illustration is an outdoors space as found in traditional depictions of Scenes 4 and 5 (described below), it is unusually minimalist. However, what little is there is deeply symbolic, alluding to Hamlet's vulnerability and the Ghost's disturbing supernatural agency. Portrayals of the Ghost and Hamlet's first encounter generally evoke the castle's exterior in the form of battlements, drawbridge or an external gate (Young 2002, 150), recalling that the Ghost appears on "the platform where [the guardsmen] watch" (1.2.213). In some instances, the sea constitutes the background (151), in reference to Horatio's concern that the Ghost will trick Hamlet "towards the flood" or "the dreadful summit of the cliff / That beetles o'er his base into the sea" (1.4.69–71).[82]

Austen's image, however, lacks a fortress or sea. Instead, the backdrop is comparatively stark, pitch-black and punctuated by either falling snow or stars — the latter would be suggestive of their night-time encounter. Further, if interpreted as stars, these white specks suggest impending destiny, made ominous by the Ghost, particularly as they are shown in apparently intricately patterned but inscrutable arrangements. Save for these natural elements, the surroundings appear devastatingly empty. While an absence of visible terrain, coupled with falling snow, evokes a blizzard, recalling Hamlet's observation on the battlements that "The air bites shrewdly" and Horatio's rejoinder: "It is a nipping and an eager air" (1.4.1–2), this also points to Hamlet's overwhelming emotion and consequent blindness to his surroundings. Further, this vacuum underscores the intensity of focus between the characters, accentuating Hamlet's vulnerability and isolation and foreshadowing its continuation throughout the play. It also suggests that the Ghost drives nature into hiding by "Making night hideous" (1.4.54).

Through this spaciousness and wild, natural environment, Austen's drawing evokes the sublimity of some traditional depictions. This contributes to an impression of the Ghost's overwhelming supernatural influence and its threatening impact on Hamlet's implied psyche. In cases where the sea dominates the background, the Ghost and Hamlet, and possible

[82] In Benjamin Wilson's painting *William Powell as Hamlet encountering the Ghost* (1768–69), a sea is visible in the background; the same image also features the drawbridge and/or gate motif. The latter stemmed from theatrical productions (Young 2002, 150).

company, are often dwarfed by it, mirroring the psychological tumult the character(s) are experiencing.[83] Related to this, Young notes that nature in these images sometimes evokes the Romantic Sublime (2002, 158), citing Fuseli's Boydell painting as an example: the "wild and raging sea [… is] suggestive of immense elemental forces" (158)[84] — arguably, the billowing clouds and starkly emanating moonlight in Gilbert's drawing have a similar effect, again, suggesting a shared aesthetic sensibility.

As in Fuseli's Boydell painting, Austen conveys the division between the spirit and mortal worlds. However, unlike Fuseli, he insinuates that Hamlet is lured into the realm of the supernatural. Fuseli's image, as Young observes, clearly distinguishes these realms by situating the human characters in front of a castle wall, and the Ghost in front of unobstructed sky (2002, 158). The spirit's supernatural potency is also suggested by its implied physical power and pale aura. Gilbert's illustration is comparable, as it depicts Hamlet crouching with his head beneath the battlements while the Ghost looms, its body forming a part of the sky imagery. In Austen's drawing, the stars or snowflakes extend all the way down the picture plane, suspending the figures together in space; furthering this impression, the Ghost levitates, eliciting a disturbing otherworldly power. Here, there is little evidence of the mortal realm. Hamlet is its sole representative. This reinforces the impression that Hamlet becomes a part of the Ghost's disturbing universe and perhaps complicit in its dark affairs.

Austen's, Gilbert's and Fuseli's third (post-Boydell) 'Hamlet and the Ghost' images share a similar composition and a portrait format, producing a sense of verticality which indirectly furthers an impression of Hamlet's vulnerability and intimidation. This is because the Ghost looms over Hamlet, overwhelming his more diminutive figure. The resemblance between these images also suggests that Austen is influenced by these works. In Austen's drawing, vertical lines dominate the attire of both figures and thus dominate the image. This accentuates the Ghost's levitation, and creates the impression that Hamlet is drifting upward to meet it in space, leaving the safety of the mortal realm behind him. Also contributing to this vertical sweep, the spirit's head approaches the upper border. Rendering it larger in scale

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[83] An example of this 'dwarfing by nature' is found in the "The Platform by the Sea at Elsinore," an 1887 photogravure (produced by the Gebbie Company after a contemporary oil painting) (Folger Shakespeare Library, art file S528h1. no 105). Olivier realises emotional turbulence through nature imagery in his film version of *Hamlet* (1948); Grigori Kozintsev draws on the same in his 1964 film.

[84] Similarly, Sillars observes of Fuseli's style that is contains "a romantic sense of the sublime, in which vastness of spirit is all" (2006, 99).

than Hamlet, it occupies the frontal picture plane while Hamlet is relegated to the back; consequently, the image is dominated by the vertical lines of its attire. In Gilbert's image, the vertical lines in the spirit's drapery likewise seem to lengthen the composition, and to similar effect. In Fuseli's painting, the Ghost's enormous physical stature exaggerates the illustration's verticality. All three Ghosts dominate the picture plane, towering over the prince. What is distinctive about Austen's vision, however, is that the Ghost is, as mentioned, significantly higher in the picture plane than in either of these examples. While this contributes to an impression of Austen's Ghost posing as a secretly demonic angel, it also implies that the danger of this Ghost lies more in its supernatural rather than masculine qualities.

More than Father and Son

Austen draws on Fuseli's unorthodox portrayals of Hamlet and the Ghost, although demonstrating his unique interpretive emphasis, departs from these in some significant respects, such as by portraying the Ghost as a more eerily feminine figure. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, Hamlet was often shown in one of three physical attitudes: pointing at the Ghost, usually in alarm, extending his upturned palm in a gesture of pleading enquiry, or turning it outwards in an attempt to ward off the spirit. For example, in the wood engraving signed "A. H.," (1874; fig. 27) mentioned previously, Hamlet (Henry Irving) wears a determined expression while directing an index finger at the Ghost (Tom Mead), suggesting fearless agency. In Thompson's engraving, Hamlet is shown pursuing the Ghost at the beginning of 1.5, one elbow bent and corresponding palm turned outward questioningly, denoting supplication and a desire to help his father.[85] A mezzotint portrait (1754) of David Garrick by James MacArdell after a painting (now lost) by Benjamin Wilson (fig. 28) portrays the actor instinctively trying to resist the Ghost with hands raised. Although we cannot see the Ghost, this implies that it is terrifying to behold, evoking the trope of the

[85] The significance of this gesture may also have something to do with the formal gestural vocabularies at play in nineteenth-century stage performances.

demonic 'folk' ghost. Similarly, Gilbert's illustration shows Hamlet weakly attempting to repel the Ghost with one hand, his face buried in the nook of his arm.[86]

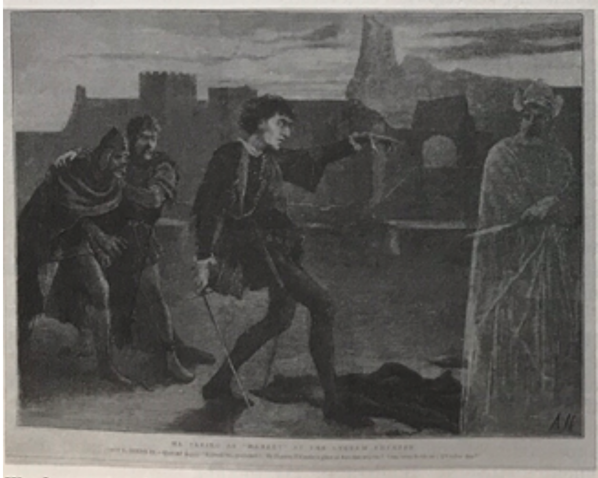

Fig. 27. Wood engraving signed "A. H." depicting Henry Irving as Hamlet, Tom Mead as the Ghost in 1874 production by Irving at Lyceum Theatre. *The Graphic*, 14 November 1874. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 28. Mezzotint portrait of David Garrick by James McArdell after a painting (now lost) by Benjamin Wilson; it depicts Hamlet encountering the Ghost. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Austen's depiction of Hamlet draws on some of these motifs, but with subtle changes. Rather than hiding his face in his arm as in Gilbert's drawing, one hand shields his face as if blinded; instead of pointing at the Ghost as in the A.H engraving, the other hand points skyward. Two of Fuseli's images seem to anticipate this unusual posture. His pre-Boydell illustration portrays Hamlet's right arm stretching vertically over his head, while the artist's post-Boydell image depicts him with his right-hand cast across his temples, as if blinded by the sight of the Ghost. However, despite these similarities, Austen's drawing is more than an

[86] As in Gilbert's illustration from *The Works of Shakespeare* (1867).

homage to his eighteenth-century predecessor, as Hamlet's body language, in conjunction with the Ghost's, communicates symbolic and abstract meanings.

Gesturing towards the same vacancy, Hamlet's right hand and the spirit's left draw two invisibly converging lines. This intersection in empty space suggests the meeting of their purposes, the prince complying with the Ghost's implied demand. This suggests that they are equally aggrieved by Gertrude's behaviour. Unable to touch Hamlet, the Ghost can only facilitate implied contact through gesturing; also reinforcing the impression of its being ethereal/insubstantial, Hamlet's arm is visible through the Ghost's robes. The communication of their hands in space also implies that the stars are ominously aligned, foreshadowing the bleak consequences of their meeting.

Austen's Hamlet and Ghost resemble one another in that both shield their faces. However, the effect is contrasting: the former is cast sympathetically, while the spirit appears diabolical. The Ghost's gesture — extending the first three digits of its hand — would be interpretable as oathtaking if it were its right hand ("as God is my witness"). With the left hand, however, this represents a diabolic parody. Hamlet seems blinded by the Ghost's supernatural, pale radiance, clad principally in white underneath its shawl. His protective gesture also implies that he is horrified by its tidings, particularly as his eyes are fixed on the Ghost's sword; the prospect of murderous revenge alarms him. Hamlet may also physically reel because he is overwhelmed by the spirit's hideousness. A forehead is visible where we should instead see the back of its head, implying that its frontal aspect, facing the prince, is equally disturbing. Its ulterior face and obscured body indicate that it hides something demonic from the viewer: namely, its malevolent intentions. Further, a Janus face — one in front, one behind — symbolizes knowledge of the past and of the future: Austen's Ghost knows what is to come.

Bernard Paris has pointed to the similarities between the Ghost and Hamlet in the play. The two share a language, especially when condemning Gertrude's " incestuous" desire for Claudius.[87] When Hamlet enters Ophelia's closet, he resembles an apparition, "Pale," almost "As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors" (2.1.81; 83–

[87] The critic observes that "both speeches stress the nobility of King Hamlet, the sexual depravity of Gertrude, and the inferiority of Claudius to his brother. There is in both a sense of outrage that this faithful, loving husband, this radiant angel, this Hyperion, has been betrayed by his wife and replaced in her affections by the bestial Claudius" (1991a, 39).

84). Early in Austen's edition, in the "Seated Hamlet" illustration, his appearance resembles the Ghost's, suggesting not only kinship but a shared purpose. Gazing shrewdly from black rimmed eyes and clad in white, Hamlet looks like the spirit both in the "DP" image from where it glares between the curtains, and in the ensuing image prefacing 1.1 ("The Ghost and the Guardsmen"). Likewise, the Ghost and Hamlet as shown in the "DP" illustration also look alike, both in pose and appearance. This resemblance suggests that Hamlet may even physically subsume the Ghost after hearing its command, abandoning his own interests in order to pursue its vendetta ("thy commandment"). Notably, the Ghost in the "DP" image resembles the spirit in A. H.'s engraving of Henry Irving (1874; fig. 27), both seeming to clutch themselves defensively.

In Austen's Hamlet and Ghost illustration, the figures also share a similar pose, suggesting a shared implied interiority. Both are vertical (although the Ghost levitates) with legs pressed together. Their bodies convey a sense of stasis rather than forward momentum, evoking stagnation and — especially when compared with Fuseli's physically impressive Hamlet and Ghost images — impotence. The latter convey an impression of sudden action and power. In the pre-Boydell image, Hamlet's legs lunge in a v shape while he leans backwards; the Ghost's legs mirror his, but its chest remains authoritatively erect. In the Boydell painting, Hamlet surges forward as if desperate to pursue the Ghost, his torso twisting towards it — again, the Ghost's posture mirrors his, only its chest faces away in the direction in which it points. In the post-Boydell image, Hamlet lunges protectively sideways in front of his mother while the Ghost takes an intimidatingly minimal forward step, recalling its "solemn march" in the play (1.2.201). This last image shows the greatest disparity in the postures of Hamlet and the Ghost, perhaps implying that he has lost intellectual sympathy with the spirit when the closet scene unfolds — for which he is reprimanded. In short, the implied momentum and thus masculine power of Fuseli's figures starkly contrasts with Austen's, frozen where they stand. This underscores the eeriness of the Ghost and the supernatural dimension from which it issues, suggesting that Hamlet is in grave danger.

The illustration of Hamlet and the Ghost on p. 46/228 implies that the former sublimates sexual desire into a longing for vengeance. The image faces the opening of 2.1, the scene in which Ophelia relates to Polonius her distressing encounter with Hamlet in her chamber, despite referencing the events of the preceding scene. Coupled with its full-page

size, this again underscores the centrality of Hamlet's meeting with the Ghost within the play's narrative, implying that its repercussions are going to manifest in 2.1 with the telling of Ophelia's troubling story. The sword's hilt features a naked woman, while the sword is thrust between Hamlet's parted arms — in the general direction of his groin — in a penetrative gesture; coupled with the fact that his groin is more prominent than anywhere else in the edition, this causes his arched back and backward rolling head to evoke sexual ecstasy. This recalls his urgent petition suggesting unconscious self-revelation: "Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift / As meditation or *the thoughts of love* / May sweep to my *revenge*" (1.5.29–31; my emphasis). Austen's imagery insinuates that Hamlet's sexual desire is sublimated into an obsession with revenge. This reading is made available in the text, as Hamlet spares little thought for Ophelia after his misogynistic condemnation of her, turning all his thoughts to revenge.

Austen's Ghost: A Saintly Demon

As briefly discussed, critics have long since questioned the Ghost's intentions, referring to Hamlet's internal query: "The spirit that I have seen / May be the devil, and the devil hath power / T' assume a pleasing shape" (2.2.594–96)). Harold Jenkins notes that Hamlet's tone in addressing the Ghost under the stage recalls the disrespectful manner in which the stage Vice traditionally spoke to the devil; he also observes that 'old mole' etc. evokes the below ground activities of devils. Benjamin Robert Haydon described Fuseli's Boydell Ghost in terms which invoke a similar reading of the spirit:

> round its visored head was a halo of light that looked sulphureous, and made one feel as if one actually smelt hell, burning, cindery and suffocating […] the ghost looked at Hamlet, with eyes that glared like the light of the eyes of a lion, which is savagely growling over his bloody food. But still it was […] not the ghost of Shakespeare. There was nothing in it to touch human sympathies combined with the infernal; there was nothing at all of his "sable silvered beard," or his countenance more "in sorrow than in anger"; it was a fierce demonical, armed fiend reeking from hell, who had not yet expiated "the crimes done in his days of nature," to "qualify him for heaven"
>
> (qtd. Todd 75–76)

However, it can be argued that Fuseli's Ghost is not so diabolical as the critic imagined, and that the demonic malevolence of Austen's Ghost exceeds that of Fuseli's. One way in which it does this is through its (symbolic) physical convergence with the halo-like moon behind it. As I will explain, Austen seems to subtly adapt this motif as found in Fuseli's Boydell painting, portraying the Ghost ironically as both diabolic and yet saint-like. Gilbert's illustration also loosely adopts this motif, as, perfectly round and shining brightly, the Ghost's helmet resembles the moon and is adjacent to it — this circular motif is repeated in the arched frame. This suggests that Gilbert's incorporation of this symbolic aesthetic may also have influenced Austen.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, there has been a tradition of portraying moonlight in representations of 1.4 and 1.5. A full moon denoted a late-night setting and provided means by which to dramatically illuminate the figures (Young 2002, 152).[88] Austen and Fuseli manipulate this motif in similar ways, using a moon to suggest that the Ghost wears a nimbus. In Fuseli's painting, a moon is suspended in the sky directly behind the head of the Ghost. This endows it with a "halo" as well as a "powerful supernatural aura" (Todd 75; Young 2002, 156). Made to seem divine, the Ghost's commanding appearance evokes Hamlet's description of him as "Hyperion" (1.2.140; 3.4.54). Similarly, a nimbus-like disc surrounds the head of Austen's Ghost, denoting the moon behind, however, in pale drapery and without the same muscularity, this Ghost is more reminiscent of a saint than a god.

Although Fuseli and Austen both treat the moon as a nimbus, their representation of it differs significantly. In Fuseli's image, the nimbus is an actual moon; this is suggested by its being situated in the background behind the Ghost. In Austen's, placed directly between the Ghost and the foreground (an illogical position for an actual moon), it seems to merely symbolise one. This distinction is probably attributable in part to Austen's Symbolist aesthetic. Further, by implying that the Ghost wears a literal nimbus, Austen places probably ironic emphasis on its saintliness. The disc's empty night-time interior seems sinister when compared with the starry surrounds, a foreboding absence of starlight perhaps signifying the Ghost's arrival. If instead interpreted as an ominously eclipsed moon, it contrasts with the full moon in Fuseli's painting. Either reading casts Austen's Ghost in a more disturbing light than

[88] The first instance of this was in an engraving by Gerard Van de Gucht (1740) after a design by Hubert Gravelot, portraying Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost in Scene 4 (held in the Folger Shakespeare Library).

Fuseli's. An eclipsed moon surrounded by stars recalls Horatio's sober description of the visual "precurse" of Caesar's downfall:

> As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,
> Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
> Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
> Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.
>
> (1.1.120–23)[89]

Incorporating this "eclipse[d]" "moist star" into the Ghost's appearance, Austen's illustration implies that the Ghost's visitation presages 'disasters.' Likewise, on pp. 42/227 and 113/233, the disc's vast, shining magnitude recalls Horatio's bleak reference to "Disasters in the sun."

Despite its ostensibly saint-like aspect, Austen's Ghost is sinister. It seems more diabolical than Fuseli's, which is physically powerful in aspect. The latter's overwhelming physicality recalls the saints occupying the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, rendering it almost sublime — a manifestation of divine power.[90] In contrast, Austen's Ghost appears decrepit and far from "admirable." Because of its nimbus, physical suspension in space, and loose, flowing robes, this Ghost resembles an angel, suggesting an ironic allusion to the angelic delivery of holy tidings. In the play, the spirit is ambiguously interpretable, seeming more like a fallen angel. It explicitly compares itself to an angel: "So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd, / Will sate itself in a celestial bed, / And prey on garbage" (1.5.55–57), yet, as discussed, tells the prince to exact vengeance despite God's injunction to the contrary. Hamlet knows that its claim to issue from purgatory may be a fiction ("the devil hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape" (2.2.595–96)). Reflecting this anxiety, Austen's Ghost seems more demonic than authentic, partly on account of its Janus-face.

If we return to one of the earliest images of Austen's Ghost, we observe that the illustration introducing 1.1, "The Ghost and the Guardsmen," portrays the Ghost as only

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[89] *Antony and Cleopatra* includes a similar sentiment: "our terrene moon / Is now eclipse'd, and it portends alone / The fall of Antony!" (*A & C,* 3.3.153–55).

[90] In his Lecture IV (1805), Fuseli claimed that the "artist" and "poet" should seek to evoke "that magic which places on the same basis of existence, and amalgamates the mythic or superhuman, and the human parts of the *Ilias*, of *Paradise Lost,* and of the Sistine Chapel, that enraptures, agitates, and whirls us along as readers or spectators" (Knowles, 2:199–200).

potentially treacherous, reflecting Hamlet's ambivalence. Rather than eerie, it is "stately," as in Bradley's description above, and has "assume[d] a pleasing shape," as if "Abus[ing Hamlet] to damn [him]" (2.2.598–99). The emphasis on the Ghost's face in this image may be due to Horatio and the guards' description of it, although there is no sign of its armour, nor the "beaver" which it wears up (1.2.129; 200). Depicted with a human aspect, it narrowly observes ("fixe[s its] eyes upon") the guardsman who reel backwards in shock (recalling their "oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes") (233; 203). Its expression seems intent and somewhat mocking; its forehead is furrowed, and the underside of its moustache curves upwards at the corners, suggestive of a sardonic smile. It wears a "sable silvered [...] beard" (242), however its "countenance" expresses neither "sorrow" nor "anger" (231) — its sideways glance makes it appear sly and conspiratorial. As in the "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" image, there is nothing in its expression to "touch human sympathies." Its eyes are large and effeminately lashed; in combination with his watchful expression, this creates an impression of seductive danger, hinting at the feminine and the diabolic. Austen again emphasises the Ghost's dangerous femininity.

Partly accounting for the difference between this and the Ghost's appearance in Scene 5, Horatio vacillates between a noble description of the Ghost as Hamlet's father: "a figure like your father / [...] / Goes slow and stately by them; thrice he walk'd" (1.2.199; 202), and as a (dehumanised) lowly spirit: "at the sound it shrunk in haste away" (219). Hamlet's descriptions of the Ghost are similarly contrasting, calling it "My father's spirit" (1.2.255) but also an "old mole" (1.5.170). His abrupt switch between filial reverence and jocular familiarity seems to depend on the Ghost's presence or absence. When it is present, exerting its diabolic glamour, Hamlet abandons his doubts ("Thou com'st in such a questionable shape / That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet, / King, father, royal Dane" (1.4.43–45); when it cannot be seen, his doubts return ("this fellow in the cellarage" (1.5.159)). Skulking in aspect, the Ghost pictured in the "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" illustration recalls its being called an "old mole," while here ("The Ghost and the Guardsmen"), the Ghost's appearance evokes the respected patriarch, "King, father, royal Dane." By depicting the Ghost as alternately benevolent and malign, Austen underscores the characters' perception of its disturbing ambiguity, demonstrating a detailed readerly understanding.

Night-time's appearance in this image contrasts with Hamlet's and Horatio's descriptions of it during the Ghost's visitations, ostensibly contributing to an impression of

the Ghost's being sincere rather than demonic. The former claims that the apparition 'hideously' distorts night's aspect; similarly, Horatio describes the moon as being "sick […] with eclipse." However, despite the "hideous[ness]" we might expect either of Austen's Ghost or its surrounds, and despite its crafty expression, it has ordinary, human features, while the pale, billowing clouds are far from dark and ominous. While the bleached atmosphere may represent the breaking dawn, the spirit shows no sign of uneasiness or a desire to "shr[i]nk in haste away." The lighting in the scene is evenly balanced throughout the image, suggesting that the moon is featured for its symbolism rather than its evocative lighting effects. This also points to Austen's spare, monochrome Symbolist aesthetic.

However, notwithstanding the spirit's wily expression, the illustration highlights the Ghost's uncanniness in other ways, portraying it with the same dimensions as the moon. Similarly, like a moon, the spirit seems to issue from a thick stratum of cirrus ('horse-tail') clouds, its right shoulder almost indistinguishable from the sky cover. The moon is full, albeit partially obscured by the Ghost. Because spirit and moon are of equal size, the moon seems to be in danger of being 'eclipsed' entirely. This illustration introduces the scene in which the speech about the eclipse is delivered, implying a clear connection between image and text. By underscoring the Ghost's foreboding materialisation (which Horatio compares to an eclipse, the "precurse of fear'd events"), the image anticipates the play's tragic outcome. The physical juxtaposition of moon and spirit also recalls Hamlet's anxious description of the Ghost "Making night hideous." Hamlet speaks as if the spirit were a malign planet "visit[ing]" its neighbouring moon, casting both in equally significant, otherworldly terms.[91] The spirit's huge looming face, threating to eclipse the moon, evokes the terror which it instils in the characters.

One very distinctive interpretive choice of Austen's is to include the Ghost in the court scene (1.2; the "DP" image), clarifying its agenda. The stage in this illustration may represent Hamlet's mind, where the image of his murdered father is constantly present. It is shown skulking in the background, shielding its face. This suggests that it bears angry witness to the marriage, prompting it to approach the prince. The image implies that it is Gertrude's remarriage and supposed sexual betrayal — rather than the spirit's own murder — that spurs

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[91] The *OED* (3a(a)) gives one meaning of 'to visit' as: '[t]o inflict hurt, harm, or punishment.' This could be considered to be the Ghost's role in the play.

it to action.[92] In the "DP" and the "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" illustrations, the spirit disguises its face with its cloak; in contrast, in the illustration introducing 1.1, it lowers it to reveal its features, including its "beard […] sable silver'd," recalling its decision to appear before the guardsmen and communicate its message to the prince. All of this loosely suggests that the Ghost is genuine. Austen prompts the reader to entertain two contrasting possibilities of its real nature: that it is either the "devil" or an "honest Ghost."

Hamlet Possessed

Austen implies that Hamlet is possessed by the Ghost, anticipating performance tradition later in the twentieth century. The *Evening News* described Alan Howard's Hamlet, directed by Trevor Nunn in 1970, as "palpably mad as a March hare, from the distracted bolting-eyed moment when he meets his father's Ghost to his own death. A mad, wild Hamlet — he stabs Polonius not once but 20 frenzied times — and one that I accept and rejoice to have seen" (June 1970). The timing of the onset of his madness suggests that it coincides with his possession. The idea that Hamlet might be possessed became explicit a decade later in Jonathan Pryce's prince, directed by Richard Eyre. He and Pryce were deeply familiar with the film *The Exorcist*, and Pryce sought out documentaries on voodoo and people speaking in tongues for further inspiration (*The Guardian*, 18 April 2016). Harriet Walter, playing the role of Ophelia, described how in the ghost scene, Hamlet's

> body writhed and contorted as if some alien creature had invaded him and was kicking at his sides. He belched the Ghost's words from the pit of his stomach, and gasped for air as his own voice recovered enough to answer.
>
> (Walter 8–9)

When Pryce delivered his final line "the rest is silence," he momentarily seemed to fit, evoking his being possessed by his father's spirit (Croall 48). It may also be that Pryce partly sought to realise the modern idea that the Ghost was a projection of Hamlet's own psyche. *The Times* claimed that Zeffirelli's production portrayed the Ghost onstage as "a projection of

[92] In early modern culture, a widow who remarried was felt to be adulterous towards her dead husband (see Groves and Hiller 32).

the Prince's super-ego," Hamlet uttering some of the Ghost's lines himself and mouthing them when spoken from the wings (16 September 1964).

Several of Austen's images insinuate that Hamlet is possessed by the Ghost or that his madness is inspired by it. This provides a sympathetic reading of the prince, as his actions are seemingly beyond his control. In Austen's "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost," the moon — symbolising madness and melancholy in early modern thought — is assimilated into the Ghost's aspect.[93] This may reflect and possibly confirm Hamlet's suspicion that "Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / [the devil] / Abuses me to damn me" (2.2.597; 599). Horatio warns that the Ghost may "tempt" Hamlet

> […] toward the flood […]
> And there assume some other horrible form
> Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
> And draw you into madness […]
>
> (1.4.69; 72–74)

In the drawing, the Ghost's Janus-face and Hamlet's reeling posture suggest that the apparition indeed has a "horrible form." That the prince feigns insanity after encountering the Ghost suggests an attempt to protect himself from a perceived threat of real madness.

Hamlet's possession by the Ghost naturally insinuates that he acts on its behalf, but Austen extends this to include Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance. The depiction of Hamlet's murder of Polonius ("Gertrude's Closet") implies that the prince is failing as the "scourge" appointed by the Ghost, itself an ostensible representative of Nemesis. Nemesis does not appear in depictions of *Hamlet* by other artists to my knowledge, although occasionally the three Fates do (discussed in the "Austen's Terrifying Feminine" chapter). Like the Fates pictured in an unsigned wood engraving carrying the title "Ophelia and the Fates" in Anna

[93] The link between the moon, madness and melancholy is evidenced by the following lines: "O sovereign mistress of true melancholy" (*A & C*, 4.9.12); "That I being govern'd by the watery moon, / May send forth plenteous tears to drown the world!" (*Richard III*, 2.2.69–70); "It is the very error of the moon, / She comes more near the earth than she was wont, / And makes men mad" (*Othello*, 5.2.109–111).

Jameson's *Characteristics of Women* (1832) (fig. 44), Nemesis — also a powerful omniscient goddess who shapes the destinies of mortals — is shown wearing a black cowl.

An even more overt suggestion of Hamlet's possession is found in the miniature on p. 36/226 ("Hamlet Possessed by Death"). This possibility is underscored by the illustration of Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost being shown directly opposite ("Hamlet Encounters the Ghost"). Recalling the Ghost's lethal imperative, the image portrays Hamlet with head thrown back and chest thrust forward before a looming, gigantic skull, as if subject to its ominous influence. Reinforcing this impression, this arrangement of figures anticipates an ensuing image on p. 46/228 ("Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost") in which the Ghost appears in lieu of the skull, a juxtaposition suggesting that the spirit is diabolical and deadly. Portraying Hamlet under the Ghost's sway, the image on p. 46/228 implies that the spirit bewitches him with its sinister influence. As in the miniature ("Hamlet Possessed by Death"; p. 36/226), Hamlet's head is thrown back and his spine arched, making his chest seem dangerously exposed.

In 'Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost,' the spirit looms over him in the image centre, head uncovered save for a diadem, denoting kingship, while wearing the same hairstyle and moustache as in previous images. Kneeling and barefoot, arms and fingers outstretched, and his posture strained, as if an electric current is passing through him, Hamlet appears possessed. He bends further back than in the image on p. 36/226 ("Hamlet Possessed by Death"), his arms extending outwards instead of hanging limply behind him. While Hamlet's exposed feet and loosely tied breeches recall his intention to feign madness, they also suggest, when paired with his posture, that he is psychologically unravelling and completely at the mercy of the Ghost. The starless backdrop is entirely black, except for the moon, suggesting that the Ghost's ominous presence has permeated the night-time sky and blocked out the light ("eclips[ing]" the moon). The figures appear suspended in space, as in the first portrait image of Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost.

If considered in relationship with the scene in Ophelia's closet, Austen's illustration on p. 46/228 casts Hamlet's behaviour at this point in the play as that of a man possessed. Ophelia describes him as departing with "his head over his shoulder turn'd / […] seem[ing] to find his way without his eyes" (2.1.97–98). Matching her description, his head is thrown backwards, while his arms seem to probe the air in front of him. His back arches severely,

and he has naked feet, with breeches loosely tied. His overall gesture and appearance contribute to a more extreme depiction of Hamlet's behaviour in her chamber than in either the play or Austen's actual illustration of the "Ophelia's Closet" scene (p. 74/230). Underscoring his 'moonstruck' enchantment, a woman's face, possibly Ophelia's, resides within the moon. This recalls Othello's claim that "It is the very error of the moon, / She comes more near the earth than she was wont, / And makes men mad" (5.2.109–111), and evokes Ophelia's presence when Hamlet intrudes into her chambers. Further, merging Ophelia's face with the moon, the illustration suggests that Hamlet perceives his relationship with Ophelia and the Ghost in similar terms. In the play, he is wary of both of them.

The "Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure" image (p. 51/229) likewise implies that the prince is subject to the Ghost's power. The illustration appears at the end of 2.1, when Ophelia tells Polonius of her disturbing interaction with Hamlet. This implies that his behaviour in her chambers was that of a man subject to supernatural influences. As in the images on pp. 36/226 and 46/*224*, he is dressed completely in white. Here, unbuttoned, his cuffs gape open, the only indication in his attire that he exhibits ostensibly feigned insanity. Recalling his visit to Ophelia's closet, his arms are outstretched, and he turns his head back to gaze over his shoulder, his eyes staring vacantly. The Ghost's murky outline surrounding his own, Hamlet is overshadowed, standing on the robes which pool at its feet. Seemingly, he is under its dark influence. Abundant daisies and female faces are visible among the entanglement of reeds dominating the background; while underwater supernatural female entities are a Symbolist motif, this arguably also highlights Hamlet's increasing fixation on feminine duplicity, spurred on by the Ghost. The varied expressions of these faces form an impression of variegated humanity, likewise suggesting that this represents his hysterical perception of women as corrupt. Paired with his possessed appearance, as if subject to a monster's will, their staring at Hamlet also calls to mind his derogatory condemnation of Ophelia regarding the "monsters you [women] make of [men]" (3.1.141–42). A skull rests on the spirit's robes where they meet the floor, a *memento mori* and omen of things to come. In general, Austen's imagery repeatedly evokes Hamlet's precarious mental state.

The Ghost: The Agent of Nemesis

Austen also casts the Ghost as a manifestation of Nemesis, perhaps because the former views the play's events omnisciently while desiring revenge, mirroring Nemesis' behaviour in Greek myth. Austen perceives the Ghost as an, if not demonic, then as a profoundly vengeful spirit. Suggestive of this, in the drawing on p. 46/228, the pattern on the spectre's robes matches Nemesis' attire in the preceding image (p. 42/227). The ambiguity of the swirling motif and lack of recognisable symbols referring to the physical world hints at the supernatural, the domain of both figures. While the proximity of and differences between the illustration of Nemesis raising a sword over Hamlet's head (in "Seated Hamlet") and of the Ghost (in "The Ghost and the Guardsmen") underscore their being distinct beings — their contrasting ages and genders are explicit, while Nemesis wears black and the Ghost, white — Nemesis' symbolic request for justice recalls the Ghost's demand for vengeance (Bacon's "wild justice"). Hamlet imagines himself "a pipe for Fortune's finger" to play on (3.2.70); in conjunction with his claim that he has no choice but to be the "scourge and minister" of Denmark, this implies that Hamlet considers himself helplessly subject to the Ghost's (Nemesis-like) demands. That these figures perform identical roles in violently upending the prince's hopeful future also points to their affinity. Meanwhile, their joint appearance in the illustrations underscores the impossibility of Hamlet's satisfying both their imperatives, as simultaneously a dispassionate executioner and an impassioned revenger driven by "the thoughts of love."

The "DP" illustration likewise presents the Ghost as an extension of Nemesis — as her avenging agent. Similarly, in conjunction with Nemesis' imposing physical presence, her outstretched hand, positioned close to the unwitting characters, implies that she literally has a hand in their fate. Wearing monk's attire while looming over these figures, Nemesis resembles Death in a subsequent illustration ("Puppeteer Death"; p. 78/231), in which he puppeteers the play's characters. Here, extending her hand forebodingly towards Gertrude, Nemesis appears either to cast a spell on her or point accusingly at Claudius, standing beside his wife. Her other hand pulls back the stage curtain to reveal the Ghost; introducing it into the play, Nemesis ushers in vengeance, the object of which she points towards. Her gesture foreshadows the royal couple's demise, while signalling the Ghost's fury over the Queen's and Claudius' wrongdoing.

Nemesis' gesture is also interpretable as her reaching out protectively towards the Queen, recalling the Ghost's ostensible concern for her and reflecting Austen's close reading of the text. It tells Hamlet to "leave" Gertrude be but to enact mortal vengeance on Claudius (1.5.86); in the closet scene, the Ghost's appearance suggests its intention to cut short Hamlet's excoriation of his mother, particularly as it chides him for his "almost blunted purpose" (3.4.111). Nemesis' hand falls short of grasping Gertrude, suggesting the boundaries between the living and the dead — between the Ghost and his wife. Perhaps as a protective measure, the Ghost delivers its message to Hamlet rather than Gertrude, and when confronted with her in the closet scene chooses to remain invisible. In this image, its desire to remain hidden is suggested by its covering its face with one arm.

The illustration of Hamlet's visit to Ophelia's closet (p. 74/230) implies that Nemesis (like the Janus-faced Ghost) possesses an awareness of Denmark's terrible fortune. The image is positioned immediately after the concluding text of 2.2., when Hamlet determines that "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.600–601). Given that Polonius informs Claudius of Ophelia's troubling interaction with Hamlet early in this scene, the illustration, with its depiction of their encounter, seems intended to reinforce the dreadful impact of Ophelia's story. This focus on Ophelia's interior experience will be explored in the "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship" chapter.

Nemesis is shown silently leafing through a tome, perhaps the play, as she watches Hamlet behave antically, suggesting that she knows how events will unfold. She is interpretable as a metatheatrical figure, a mediator of sorts (also further discussed in "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship"). Horatio cries out to the Ghost: "If thou art privy to thy country's fate, / Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid, / O, speak!" (1.1.136–38) — the spirit may indeed know what will eventuate. Horatio describes the Ghost as a harbinger of things to come, comparable to what took place in Rome before "the mightiest Julius fell," when "The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets" (1.1.117–119). Evoking this description of the Ghost, in the "DP" image, Austen's Nemesis appears to reside ominously over the assembled party, as a towering, but seemingly invisible, figure. Her presence, particularly as it persists throughout many of the illustrations, is deeply portentous. On p. 74/230, watching Hamlet closely as he communicates with Ophelia, Nemesis'

depiction recalls the Ghost's presence in the closet scene (in the play), the spirit closely observing Hamlet's actions as he interacts with a female character.

The "Seated Hamlet" illustration, in which Hamlet sits in melancholy thought while Nemesis looms behind him, also suggests that Nemesis and the Ghost are conjoined, by portraying Nemesis as if she were a spectre and also the Ghost's messenger. Nemesis' whip is suggested by the tassel which hangs over her sword. Her appearance contrasts with Hamlet's: she is swathed in black, reversing the shade of their garments in the "DP" image. She resembles an ominous apparition, while the stark white of Hamlet's clothing indicates that he is still untainted by the Ghost's imperative. Unlike in the "DP" illustration, Nemesis is no longer gargantuan but life size, suggesting her immediate presence, like the Ghost, among the characters. Her special interest in Hamlet is evidenced by their physical proximity. The fact that Nemesis and the Ghost ensure Hamlet's death is suggested by the "Seated Hamlet" image, Nemesis holding a sword directly over Hamlet's head. This motif is compositionally echoed by the sword-like smoke which seems to plunge into the candle burning atop the skull.

Standing immediately behind an unsuspecting Hamlet with sword raised ominously over him, Nemesis ritualistically summons him to action. This also prefigures Hamlet's posture in the prayer scene (3.3), suggesting that he comes to embody the spirit of vengeance. The grotesque on Nemesis' sword may symbolise the Ghost issuing instructions. It lacks the satyr-like addition of horns and flowers worn by the other grotesques in Austen's images. A sword protrudes from its mouth; as the weapon is a symbol of revenge, this may denote the Ghost's words to Hamlet. This motif also echoes Gertrude's claim that her son's "words like daggers enter in my ears" (3.4.95), despite his stated determination to "speak daggers to her, but use none" (3.2.387). Compared to the other grotesque masks found throughout Austen's *Hamlet,* the grotesque here is more humanoid, with thick hair, a receding hairline and a stern forehead. In conjunction with its penetration by a sword, this suggests Claudius' demise at the play's end, when Hamlet stabs him with an "envenom'd" sword (5.2.323), while also hinting at an alternative outcome to the prayer scene. This image represents Hamlet as the victim of supernatural entities: the Ghost and the abstracted form of vengeance that is Nemesis. Austen presents us with a distinct reading of the play.

The Dance of Death

The artist adapts common Symbolist motifs to generate new insights into the play; one such motif is death personified. Death can be compared to the Ghost and Nemesis because it interacts, or even interferes with, the fate of the characters. In the illustration "Hamlet Drags Polonius' Corpse" (p. 113/233), a large skull and grotesque mask hang from the front of Nemesis' costume. Together, these refer to deceptive appearances and deadly realities, reflecting the disturbingly ambiguous nature of the Ghost and its motives, "spirit of health or goblin damn'd" (1.4.40). Similarly, the prefatory image to 3.1 — another tableau independent of the play's events, providing commentary on *Hamlet* in general — implies that Denmark's initially jolly atmosphere ("heavy-headed revel" (1.4.17)) during wedding celebrations was ironically masking the onset of horrible events. Death is portrayed as a puppeteer, while his marionettes are the play's principal characters: from left to right, we see Laertes, Polonius and the Queen, Ophelia and an unidentified courtier. This image is positioned in the edition immediately before the mousetrap scene (3.2), implying that, in the play, playacting mirrors puppetry. Hamlet decides what lines the players will perform; he also manipulates the entire court — like Death, controlling their fates. In this image, Austen may cast Hamlet as Death.

The Grim Reaper wears a hooded black robe, corresponding with Nemesis' attire in the "Seated Hamlet" illustration and the drawing of the play's concluding scene ("The Rest is Silence"; p. 173/237). Nemesis' and the Ghost's absence in this image is notable, given their pervasive presence in the edition. That Death and Nemesis are abstract entities, both attired in hooded black cloaks, suggests that they are related figures. Both are inexorable and omniscient, and invested in the characters' mortality. Arguably, the Ghost performs a similar role. It drives Hamlet towards vengeance, chastising him for being temporarily distracted from this purpose when rebuking Gertrude. Its sudden appearance in her chamber and decision to intervene at a crucial moment, suggests that it knows exactly what is going on in Elsinore.

The drawing also insinuates that the characters' happiness is merely superficial, a consequence of their complacency with surfaces and their failure or refusal to peer into the moral depths that horrify Hamlet. Further, it evokes the Ghost's disturbing appearance during Elsinore's celebrations, and unbeknownst to its inhabits, the Ghost's having a hand in their affairs. In the image, all aside from Death are smiling, as if in celebratory mood, either

unaware of or indifferent to the ghastly presence controlling them. The gaiety of the scene, particularly as the King, Queen and Laertes dance, recalls the artistic allegorical topos, the *Danse Macabre* (the 'Dance of Death'), dating back to the Late Middles Ages, in which Death shepherds people from different walks of life — typically pope, emperor, king, labourer and child — dancing towards their graves.[94] The drawing evokes Hamlet's contemptuous description of the carousing which accompanies Claudius' enthronement and wedding — using the rustic word "wassail" (1.4.10), which evokes the atmosphere of a country celebration. Death's inclusion contributes to an impression of the originality of Austen's reading.

The abundant flowers (including the flower wreath encircling Death's head), the entertainment of a puppet show, and the comically oversized plant stem (or peacock feather, reminiscent of the flamboyant Osric) protruding from the unidentified courtier's cap, evoke a disturbing, garden-like setting, recalling the "unweeded garden" that Hamlet thinks is Denmark, "Possess[ed]" by "things rank and gross in nature" (1.2.135–37). Coupled with Ophelia's wild black mop of hair and precarious position on top of a moon-shaped sphere (displaying the scene's title), the flowers evoke her madness and deadly attempt to "hang" her "crownet weeds" on a tree's "pendent boughs" (4.7.171–72). Paired with Death's supervision of the characters' celebrations, Ophelia's unstable, smiling appearance in particular recalls Hamlet's misogynistic gloating over the mortality of the frivolous and flirtatious courtly lady: he ironically instructs the jester's skull to "get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that" (5.1.186–88).

Eliciting the same motif of mortality, the image "Hamlet Leaves the Ghost" (p. 42/227) alludes to the dangers of kingship. In a moment of dramatic irony Claudius airily dismisses these, whereas other of Shakespeare's kings remain acutely aware of them.[95] A skull seems to

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[94] Clark provides a full exposition on this in *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (1950). See also 'Dance of Death' entry in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Herbermann & Williamson, 1908).

[95] He complacently tells Gertrude "Do not fear our person. / There's such divinity doth hedge a king / That treason can but peep to what it would, / Acts little of his will" (4.5.122–125). But as Richard II observes:

> […] within the hollow crown
> That rounds the mortal temples of a king
> Keeps Death his court, and there the antic sits,
> Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,

project outwards into the viewer's space, occupying the same part of the composition as in the 'Hamlet seated' image. Although no longer intrusive in size, its presence is hard to ignore. It wears a diadem or crown resembling a candelabra, the three candles of which bear women's faces. Two are smiling playfully while one looks relaxed. Because candles and skulls traditionally signify mortality (as per the visual and literary tradition of the *memento mori*), the combination of crown, skull and candelabra ironically recalls, and anticipates, the fate of Denmark's kings (and heir); reinforcing this impression, the Ghost's head is visible immediately behind the skull. Trailing from the burning wicks, three ribbon-like tendrils of smoke follow Hamlet as he departs. Since candles symbolise the brevity of human life, these suggest the deaths of other characters as caused directly by Hamlet. He directly occasions three deaths in full possession of his senses and with malice aforethought (the slaying of Polonius could be argued to be — as Hamlet claims to Laertes — the work of his 'madness'). A flower occupies the centre of the skull's diadem; while this association between flowers and mortality was a popular motif in the *memento mori* genre, it also evokes Old Hamlet's murder in the garden, as well as Ophelia's madness and consequent death.

The triad of candles motif is also present in Beardsley's illustration 'Of a neophyte and how the black art was revealed unto him by fiend Asomvel' (see image above; for further discussion, see the "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship" chapter). In both Beardsley and Austen, grotesques feature at the candles' base, and the trailing smoke seems to have a life of its own. However, the artists' employment of this motif is distinctive. For example, the grotesques in Beardsley appear monstrous, whereas in Austen, they are attractive female faces. Further, this motif is repeated numerous times in Austen's images, while it barely appears in Beardsley. Partly explaining their presence in both artists' works, *memento mori* are a distinctly Symbolist motif. Austen seemingly draws on this symbol to emphasise the grim outcome of the play; its inclusion is more than a gesture to Symbolism and (perhaps)

Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit;
As if this flesh which walls about our life
Were brass impregnable; and humor'd thus,
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!

(3.2.160–170)

Beardsley. Austen draws on Symbolist motifs to produce a new and insightful interpretation of the play.

Summarising Remarks

For the attentive reader, *Hamlet* provides suggestions that the Ghost is more ambivalent and more insidious than eighteenth and nineteenth-century critics, reading the play through a simplifying patriarchal lens, were inclined to believe. In his illustrated edition of *Hamlet*, John Austen makes this ambiguity explicit. This chapter has explored his illustrations of Hamlet and the Ghost in terms of their representation of the former's agency, madness and possible possession, and charted the ways in which the artist's images differ from but also draw on traditional (nineteenth-century) depictions. It has compared Fuseli's and Austen's — and to a lesser degree, Gilbert's and Selous' — demonic Ghosts, particularly with respect to their use of masculinity or effeminacy as a means of communicating supernatural potency. It has explored how Austen casts both Hamlet and the Ghost as agents of Nemesis (or 'Vengeance'), while examining Death's role as a related figure. Austen adapts Symbolist motifs, such as Death and burning candles, to communicate an unprecedented reading of the play. Austen's imaginative and symbolic depictions reflect his imaginative insight into the possibilities of Shakespeare's text that Romantic and Victorian readings had obscured. His inclusion of the Ghost, Nemesis and Death affects how we view Hamlet. Implying that this triad of figures largely determine the play's outcome, and that the Ghost diabolically possesses Hamlet, the artist's imagery renders the prince sympathetically. Based on this reading, *Hamlet* is treated as a human tragedy. However, these illustrations also create the opposite impression, insinuating (in contrast) that Hamlet carelessly, or perhaps deliberately, inflicts tragedy on those around him. He delights in acting out the roles of Death and Vengeance, while disregarding the questionable origins of the Ghost.

Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship: You Did Love Me Once

The central thing about the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia is that they understand each other. She is not as emotionally complicated as him, but she has the same sense of morality and goodness.

John Cameron, composer and orchestrator for Simon Russell Beale's *Hamlet* (2000), directed by John Cairnd (qtd. Croall 134)

Introduction

Austen represents Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship in an ambivalent light which contributes to a negative reading of the prince, discussed in the preceding chapters. Developing this further, the artist invests Ophelia with unprecedented agency in terms of their relationship dynamic. Rhodes observes that *Hamlet* "challenges conventional notions of gender and heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships" (159).[96] This chapter argues that Austen's drawings do the same with regard to the central couple. The illustrations reflect Hamlet's dismal treatment of Ophelia, abusing and then ignoring her until he learns of her death. Hamlet is shown mourning Ophelia's demise and witnessing her descent into madness, of which he is the primary cause, as if to ironically highlight his lack of regret and grief in the play, even despite his culpability. The images imply that there is something monstrous lying in wait inside of him, of which his hatred of women and corresponding treatment of Ophelia is symptomatic; this recalls Claudius' conviction that Hamlet's "melancholy sits on brood" hatching "danger" (3.1.167; 169).

The illustrations likewise portray Ophelia in an atypical light by giving her additional agency. She is shown condemning Hamlet for his actions and petitioning Nemesis, the goddess of vengeance, for justice. Ophelia is shown to be more than a victim of fate and love, and a highly complicated character. As discussed in the previous chapters, Nemesis is

[96] She cites as examples the "sexually frank language" of Gertrude and Ophelia, Hamlet's revenge for his father's cuckoldry and murder, the Queen and Claudius' "incestuous" marriage, the former's enduring sexual desire despite her waning years, what some describe as Hamlet's "Oedipal" relationship with his mother, and the prince's sometimes stereotypically "'effeminate'" behaviour (159). See Kahn (132–40) on cuckolding and Heilbrun (9–17) on Gertrude's sexuality.

regularly included in the edition's illustrations, principally in reference to the revenge plot underpinning the play. However, she also performs other functions, seeming sometimes to watch and weigh Hamlet's behaviour towards Ophelia, while partly precipitating the couple's separation, because Hamlet's obsession with vengeance prompts him to spurn his lover. Her inclusion numbers among Austen's highly original artistic initiatives.

The breakdown of the couple's relationship, and in turn Ophelia, have popularly been considered the more intriguing and disturbing elements of the play. Austen's illustrations participate in this ongoing discourse, investigating the nuances of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship, and underscoring its problematic facets. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, critics argued either that Ophelia was a sexual hypocrite and was blameworthy for not aiding Hamlet, or that she was a vulnerable innocent, a sacrifice (Desmet 11). Rebecca West considered that "[n]o line in the play suggests that she felt either passion or affection for Hamlet" (22). Bradley called her "childlike," "young and inexperienced," claiming that she existed primarily in relation to other characters such as Hamlet, not in her own right (160–61). However, the emergence of feminist and post-structuralist criticism complicated the issue: Lacan reduced her to an "O-phallus," an intrinsic "lack" and a dangerous female sexuality that can never be realised (cited in Showalter 77). In contrast, Showalter argued that Ophelia's appropriation in different periods and cultural frameworks argues against the existence of a single Ophelia (77–94, esp. 79, 91). Austen's atypical representation of her demonstrates this point. It follows from Showalter's (widely recognised) theory that Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet is equally ambiguous, as demonstrated by the divergent opinions of critics and public alike in respect of this topic. Austen's depiction of this will be the focus of the following chapter.

Allowing for particular focus on the couple, the images to be discussed primarily portray them alone together. The image which I will analyse which I have already discussed include those on p. 5/224 (the "DP" image), p. 51/229 ('Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure) and p. 74/230 ("Ophelia's Closet"). Illustrations which are new to the discussion include the following: p. 29/225 presents Ophelia's first portrait (her "Sane Portrait"). Page 47/228 portrays Hamlet at Ophelia's door ("Hamlet Knocking"). Page 144/235 depicts him mourning over Ophelia's corpse ("Ophelia Drowned"). Page 145/235 (the "Tree-climbing" image) depicts the couple naked and alone in nature. Page 148/236 shows Hamlet alone in the graveyard ("The Graveyard"). First, I will discuss the couple's representation in the "DP"

image and how it points to Hamlet's ignoring Ophelia in the play and alludes to Ophelia's desiring redress for her mistreatment. I will then examine Ophelia's first portrait and its insinuation that her love for Hamlet is sincere and that in some respects she is his victim. I will then analyse the illustrations of Hamlet knocking at Ophelia's door, his subsequent invasion of her closet, and their depiction as a naked couple, with respect to the implied dynamic of their relationship, including Ophelia's surprising agency and Hamlet's major shortcomings. Following this, I will investigate Austen's depictions of Hamlet's grief, demonstrating how it ironically reminds us of the prince's mistreatment of Ophelia and fundamental indifference to her death.

In this chapter, I will continue to draw on the same methodologies as in previous chapters. I will historicise Austen's reimagining of performed and depicted Ophelias of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I will examine the formal elements of Austen's drawings while investigating their iconological significance. I will invoke feminist perspectives when discussing the dynamics of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship. Finally, I will explore Ophelia's (and once more, Hamlet's) implied interiority as evoked in the illustrations, drawing on traditional character study.

Ophelia's Complaint: The "Dramatis Personae" Scene

Austen's illustrations make vivid a strand of critical opinion, encompassing Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia, which has largely been eclipsed by the Romantic idealisation of Hamlet. Austen's tableau of the "DP" scene is a case in point. The image casts Ophelia as a sympathetic figure whom Hamlet disdainfully neglects, a reading which fits the play; he only turns his attention to Ophelia when ruthlessly degrading her, and it takes her demise for him to profess the supposed depth of his attachment, and even then, in a mostly competitive spirit. In the illustration, Ophelia is shown to Hamlet's left, kneeling while clasping flowers; due to her dishevelled appearance, this evokes her psychological collapse. This visual coupling of the characters during her madness, despite its conflict with the text, suggests a determined reading of their relationship and implied mental states. As I will explain, Hamlet is depicted as his usual, otherwise preoccupied and inattentive, self. Ophelia is shown as angry that her lover has treated her cruelly — despite the disorientation which would ordinarily accompany an insane mind — because Hamlet has not only abused and abandoned her but murdered her

father. The visual pairing of the couple implies that, directly responsible for her misery, Hamlet should bear direct witness to its consequences.

Kneeling and frayed in appearance, Ophelia's gazing at Hamlet suggests an emotional appeal. Alternatively, given that he incites her mental derangement, Ophelia may be accusing him of his misdeeds. He, however, stares hard at the adjacent king and queen; he pays Ophelia no heed, although contrapposto with his weight centred on his left leg, he tilts his left hip towards and almost touches her. Hamlet either evades or is oblivious to her stare. He is shown ignoring her because he forsakes and betrays Ophelia in the play. This bears comparison with Austen's depiction of Hamlet's incursion into Ophelia's closet. A *putto* watches Ophelia while Nemesis keeps an eye on Hamlet, denoting the characters' respective preoccupations: Ophelia is deeply concerned about Hamlet, but he focusses solely on avenging his father.[97]

Ophelia's initial portrait (p. 29/225; Act 1.3) complements the couple's portrayal in the "DP" illustration. She carries an elongated tassel resembling 'the cat,' a multi-tailed whip; a whip, as mentioned, is one of the traditional accoutrements of Nemesis in visual art. In conjunction with Ophelia's saint-like demeanour, this suggests her punishment at Hamlet's hands, and even martyrdom (cf. St Catherine and her wheel), reflecting (Anna) Jameson's description of Ophelia as a sacrifice (see pp. 114–15). It also conveys an impression of Ophelia's agency because, like Nemesis, she is holding a whip. Equally suggestive of female empowerment, St Catherine is frequently represented as trampling her tormenter, the emperor Maxentius.[98] Both Ophelia and the saint are depicted both as passive sufferers, and conversely, as active avengers. Ophelia would be justified in thinking that Hamlet deserves punishment, even if she cannot personally administer it.

As Coppélia Kahn points out, Ophelia fearlessly criticises Hamlet in the mousetrap scene, telling him that he is "naught" [offensive] and "keen" [sharp-tongued, bitter] (3.2.143; 243). The critic remarks, "[t]urning the prince's barbs back upon himself, she creates a strategic distance between them. Ophelia is not without verbal resources; unfortunately, they

[97] Beardsley also depicts a cherub/*putto* figure preoccupied with an activity in 'Cherub playing the piano' (1892) (reproduced in *Bon-Mots of Sydney Smith and Rachael Brinsley Sheridan* in 1893). However, unlike Beardsley's *putto*, Austen's is winged and fair haired. Notwithstanding that they are both cupids/*putti*, there is little physical similarity between the figures.

[98] See, for example, *Saint Catherine of Alexandria Dominating the Emperor Maxentius* (c. 1664–65), Dallas, Southern Methodist University, Meadows Museum.

are the only ones she has" (2012, 236). But Ophelia goes beyond merely rebuking Hamlet's abuse because she counter-attacks: "naught" is closer to 'worthless,' and "keen" uses Hamlet's attack of apparent praise combined with plausibly-deniable abuse against him ("keen" could mean 'Intellectually acute, sharp-witted, shrewd' (*OED* 7b) but also 'full of, or manifesting, intense desire' (*OED* 6a)).

Austen's "DP" drawing implies that Ophelia desires vengeance for Hamlet's mistreating her. Although she might not explicitly vocalise this in the play, her problem is precisely that she is unable to. Even her "mad" speech is oblique, although there is a hint of revenge in "I cannot choose but weep to think they should lay him i' th' cold ground. My brother shall know of it" (4.5.68–70). Ophelia's body creates a diagonal meeting Nemesis' face. While she tilts her head sideways, as if gazing at Hamlet, she also appears to look up at Nemesis. Kneeling with arms upraised, Ophelia seems to implore the deity for vengeance. In the mad scenes, she makes no explicit mention of Hamlet, despite his ignoble behaviour and telling removal after her father's death; however, the topics she openly dwells on — duped women and her father's clandestine funeral — suggest that his actions weigh heavily on her mind. Given also that Ophelia's ditty entails a man exploiting a country maiden, in the likeness of which Ophelia is attired (both in Austen's image and according to the Q1 stage directions), she seems to imply that Hamlet treats her the same way, implicitly criticising him for it.[99] However, this constitutes the full extent of Ophelia's critique, suggesting that the illustration builds on her tacit frustration.

Desiring recompense implies strength of character and reclaimed agency, despite the fact that her death fits the patriarchal narrative of redemption for the 'fallen woman.' This correlation also suggests that she and Hamlet were sexually involved. Tellingly, Ophelia describes Hamlet as fallen ("quite, quite down" (3.1.156)), although she means this in an intellectual sense. Goldsmith's poem "When Lovely Woman Stoops to Folly" from *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) draws on the trope of the "fallen woman":

[99] In Q1, the stage direction reads that Ophelia looks like a country lass, "playing on a Lute, her haire downe singing," while handing out gathered flowers. In the Folio version, she enters simply looking "distracted." Her appearance in Q1 fits the victim of her story, a country maiden deceived by her lover. Among those scholars to have made this connection, De Grazia observes that "on stage and in [Elizabethan] narrative, unbound and dishevelled hair gave sign of deep distress caused by loss, sometimes of a loved one […], sometimes of virginity or chastity" (116); "Laertes curses Hamlet for having 'Depriv'd' his sister of her 'most ingenious sense'," suggesting that "something else [has] been taken as well" (118).

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can sooth her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?

The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom—is to die.

(P. Cunningham 1878, 105)

The problem the 'lovely woman' faces is that her lover has led her astray and thereby ruined her reputation. She faces prostitution — the fate of her predecessors — or death. Reflecting society's patriarchal double standards, the poem repeats the word "guilt," denoting not only socially prohibited female sexual experience but the heroine's feeling of remorse; she feels "guilt" for sexually transgressing, instead of anger at her lover's duplicity. Described as being "wash[ed …] away," her "guilt" also recalls both the longstanding tendency of "fallen" English women to commit suicide by leaping into the River Thames[100] — death was widely considered the only way to reclaim female purity — and Ophelia's possible suicide. In contrast, Austen's imagery implies that Ophelia is furious with Hamlet (investigated further in the following chapter), signalling agency. In the play, her tale regarding a sexually betrayed maiden likewise suggests that she is angry.

Nemesis' presence evokes the plight of lovers in Greek myth, suggesting a connection with Hamlet and Ophelia. In Classical fable, the goddess is often involved in lovers' complaints, cursing Narcissus with wasting away in front of his own reflection because he failed to acknowledge the nymph Echo's affections (Pavlock 14).[101] This situation reflects events in *Hamlet*: Hamlet becomes blind to Ophelia's existence and describes her as a "Nymph" (3.1.89) (recalling Echo), while Ophelia roams the woods grief-stricken (again like

[100] See, for example, Thomas Hood's fetishistic "The Bridge of Sighs" (1844).

[101] Nikaia was also punished for being coldly indifferent to lovelorn admirers. Nemesis encouraged an otherwise indifferent Bacchus to rape her (Dalby 76–77). Some versions of the Trojan War cast Nemesis as Helen's mother (A. Smith 44). In some images she is shown "pointing an accusatory finger" at Helen and Paris (Shapiro 51).

Echo, although Ophelia appears actually insane). Thus, Nemesis performs two functions in Austen's image: her overwhelming physical presence indicates that vengeance drives the plot, but also that a lovers' quarrel arises as a result. Her presence underscores both facets of the play equally. This drawing draws significant attention to their relationship and Ophelia's ill-treatment, although Hamlet rarely turns his mind to the former, and never to the latter. Further, inventing Ophelia's hope that Nemesis will intervene on her behalf, Austen implies that Ophelia would be justified in seeking redress.

Offering Hamlet flowers, Ophelia's gesture motivates us to scrutinise and even judge his actions in regard to her. In the mad scene in the play, Ophelia gives out several species of flower, using the connotations of each to communicate silent judgment. Here, she seems to present Hamlet with what look like daisies, prompting us to speculate which flower he merits. Similarly, in the preface image to 2.2 (discussed below), Ophelia's critical expression suggests that she silently judges Hamlet, suggesting an ability to form her own critical thoughts independent of her surroundings and consequent agency. Limiting her autonomy, however, Ophelia's ability to change her circumstances is necessarily constrained because of the patriarchal society in which she lives. If Ophelia partly assumes madness instead of becoming entirely mad, then her madness is paradoxically liberating, because it allows her to say what she really thinks, to express her sexuality without regard to social mores or sexual commodification, and (it can be interpreted) to courageously take her own life in an act of defiant independence. Depictions of "pure" madness in Jacobean drama, by contrast, tend to involve utterances of mere random nonsense.[102] Hamlet's feigned insanity mirrors this scenario: adopting the guise of madness allows him to express covertly what he thinks. Patriarchal assumptions about female insanity as a simply bodily affliction (the wandering womb) have encouraged the view that Ophelia's insanity is something she is merely subjected to.

Seeming to critique Hamlet, Austen's depiction of Ophelia reflects critical commentary of the play since its inception: in the mid-eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson observed that Hamlet "plays the madman most, when he treats Ophelia with so much rudeness, which seems to be useless and wanton cruelty" (1968, 2:1011), while his contemporary George Stubbes remarked "I might also justly find Fault with the want of Decency in [Hamlet's]

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[102] Consider, for example, the lunatics' speech in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling*.

discourses to *Ophelia,* without being thought too severe" (1736, 31). Reflecting this commentary, Ophelia's "Sane Portrait" asserts her fundamental goodness and mistreatment by Hamlet, and in so doing, encourages our condemnation of his character.

A Victim of Fate and Love: Ophelia's "Sane Portrait"

Ophelia's initial portrait casts her as a victim of fate, love and Hamlet's hypocrisy, while foreshadowing her madness. It points to Ophelia's genuine affection for Hamlet. Contrasting with traditional depictions in which Ophelia is depicted naturalistically (see chapters 'Ophelia: A New Autonomy' and "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship"), Ophelia's hair, a dark space punctuated by white dots, resembles a starry night sky, suggesting the surreal influence of the artist Austin Spare or that of the Symbolists more generally. A star-lit canopy also dominates the background in the "Hamlet Encounters the Ghost" drawing (p. 37/226). As in the play, stars are a prominent symbolic motif in Austen's illustrations. The stars in Ophelia's hair ironically recall Polonius' careful reframing of his conversation with Ophelia when speaking to Claudius, claiming that Hamlet's royal birth — not his "prodigal" desire (1.3.116), which Polonius blames when speaking with his daughter — renders the prince's relationship with Ophelia untenable. The old advisor purports to have told her that their conflicting social status, directly reflected in the stars' astrological alignment, prevents her relationship with Hamlet:

> 'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.
> This must not be.' And then I prescripts gave her,
> That she should lock herself from his resort,
> Admit no messengers, receive no tokens
>
> (2.2.141–44)

Polonius' claim that Hamlet is "out of thy star" not only foreshadows the couple's separation, but ironically recalls his blunt critique to her when speaking in person:

> I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
> Have you so slander at any moment leisure
> As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet

(1.3.132–34)

He contributes to their separation, as forcing her to avoid Hamlet partly provokes the latter's cruel, incisive attack. Polonius is right that Ophelia is "out of [Hamlet's] star," if this is what he really thinks, but only in that the Ghost's dread command and Hamlet's consequent fate (as determined by the stars) undermines their relationship. In the scene in which Ophelia receives advice from her family, it is actually Laertes, not his father, that cautions Ophelia that "[Hamlet's] greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own. / […] He may not, as unvalu'd persons do, / Carve for himself" (1.3.17; 19–20). Her brother's justification is kinder than that given by Polonius, who instead delivers a degrading and cynical assessment of love and youth, savagely comparing Hamlet's "suits" to "unholy" ones delivered by "pious bawds / The better to beguile" (1.3.129–131). In short, the stars in Ophelia's hair ironically suggest a contrast between Polonius' harsh words to his daughter and his flattering reframing of their conversation. This implies that Ophelia's father sets a precedent for belittling her, which Hamlet subsequently repeats.

The physical location of these same stars also implies that Hamlet dominates her thoughts. Her father tells her to be wary of Hamlet's

> […] vows. These blazes, daughter,
> Giving more light than heat, extinct in both
> Even in their promise, as it is a-making,
> You must not take it for fire
>
> (1.3.117–20)

The word "fire" is commonly associated with stars. Consequently, those in Ophelia's head may imply that she has already taken Hamlet's "honey'd vows" for "fire," making it too late for the advice she is shown receiving. Ophelia describes Hamlet with reference to the celestial spheres, lamenting that he is "quite, quite down," his "noble and most sovereign reason / Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh" (3.1.156; 159–60); she considers Hamlet to have lost "The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword" (153). Pictured (approximately) in her head, the stars pictured also insinuate that Ophelia privately idolises Hamlet when receiving her family's advice. Her overwhelming affection and, perhaps, artless inexperience, render her emotionally vulnerable.

The stars even evoke Hamlet's ostensibly lovelorn but disturbingly ambiguous letters and sonnets addressed to Ophelia: "To the *celestial* and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia" (2.2.109–10; my italics). This implies that she is angelic, or at least 'beatified'; however, "beautified" also suggests that she is decoratively made up, anticipating Hamlet's claim that women are deceptively "painted" (3.1.144). His poetry is equally problematic:

> Doubt thou the stars are fire,
> Doubt that the sun doth move,
> Doubt truth to be a liar,
> But never doubt I love.
>
> (2.2.115–18)

Hamlet wants her to doubt these "absolute certainties" before doubting his love. But Shakespeare, friend of Leonard Digges,[103] would have known that Copernicus had called into doubt whether "the sun doth move" (rotate around the earth). Ophelia has good cause to question those things which Hamlet implies are unshakeable truths, including his love for her. His atrocious poetry, despite his typically adept speech, likewise suggests that he does not take her seriously:

> O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to
> reckon my groans. But that I love thee best, O most best,
> believe it. Adieu.
>
> (119–121)

The contemptuously salacious tone of this poem is partly evidenced by "groans," calling to mind Hamlet's crude retort to Ophelia during the mousetrap scene: "It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge" (3.2.244). His being "ill at these numbers" is likewise interpretable as intentionally cruelly comedic.

Finally, the stars in Ophelia's hair presage her impending insanity. The play's text commonly interchanges the word "star" for moon, a traditional symbol of madness; Bernardo

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[103] Digges (1588–1635), who wrote a brief elegy for Shakespeare, printed in the First Folio, was the son of the astronomer Thomas Digges, whose *Perfit Description of the Caelestiall Orbes* (1576) was the first detailed presentation of Copernican theory in English.

speaks of the "star" illuminating the Ghost's arrival (1.1.39).[104] The stars also resemble abstract daisies, anticipating Ophelia's madness whereby she is traditionally shown wearing flowers in her hair. Whether stars or daisies, the imagery in Ophelia's hair casts her sympathetically as Hamlet's victim and that of insanity. Notably, similar looking stars are present in Beardsley's illustration, "Virgilius the sorcerer of Rome" (1893). The sorcerer wears a black robe interspersed with snow-like white flecks, sunflowers and various floral arrangements. We also see the same star/snow motif in the background of Austen's depiction of Hamlet encountering the Ghost. While Beardsley's influence here seems likely, Austen appropriates this motif for his own purposes. To summarise, the stars in Ophelia's hair point to numerous meanings, none of which cast Hamlet (or Polonius) positively.

Agency and Servility: Hamlet Knocks at Ophelia's Door

The "Hamlet Knocking" image (p. 47/228) provides two contrasting readings of the couple's dynamic: one portrays Hamlet favourably, the other is damning. Ophelia appears wary of Hamlet's motivations; as I will explain, the image implies that this may well be justified. With one hand on his stomach and one on his heart, it seems as if Hamlet is gently petitioning Ophelia as she gazes at him shrewdly. Given that this illustration introduces the scene when Ophelia tells her father of Hamlet's intrusion into her closet (in 2.2), Hamlet could be requesting entry. Ophelia seemingly has "lock[ed] herself from his resort, / Admit[ting] no messengers, receiv[ing] no tokens" — in short, "repell[ing] him (2.2.143–44; 46). Their portrayal bears little relation to typical nineteenth-century depictions of the scene. Typically, they are shown together in Ophelia's closet, Hamlet appearing disturbed, emotionally and/or mentally, with Ophelia looking concerned and even fearful. Here, rather than behaving erratically, Hamlet gestures politely, implying mental and emotional stability. However, as in some traditional depictions, his portrayal is ambivalent.

While it can be argued that Hamlet's posture — head tilted forwards slightly, one hand resting on his heart and one on his stomach — is deferential as befits his address to a female courtier, it also seems servile, implying mockery. This recalls his pretence of courtly love in his sonnets to Ophelia, glorifying her virtue and beauty while barely masking intended irony

[104] See also *OED* (2): "star": "[i]n wider use: any celestial object visible in the sky in the day or night, including the sun, moon, and planets."

(see above). Another (contrasting) interpretation of Hamlet's appearance is that the hand resting on his heart indicates that he feels strongly for Ophelia and seeks to appease her, in which case, her scrutinising gaze means that his affection is unreciprocated. Based on this reading, the illustration portrays Ophelia as a coldly rejecting female, and Hamlet sympathetically as a rejected lover. Given his furrowed brow, his gesture may indicate that, as numerous critics claim, Hamlet seeks solace in Ophelia because he is devastated by the Ghost's news.[105] However Hamlet's actions in this scene (in the play) are interpreted, his subsequently aggressive behaviour subverts the impression that he is an adoring suitor.

Hamlet's aspect is sinister: his chin, nose and Adam's apple all protrude, his fingers are elongated and thin — spindlier than in Austen's other images — and his hair is lank as elsewhere in the edition, recalling both Gertrude's description of him in her closet: "Your bedded hair, like life in excrements, / Start up and stand on end" (3.4.121–22), and the Ghost's imagining of Hamlet's likely response were it to relate the horrors of Purgatory: "Thy knotted and combined locks to part / And each particular hair to stand an end, / Like quills upon the fretful porpentine" (1.5.18–20). His physical appearance, particularly the sinister black markings around his eyes, suggesting sleeplessness due to his "bedded hair" while also sinisterly evoking a mask or a jester's make up, negate his ostensibly benign body language. Further, because Hamlet is shown arriving at Ophelia's rooms, his seemingly painted face evokes his ironic demand of Yorick's skull, "Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come. Make her laugh at that" (5.1.186–89). These words carry an implied threat, realised moments later with the discovery of Ophelia's funeral. She is justifiably wary in this image.

Hamlet's ingratiating posture and extravagantly patterned costume call to mind the courtiers he criticises. The pattern on his sleeves includes feathers, evoking Hamlet and Horatio's naming the obsequious courtier Osric a "chuff," and a "lapwing" (5.2.88;183) — Osric is suggestive of the word ostrich (in Q2, Osric is named "Ostricke," although, as Maurice Charney observes, this may be a misprint). Similarly, Hamlet claims that there are "many more of the same bevy that […] the drossy age dotes on" (185–86) — "bevy" being a

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[105] As mentioned elsewhere, Paris claims that Hamlet visits Ophelia to gain "reassurance" over his "disillusionment with Gertrude"; he hopes to "move [Ophelia] with a display of his suffering" to garner "sympathy" (1991a, 45). Bradley provides that "of his appearance in her chamber, […] he was probably influenced also by a longing to see her and bid her a silent farewell, and possibly by a faint hope that he might safely entrust his secret to her" (154).

collective noun for a group of birds. Thus, Hamlet's costume implies his disdain towards sycophantic courtiers, suggesting that his deferential aspect is feigned. Given that he censures women, Ophelia included, for participating in the same flattery and deceit, the illustration appears to portray Hamlet mocking her for this also, accounting for her sideways glance.

Hamlet's showy attire also suggests that his polite gesture signals ironic contempt towards his romantic involvement with Ophelia. In the play, his crude appearance while in her closet suggests a contemptuous parody of the traditional lover's self-neglect: "his doublet all unbrac'd, / No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd, / Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle" (2.1.78–80). The syntactic and metrical neatness of the description suggest a contrived effect. The illustration draws on this impression by implying a disdain that anticipates Hamlet's misogynistic condemnation of Ophelia in the nunnery scene. In general, Austen draws the reader's attention to Hamlet's disturbingly ambiguous treatment of Ophelia, and how the first confused interaction they have in the play, pictured here, anticipates a series of distressing ones.

As in Austen's initial portrait of Ophelia, this image ("Hamlet Knocking") foreshadows Ophelia's insanity by visually associating her with the moon. Via the same motif, it also ironically alludes to Laertes' assessment of the threat Hamlet poses to Ophelia's innocence. These combined readings suggest that Hamlet's emotional betrayal undermines her sanity. In the illustration, Ophelia's appearance is as disconcerting as Hamlet's; she is a surreal, inhuman-looking figure. Because her head is round, disembodied and exaggerated in size, she resembles the female-faced moon in the image opposite (on p. 46/228: "Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost"), and on p. 148/236 ("The Graveyard"). The 'woman in the moon' motif has no precedent in traditional depictions of Ophelia; rather, it seems like a Surrealist interpretation of the theme, popular in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century imagining (although the association of women with the moon is ancient: Diana is goddess of chastity and Luna of childbirth). Arthur Loureiro's painting *The Spirit of the New Moon* (1888), which shows a naked woman seated within the moon, is one such example. The merging of Ophelia's face with a moon also ironically recalls Laertes' telling Ophelia that "The chariest maid is prodigal enough / If she unmask her beauty to the moon" (1.3.36–37). Cast with a moon-like face, Ophelia has perhaps "unmask[ed] her beauty" to Hamlet, contrary to her brother's warnings.

Related to this, the illustration reflects the couple's implied interiors while pointing to the psychological strain of their interaction. Unlike Ophelia's cartoonish face with its baby features, Hamlet's body and face are depicted naturalistically with normal proportions. The contrast implies that she is a signifier to Hamlet rather than a person. Based on this reading, her depiction represents his own internal infantilised figuration of Ophelia, reflecting how Austen's drawings explore inner states through abstract image. Ophelia's disproportionate head and frog-like pupils, and Hamlet's masked eyes, almost obviate an implied narrative, as if this were a Surrealist work. Equally suggestive, the negative white space below Ophelia's head replaces her stereotypically white dress. The pair occupy an ambiguous two-dimensional space. However, despite its strangeness, the image retains its emotional complexity. Given the dream-like appearance of Ophelia's distorted head, the abundant daisies (her symbol) may denote Hamlet's invasion of her mind or her physical space. In conjunction with the shallow picture plane, narrow, window-like frame (Hamlet is only shown waist upwards), the characters' proximity to the viewer, the open composition and intrusive title bubble, the numerous daisies evoke claustrophobia and confinement. Combined with the eye-level perspective, these compositional factors invite the viewer into the couple's space; Austen underscores the tension of their exchange, despite Hamlet's controlled, courteous gesture, by making it more palpable to the viewer. This tension suggests Ophelia's awareness of Hamlet's flaws.

Also suggesting her psychological autonomy, Ophelia's depiction in Austen's illustration implies that, despite being controlled incessantly, she is not an unwitting, innocent victim. Looking intently sideways at Hamlet, Ophelia's interrogative stare reflects her healthy scepticism towards Hamlet's extravagant but cynical seduction, as suggested by his theatrical guise and posture. Her song about a betrayed maiden points to her disillusionment with Hamlet's emotional honesty. Austen's illustration draws upon the "mad" scene as evidence of Ophelia's capacity for strong independent thought.

Ophelia's acute gaze also recalls the watchfulness and spying which takes place in the play, as reflected in a number of Austen's images. Even when mad, she cannot escape the constant surveillance which goes on. Ostensibly out of concern, Claudius asks Horatio to "Follow [Ophelia] close; give her good watch" (4.5.74); this petition reflects his fear of scandal and not just concern for her safety. Examples of conspicuous vigilance in the edition's images include Claudius and Hamlet's covert scrutiny of one another in the "DP"

image, and the Ghost's sidelong glance in the illustration introducing 1.1 ("The Ghost and the Guardsmen"). The Ghost's watchful expression in this image closely resembles Ophelia's in the image prefacing 2.2, reinforcing the sense that, like the spirit, Ophelia's presence is implied in scenes where she says little, if anything. Equally suggestive, both these characters appear much larger in size than the surrounding figures. The composition and framing of the images are the same, the Ghost and Ophelia's faces occupying the far left of a narrow, horizontally oblong, picture plane — like a proscenium stage, this structure lends itself to sidelong looking. In the "DP" image, the Ghost observes those around him from between the curtains. Similarly, it knows what Hamlet and Gertrude have been saying in her closet before it intervenes, suggesting that it has been watching them. The "old mole" haunts the "cellarage," while listening to Hamlet demand that his companions swear themselves to secrecy (1.5.170; 158). The spirit spies just as the other characters do.

Whether the play casts Ophelia as wary of those around her, as Austen's illustration suggests, is less clear. While she might facilitate spying by acting out others' schemes, she never actually spies. Nevertheless, Ophelia's presence is frequently implied in scenes where she is silent, as Terry remarked after performing the role numerous times: "Ophelia only *pervades* the scenes in which she is concerned until the mad scene. This was a tremendous thing for me, who am not capable of *sustained effort*" (1932, 165–66). Austen's illustration reflects the actress' observation: it portrays Ophelia scrutinising Hamlet's behaviour, implying that her powerless position would require her to be vigilantly observant of those around her. Austen's depiction of Ophelia and the Ghost as watchful and even (in the Ghost's case) as spying also suggests Hamlet's perception of them. He is both literally and psychologically haunted by the Ghost ("to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended" (2.2.268–29)), and determines that, as mentioned, Ophelia is spying on him at Polonius' behest, making her, in his eyes, just another dissembling courtier. Symptomatic of psychological instability, Hamlet is intensely paranoid, suggesting that his mad persona is not as staged as he believes. As well as signalling Ophelia's psychological autonomy, the illustration alludes to Hamlet's misogynistic conviction that she is duplicitous.

Ophelia dominates the image rather than Hamlet, granting her greater significance and agency than in traditional depictions where she is physically slighter than him, and sitting or kneeling while he stands (see figs. 30, 31 and 32). Ophelia's dominating figure in this and other drawings in the edition (to be discussed) challenges her perceived role as a passive

victim of Hamlet's fickleness, and emphasises a strength of mind and will only implied in the text and thus overlooked by (traditional) patriarchal criticism. Shown frontally and large, round and exaggerated in scale, Ophelia's face mirrors the surrounding daisies and title bubble, making her more visually prominent than her counterpart, who is both smaller and shown in profile. Her presence asserts itself over his, despite the reverse being true of the play. Hamlet's questionable motivations are reflected not only in this image of the couple but in the next, on p. 47/228 ("Hamlet Knocking").

Hamlet: Vulnerable or Menacing?

Depicting Hamlet's actual incursion into Ophelia's closet, rather than his loitering casually outside, Austen's "Ophelia's Closet" image likewise provides a telling insight into, and unorthodox interpretation of, their relationship. In order to achieve this, Austen's drawing partly repurposes elements found in Fuseli's portrayal of the scene. Matching Ophelia's anxious report, Hamlet is shown looking back at her as he departs ("bend[ing]" his eyes' "light" on her), while holding his arms aloft in front of him (having attempted to "find his way without his eyes") (2.1.98–100). This episode is rarely shown in traditional depictions, perhaps because it presented a challenge to nineteenth-century artists hoping to reconcile an impression of princely dignity, as per Hamlet's Victorian persona, with Hamlet's most disturbing and wildly erratic portrayal in the play, suggesting a more Romantic prince.

As mentioned, there are approximately twelve depictions of this scene dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Young 2002, 288). Fuseli was first to render it in 1775–76, (see fig. 29) although his (highly atypical) illustrations of Hamlet were unlikely to have reached a public audience as they were privately kept (2002, 289).[106] In Fuseli's initial drawing of the scene, the room is empty except for the couple; as Young observes, this removes visual distraction (2002, 288). Similarly, in Austen's illustration, a seated Nemesis, a *putto* and three masks are the only additions to an otherwise bare setting. Devoid of visual interruptions, the image amplifies the intensity of the couple's interaction. Fuseli's and Austen's backgrounds differ, however, as Austen does not depict the characters in Ophelia's closet as per tradition, and invents the inclusion of Nemesis and a *putto*.

[106] Now located in the British Museum.

Fig. 29. Fuseli. *Hamlet and Ophelia* (1775–76), The British Museum, London.

Austen's depiction of Hamlet in the "Ophelia's Closet" image contrasts starkly with an earlier image on p. 51/229 ("Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure"), although both are derived from the same scene. The former points to Hamlet's feigning madness in her presence, while the latter openly insinuates that Hamlet is driven mad by, and possessed by, the Ghost. Many scholars have interpreted his behaviour in Ophelia's closet as a desperate bid for consolation from someone he trusts deeply. Paris claims that "[i]n his disillusionment with Gertrude, Hamlet has turned to Ophelia for reassurance. He desperately needs believe in her goodness, in the purity of his own feelings, and in the ideal nature of their love" (1991a, 45). Despite this tendency in interpretation, the "Ophelia's Closet" image precludes the emotional intensity which might indicate this: absent of torment or distress; Hamlet's playful demeanour implies that he is not taking things seriously. We are encouraged to view him either favourably, as engaging in child-like play while not realising its repercussions, or, what is more likely given Ophelia's evident alarm (expressed later to Polonius: "my lord, I have been so affrighted" (2.1.75)), as indifferent to the distress he inflicts. Although the "Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure" image (p. 51/229) also portrays him in accordance with Ophelia's description of his entry into her closet, it provides a very different impression of his mental state, suggesting actual madness. Hamlet's expression is vacant and his arms mechanically drift out in front of him, rather than extending outwards at oblique, comical angles, as in the contrasting illustration. The Ghost's claustrophobic proximity also contributes a menacing undercurrent to Hamlet's behaviour, implying that it controls him. Thus, only the second image points to genuine madness, inspired by the Ghost. In contrast,

the first makes abundantly clear that Hamlet is responsible for his actions. Austen encourages us to choose which, if either, we think more likely.

Another informative difference between Fuseli's first illustration of this scene and Austen's "Ophelia's Closet" drawing (p. 74/230) is Hamlet's implied level of vulnerability when appearing before Ophelia. Fuseli's Hamlet seems more emotionally vulnerable. Fuseli daringly portrays Hamlet as a naked figure (Ophelia is clothed), while Austen's prince is fully dressed as per traditional depictions, despite that two of his other drawings (pp. 76/230 and 145/235 — "A Pastoral" and "Tree-climbing") show Hamlet nude. Both of Austen's drawings are simply drawn invented scenes in which he accompanies (an also naked) Ophelia. In Fuseli's illustration, Hamlet's nudity suggests his vulnerability when visiting her, implying that he goes to her in need of comfort. In contrast, Austen (ostensibly) points to Hamlet's vulnerability only when alone with Ophelia in invented moments of sexual intimacy, while his depiction of Hamlet's entry into her closet suggests that he is not emotionally compelled to seek her out. Equally suggestive, Hamlet's overtly polite gesture in the "Hamlet Knocking" image (p. 47/228) implies a degree of self-control when visiting Ophelia. In short, Fuseli's more vulnerable figure suggests a more sympathetic reading of Hamlet's visiting Ophelia, in which the prince is emotionally defenceless.

Unlike Fuseli's representation of the scene, a select few eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ones darken its subject matter by implying that Hamlet's aggression is sexual in nature. Austen's portrayal of Hamlet in this scene ostensibly lacks the sexually menacing quality found in these depictions, like Fuseli's images. The implication of Hamlet's sexual aggression reflects the fact that, as discussed in the following chapter, his entry into Ophelia's closet is analogous to rape because it is a private space, she does not want him there, and she cannot escape, as he bars the only exit.[107] In a 1783 engraving by Charles Taylor, based on a design by Robert Smirke (fig. 30), Hamlet grasps Ophelia as per her distressed report: "He took me by the wrist and held me hard" (2.1.86). She appears stunned ("affrighted") by his behaviour and disordered appearance, one stocking "down-gyved" (80) and absent a hat. While the latter is commonplace, the "down-gyved" stocking is less so. Austen's prince wears (untouched) striped leggings. Unlike in Ophelia's description and Taylor's engraving, Austen's Hamlet does not grasp Ophelia's wrist, thus mitigating some of the aggression

[107] *OED*, "closet, 1a"): "1592, A. Day 2nd Pt. *Eng. Secretorie* sig. Q1, in *Eng. Secretorie* (rev. ed.) "Wee do call the most secret place in the house appropriate vnto our owne priuate studies..a Closet."

implied by this scene. Similarly, Hamlet's expression and pose are playfully ridiculous, and he is at a remove from, rather than immediately beside, Ophelia — departing as per her account. As we will see, however, this Hamlet is more threatening than we might think: there is more to the implied action of the scene than conveyed by an initial impression.

Fig. 30. Charles Taylor. Engraving of Act 2.1. Based on a design by Robert Smirke. Included in a collection of prints entitled *The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare, Being a Selection of Scenes, From the Works of that Great Author*. Produced between 1783 and 1787.

Young observes that both of the following images suggest a sexual threat (291): C. Hentschel's 1890 wood engraving, designed by Gordon Browne (fig. 31),[108] as well as one by Bourdon and Keilhauer (first names unknown) from 1900, based on a design by Albert Robida (fig. 32).[109] While both portray Hamlet grasping Ophelia's wrist, other visual elements make this action appear particularly threatening. In Hentschel's engraving, Ophelia is afraid, pulling away from Hamlet's grip while he moves towards her — as Young explains, this could be "the preliminary to something worse" (2002, 291). In Bourdon and Keilhauer's engraving, a bed is placed in the background suggestively, while Hamlet seems to pull on Ophelia's arm in the direction of the bed behind him. She appears mildly surprised, as if interpreting events somewhat differently. Young remarks that the mermaid decoration at the foot of the bed adds an air of eroticism (2002, 291)[110] — this atypical emphasis is partly explained by the artists being 'outrageously' French. Austen's portrayal includes a similar motif: a *putto* or cupid (symbolising physical love) is shown lower centre. Depictions of the nunnery scene are usually more sexually suggestive than those portraying Hamlet's incursion into Ophelia's closet (Young 2002, 293). Although Austen's drawings tend towards the erotic (as explored in other chapters), he omits to illustrate the nunnery scene, despite the

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[108] Located in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (1890), editors were Henry Irving and Frank A. Marshall. Held in the Folger Shakespeare library.

[109] Found in Jules Lermina's *Oeuvres de W. Shakespeare* (1898).

[110] Mermaids number among the *femme fatale* figures which fascinated Britain in the nineteenth century. Austen's edition draws heavily on this theme, exploiting their association with deadly seduction (as explored further in the 'Treacherous Feminine' chapter).

opportunity it presents, perhaps through a desire to avoid the well-worn and to explore previously neglected facets of the play.

Fig. 31. C. Hentschel. Wood engraving after a design by Gordon Browne, depicting Act 2.1. *The Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Henry Irving and Frank A. Marshall, 1890. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 32. (?) Bourdon & (?) Keilhauer. Wood engraving after a design by Albert Robida, depicting Act 2.1. *Chefs-d'Ouevre de Shakespeare*, Shakespeare translated by Jules Lermina, 1898. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

In Austen's image, Ophelia seems afraid, regardless of the fact that Austen's Hamlet appears sexually non-aggressive. This indicates that the artist's drawing has more in common with the aforementioned non-traditional representations than first meets the eye. In both his and Hentschel's images, her fearful body language suggests that Hamlet presents a sexual threat. Pressing a hand to her heart in graceful surprise, a gesture perhaps anticipating the heartbreak to ensue, this Ophelia may merely be shocked by the intrusion of a sickly disordered prince, as in Taylor's engraving, or anxiously shielding her exposed breasts.[111] The other hand reaches towards the curtains behind her as if to grasp them for support. However, more worryingly, this same gesture also suggests that she is half-considering an

[111] From *The Picturesque Beauties of Shakespeare, Being a Selection of Scenes, From the Works of that Great Author*. Produced between 1783 and 1787 (Young 2002, 289).

escape. Like Hentschel's Ophelia, she shies away from Hamlet. In addition to this, she involuntarily raises her right shoulder protectively, while the same arm protects her body. With one sleeved wrist partially obscuring her breasts, Ophelia subliminally revokes sexual access, suggesting their previous status as lovers, and that she perceives Hamlet to be sexually threatening, despite his seemingly benign appearance. Given that he is departing having already grasped her "by the wrist," Ophelia may be reeling from a retrospective assault.

Because Hamlet is portrayed almost jovially, instead of with manifest intensity, his appearance provokes a comparison not only with traditional depictions but with Ophelia's frightened aspect. The contrast between his and Ophelia's expression highlights the fact that Hamlet is toying with as well as menacing her. Austen's illustration emphasises the prince's threatening aspect in this scene like these other artists, but far less overtly. It demands that the reader closely scrutinise Ophelia's reaction rather than Hamlet's, de-emphasising the prince's centrality in the play in favour of Ophelia. This image also foreshadows Ophelia's madness, implying a correlation between it and Hamlet's actions. Although there are no flowers in her hair or hands as per stereotypical "mad" depictions, an abstract daisy pattern dominates her sleeves, while nearby, daisies lie on the stage. As telling as those symbols which are present are those which are absent, such as those traditionally included in depictions of the scene, pertaining to female domesticity.

Ophelia: The Question of Her Intrinsic Role

An absence of markers in Austen's image denoting the domestic setting generally depicted in Victorian illustrations suggests that this Ophelia is a creature of the stage rather than of the idealised, Victorian stereotype of womanhood. Rather than being sentimentalised as a typical Victorian heroine — who conforms with Victorian social mores of (demure) femininity — Austen's Ophelia is granted independence. Both Taylor and Fuseli's (second) image of the closet scene, drawn 35 years after the first (in 1810), include evidence of sewing, recalling Ophelia's claim that Hamlet interrupts her while "sewing" in her closet (2.1.77).[112] Traditional depictions commonly include visual evidence of this. Its absence in Austen's drawing suggests an avoidance of stereotypically gendered roles including passive, feminine activities, giving Ophelia greater independence from patriarchal constraints and implying that she is Hamlet's equal. Although Hentschel's engraving of the scene lacks an indication that Ophelia has been sewing, Hamlet's dominant posture, standing over her as she sits, implies a gendered power imbalance. This fits with traditional depictions in which Hamlet towers over Ophelia who either sits or stands. However, in Austen's drawing, both are standing, while Ophelia's hair compensates for the difference in their stature, suggesting equality between them. Fuseli's second drawing includes a prayer book and prayer beads, in reference to the nunnery scene (Young 2002, 288; 289). Austen's illustration does not, and so avoids stereotyping Ophelia according to Victorian ideals of feminine virtue and piety; instead amplifying, via her physical expressiveness and exposed breasts, her basic humanity.

As in Austen's initial portrait of Ophelia (p. 29/225), the "Ophelia's Closet" drawing also conveys Hamlet's perception of Ophelia as well as the contrasting truth of the situation: that her affection and benevolence are genuine. A heart-shaped buckle, an allusion to their former romance, secures her dress; arguably, this recalls Iago's scathing perception of Othello's emotional vulnerability ("But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at" (1.1.64–65)). However, Othello's open displays of affection towards Desdemona and sincere admiration for his loyal, courageous men is actually a sign of strength. The heart emblem in Austen's illustration suggests that the same is true of Ophelia. Alternatively, given Ophelia's bared breasts and ornamental appearance, recalling Hamlet's description of disingenuous "painted" women and his demand that Ophelia enter a "nunnery" (3.1.144; 103)

[112] In Taylor's image, there is a sewing basket; in Fuseli's, a sewing basket containing sewing. Fuseli's second drawing is located in the Zürich Kunsthaus. The first, illustrated in 1775–6, is in the British Museum.

(interpretable as a whorehouse), the heart may also signify the superficial affection of courtesans.[113] Ophelia's breasts are more exposed than in her initial portrait, a subtle shift possibly denoting Hamlet's increasing fixation on feminine sexuality, the consequence of his mother's remarriage.

By depicting Ophelia with revealed breasts in many of these drawings, Austen counters the nineteenth-century visual tradition of showing her partially unclothed, although with her chest covered, *only* when mad and approaching death. In his portrayal of her insanity, she is (except for in the "DP" illustration) bare breasted or totally nude, exaggerating the nudity found in the edition's preceding illustrations. Consequently, the clothes Austen's Ophelia does wear become significant in their own right. Austen's reader acclimatises to seeing Ophelia's naked body, reflecting the process whereby her vaguely sexualised appearance became the norm in Victorian art. The artist's illustrated works outside *Hamlet* preclude nudity. This suggests that he considered this play in particular to call for such treatment — probably due to its often sexually explicit subject matter — and/or intended to mirror decadent, sexualised *fin de siècle* imagery, as exemplified by the regularly exposed breasts in Beardsley's *Salome* (1894) (among other examples; see fig. 34), and the ostentatiously vulva-like shears in the opening illustration to his *The Rape of the Lock* (1896; fig. 33).

Fig. 33. Beardsley. Front cover design of *The Rape of the Lock, by Alexander Pope. An heroicomical poem in five cantos, "embroidered with nine drawings by Aubrey Beardsley."* Leonard Smithers, London, 1896.

[113] Early modern artists (such as Titian and Rubens) frequently painted the penitent Mary Magdalen with bared breast to signify her previous employment.

Fig. 34. Beardsley. 'Salome with her Mother' image. *Salome,* 1894.

Returning to what Austen's Ophelia *does* wear, her primarily white dress in the "Ophelia's Closet" image recalls eighteenth- and nineteenth-century performance traditions, but with some significant changes, conveying a contrasting impression of her feminine virtue and agency. Her character's ivory attire was intended to reflect the angelic purity of her sentimentalised stage persona (Kiefer 12; Chandler 15). Arguably, in Hentschel's engraving, Ophelia's traditionally pale dress casts her as Hamlet's victim. Her gown is illuminated by light from the window; as Young observes, this "helps to dramatize the sharp contrast between her innocence and vulnerability and the dark, troubled figure of Hamlet who has intruded" (2002, 290–91).

Although, in Austen's drawing, Hamlet and Ophelia wear juxtaposing shades, Ophelia's appearance detracts from an air of 'vulnerability' or 'innocence' because, exposed breasts and decadent attire notwithstanding, her physical build resembles Hamlet's, reducing a sense of physical threat. Furthering an impression of Ophelia's *relative* personal safety (see above), Hamlet appears neither "dark" nor "troubled": his features are boyish and his expression benign, and he wears white as well as black.

In Austen's image, Ophelia's sexualised appearance, including revealed breasts, her unrestrained black hair — in early modern thought, unbound tresses suggested a lack of sexual restraint (Snook 116) — and extravagantly patterned attire, complicates her character, such that her white dress does not reduce her to a stereotype of virtuous, pious, threatened

maidenhood. Further, her gown is not entirely white: it has a large patterned bustle, dark, ribbed shoulders, and darkly patterned outer sleeves. This conflicting representation of virtue prompts a reconsideration of her level of sexual awareness, consistently downplayed in nineteenth-century performances. Ostensibly objectifying, it implies a three-dimensional character, as does her human response to Hamlet's behaviour.

By comparison, however, Fuseli's second illustration of the same scene portrays Ophelia with even greater, unprecedented and perhaps unsurpassed, agency. Austen reinvigorates Fuseli's illustration of this scene with a somewhat different reading of the play; his image implies that the couple share a dynamic of equal power, despite Hamlet's misogyny. At first glance, Fuseli's Ophelia resembles Austen's in appearance, suggesting Fuseli's creative influence on this later artist. Fuseli's figure stands front on, a more dominant pose than in his first drawing where she sits, while her hair is in a coiffure, and she wears a sheer gown through which her bosom is visible. Likewise, Austen's Ophelia has dark hair raised in an ornate hairstyle, while her breasts are fully exposed.

However, their differences are telling. In Fuseli's illustration, Ophelia is taller than Hamlet and gazes at him "almost pityingly"; he seems to "almost cower" in response (Young 2002, 287). Young succinctly explains the effect: "[w]hat [the artist] has expressed is the power of Ophelia's hold over Hamlet. She possesses, what is more, a forceful sexuality far removed from the typical stage Ophelia of the time" (2002, 289). In contrast, in Austen's illustration, the couple seem to possess a potentially more balanced (and surprisingly modern) power dynamic. Seeming to imply that Austen's Ophelia lacks autonomy, the skirt and sleeves of her dress blend in with the curtains behind her, causing her to disappear into the background, as in the play. Ophelia's visual subordination ostensibly suggests that she is unimportant. However, it is accounted for by the unfolding narrative. Her response is only interpretable with regard to Hamlet's behaviour; as a consequence, the composition prioritises drawing our gaze to him. Thus, despite the egalitarian nature of the couple's relationship which Austen's image implies exists, it also draws our attention to the manner in which Hamlet's patriarchal mindset, resulting in misogyny and suspicion, undermine it.

The Licentious Fair Sex

Hamlet's hatred of Ophelia appears intrinsically linked to his fear of female sexuality, seemingly instigated or awakened by his mother's swift remarriage: "For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter? [...] Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive" (2.2.181–82; 184–85). Austen's first full portrait of Hamlet ("Seated Hamlet"; p. 8/224) hints at this antipathy. While sitting, Hamlet recoils from the upturned goblet resting on the floor to his right. His knees are turned away, right leg pressed tightly against his left. In conjunction with Hamlet's sword and white attire, the goblet anticipates Gertrude's poisoning in the play's final scene, underscoring the prince's preoccupation with his mother. A goblet or chalice also emblematises the womb.[114] Consequently, Hamlet's gesture suggests his disgust at female sexuality. He appears to shun Gertrude's disturbing womanhood, unable to reconcile her enduring sexuality with her probable loss of fecundity; as he says: "You cannot call it love; for at your age / The heyday in the blood is tame" (3.4.68–69). The image introduces the text of the play, implying that this antipathy is a central theme.

Positioned at the beginning of the play with Hamlet sitting on his own (at least to his knowledge, as Nemesis stands directly behind him), this illustration seems to represent his first soliloquy, principally dedicated to condemning his mother: "Within a month, [...] / [...] She married—O most wicked speed! To post / With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!" (1.2.153; 156–57). Frances Barber as Ophelia in Ron Daniels' production of *Hamlet* (1984) described Hamlet in the nunnery scene as reflecting that angry fixation on women foreshadowed in Austen: "[a]s the scene proceeded he clasped my face, spitting out all his accusations against women, implying that women, and particularly her, were the direct cause of his troubled mind" (qtd. Croall 58). That Nemesis should be included in the image recalls the prince's final, foreboding observation (with reference to Gertrude's remarriage) in this scene of the play: "It is not, nor it cannot come to good" (1.2.158). Hamlet clasps his heart and narrows his eyes as if in pain, suggesting that he is reflecting on a feeling of betrayal inspired by his mother's remarriage ("But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (1.2.159)), the result of her supposedly aberrant sexual desire. Symbolising excessive lust,

[114] Ad de Vries' *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* describes "chalice" as a "symbol of containment, fertility, the feminine principle, reproductive energy" (92); the Eucharistic chalice contains, like the womb, the seed of new life.

and recalling Hamlet's description of Claudius (and his mother), a large satyr grotesque overshadows the scene in the top right of the illustration.

Visual similarities between Austen's Ophelia and Queen likewise reflect their implied sexual agency while alluding to Hamlet's (related) indiscriminate misogynistic conflation of women. In the "Ophelia's Closet" image, flowers adorn Ophelia's sleeves, her hair is black, and her bosom is on display; she closely resembles Gertrude in the image of Polonius' murder ("Gertrude's Closet"). This suggests that Hamlet is unable to separate them in his thinking; demonising one leads him to demonise the other. Their bared breasts indicate that both figures are fecund and deeply sexual beings, much to Hamlet's consternation. Ophelia's frank self-exposure (in the "Ophelia's Closet" image and in the edition more generally) suggests that she is aware of her sexuality and its — quite literal — visibility to others, while her safeguarding gesture implies sexual independence. Alternatively, it can be interpreted that this image represents Austen's rendering of Hamlet's state of mind and preoccupations rather than the women's. Ophelia's sexuality may be paramount in the prince's consideration of her. Thus, the illustration does not provide an interpretation of Ophelia (and Gertrude) but rather one of Hamlet's internal world. The characters' exposed breasts also reflect their respective (in)ability to reproduce, recalling both Hamlet's demand of Ophelia: "Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" (3.1.121–22), and his cold assessment of his mother's sexuality: "at your age / The heyday in the blood is tame." The Ghost shows equal interest in his wife's sexuality, although it is concerned with marital (in)fidelity rather than female reproduction.

Austen's drawings suggest Hamlet and the Ghost's conservative perception of female sexuality — denouncing Gertrude for female inconstancy — although not necessarily to endorse their attitudes. By revealing Gertrude's breasts and exaggerating her "painted" face, Austen's imagery amplifies the tradition in performance (both onstage and on film) in which her sexuality is underscored. Directors assumedly do this because the Ghost and Hamlet fixate on it, and it drives much of Hamlet's behaviour — Old Hamlet's death and revealed murder notwithstanding. The Queen's make up implicitly alludes to the prince's bitter declaration as regards women's faces: "I have heard of your paintings [...] God hath given you one face and you make yourself another" (3.1.144–46). Glamorously and expensively attired, but also sexually available, Austen's Gertrude resembles a courtesan more than a Queen. Suggestive of a courtesan's fickleness, the Queen swiftly exchanges one man for another, although unlike a courtesan, she marries them. Austen's illustrations depict Ophelia

similarly because Hamlet considers all women inherently hypocritical, feigning child-like innocence as a cover for 'wantonness': "You jig and amble, and you lisp, you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance" (3.1.146–48).

Hamlet's characterisation of Fortune as a prostitute, with an emphasis on her "privates," may also partly account for Austen's portrayal of Ophelia (and Gertrude) in "whoreish" attire, Ophelia covering her "lap" (on pp. 29/225 and 127/234). This reflects Austen's close reading of the play as text, while also suggesting that Hamlet's misogynistic perception of women is partly a product of patriarchal culture. In the Elizabethan period, Fortune was compared with a harlot because she was fickle, tending to deceive and undermine.[115] Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildernstern contrive an elaborate joke about Fortune's "privates," which Hamlet concludes by observing drily "O most true, she is a strumpet" (2.2.235–36); after describing "old grandsire Priam['s]" murder, the First Player also cries "Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune!" (489). Hamlet jokes about Ophelia's "lap" (3.2.111) in a similar vein to Fortune's "privates," and paints women as duplicitous and conniving, just like Fortune: "for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness" (3.1.111–114). He not only implies that Ophelia is a "bawd" but ambiguously tells her to "get thee to a nunnery" (3.1.103). While Austen's depiction of Hamlet and Ophelia in her closet is rendered ambiguous by the fact that the latter's appearance is reminiscent of a prostitute, this seemingly is not the focus of the illustration; rather, Nemesis' physical centrality in the composition suggests that her interference in their relationship is.

Star-Crossed Lovers

In addition to her tendency to intervene in couple's affairs, Nemesis' overt presence in the "Ophelia's Closet" drawing reflects Hamlet's (and the play's) preoccupation with vengeance. In Austen's depiction of Hamlet and Ophelia in her closet, Nemesis turns the pages of a tome held aloft by a cherub. Reading in a leisurely manner while seated in a large chair, she resembles the reader, perusing the play in the quiet of their own home. Her

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[115] This persists to the modern day. In *A Confederacy of Dunces* by John Kennedy Toole (1980), the protagonist Ignatius J Reilly is a medievalist who persistently refers to Fortuna as having given him poor luck, as in "Oh, Fortuna, you degenerate wanton!" (521).

conspicuousness is significant given that she is not diegetically a character in the play, and that Hamlet usually dominates the composition in traditional depictions. Underscoring her importance, the image is in landscape and divided into vertical thirds, Nemesis foregrounded in the centre, with the couple on either side. Nemesis secures our glance first, her monk's cowl a concentrated black mass in the image centre. Coupled with her compositional centrality, the diagonals her arms create situate the illustration's vanishing point at her face, underscoring her attentive expression as she watches Hamlet. Partly due to the focus of her gaze, the viewer's own is then drawn to Hamlet on Nemesis' left, also a heavily shaded figure, before noticing Ophelia, the least visible of the three. Creating balance in the composition while emphasising Nemesis' centrality, Ophelia's bustle and left arm form a triangle which is mirrored in Nemesis' outline.

Although *Hamlet* makes no mention of Nemesis, the illustration's prioritisation of her seems partly due to the play's focus on obtaining justice through human agency, as well as Nemesis' stereotypical preoccupation with punishing those who spurn their suitors. Hamlet is dogged by a sense that he needs to enact vengeance; its namesake haunts him, much like the Ghost. Indeed, the latter is interpretable as Nemesis' agent, harassing Hamlet for revenge. Implying that Nemesis pointedly interferes with the couple's relationship in accordance with her tendency to regulate lovers' affairs, she sits centrally in both illustrations of Hamlet and Ophelia alone together, either on a throne-like chair ("Ophelia's Closet") or with an overwhelming physical stature (the "DP" image), suggestive of a goddess. By insinuating that Nemesis partly determines the outcome of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship, Austen's illustration ostensibly lessens Hamlet's responsibility for their respective fates, casting him sympathetically. However, at the same time, Nemesis' observation of Hamlet in this image suggests that she is measuring his conduct towards Ophelia. If this is the case, then it is implied that Hamlet has more agency in undermining his relationship with Ophelia than at first insinuated, portraying him in a negative light.

Also suggesting Nemesis' intervention in the lovers' relationship, the tome she leafs through, assumedly containing the play, is held aloft by a *putto*. It and the book are positioned dead centre in the image. This suggests that she, quite literally, has a hand in the couple's fate — this may also signify that she is reading and/or interpreting the play, reflecting Austen's artistic process. Meanwhile, recalling Ophelia's status as Hamlet's lover, the *putto*'s bare chest mirrors Ophelia's exposed breasts and (as mentioned) she wears a love

heart. Implying that Nemesis instigates the couple's separation, Nemesis, the mask above her throne, and the masks and flowers which spill down the stage steps, form a visual barrier between the couple. The deity is (quite literally) coming between them, the outcome of which is shown in a later image in which Ophelia's corpse is shown prostrated across her lap, Nemesis again seated centrally. It may be that she intentionally does this because Hamlet becomes a cruel lover; she means either to safeguard Ophelia or to punish him with her death. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that Nemesis watches him in the "Ophelia's Closet" image.

Alternatively, the goddess may find Ophelia's absence from Hamlet's life convenient, because it forces him to focus exclusively on his plan of revenge, just as the Ghost reminds him to do in Gertrude's closet. Based on this reading, the illustration implies that Nemesis is wondering whether Hamlet's disturbing behaviour will manifest later as something more sinister and even dangerous, which indeed it does. Hamlet thinks that he is an agent of revenge, when in fact, due to his own actions, he becomes its victim. As discussed in the 'Dark Prince' chapter, Hamlet brings vengeance down upon himself by murdering innocents. Although he does not murder Ophelia, he is indirectly responsible for her death. Austen's portrayal of Hamlet's reaction to her demise is informative: he depicts Hamlet as deeply distressed, an exaggeration (or, arguably, an invention) which directs the reader's attention to the opposite being true of the play.

Monstrous Grief: Three Illustrations of a Mourning Prince

Hamlet is shown mourning over Ophelia's lifeless body on p. 144/235. Providing three images which highlight his apparent grief, Austen ostensibly casts him as a sympathetic figure. This scene was invented by nineteenth-century artists (although rarely shown), presumably to "rectify" what artists may have considered Shakespeare's careless omission: Hamlet genuinely mourning over Ophelia's death. Hamlet's outburst in the graveyard scene is easily interpreted as insincere, a display of bravado, particularly as he does not acknowledge his guilt in her madness and suicide. Mid nineteenth- and early twentieth-century performances have generally downplayed this potential. "Exeunt [sic] Barrymore spoke with an aspirate tone, hoarse, broken with grief and with the consciousness of his words' excess" (*New Republic*, 6 December 1922, 46). "With Irving, less than usual is made

of the struggle with Laertes and far more of the confession, 'I loved Ophelia,' as Hamlet throws himself into his mother's arms" (*Daily Chronicle*, 31 December 1878, 6).

Given the condemnatory tenor of Austen's representations of Hamlet, as mentioned, these illustrations prompt the reader — who might not otherwise have noticed it — to question the absence of such grief in the text. Hamlet's general failure (as Ophelia's supposed lover) to perceive her truly, as more than the 'beautified Ophelia,' is suggested by his obliviousness to an insane Ophelia in the "DP" image, despite her startling proximity.

When he reappears after the funeral scene, Hamlet is interested in discussing Ophelia's death only insofar as lamely excusing his treatment of Laertes — he makes no mention of Ophelia: "But I am very sorry, good Horatio, / That to Laertes I forgot myself; / […] But surely the bravery of his grief did put me / Into a tow'ring passion" (5.2.75–76; 79–80). This makes Hamlet appear narcissistic, as does his loudly interrupting the funeral with a vastly inappropriate display of bravado, proclaiming "This is I, Hamlet the Dane" (5.1.250–51). He speaks menacingly to Laertes when describing himself in the graveyard as "dangerous" (255) — the meter compels us to read this as three syllables, slowing Hamlet's speech to a harshly emphatic cadence. The meter also forces the actor to stress 'me' in "To outface me with leaping in her grave" (272), suggesting a wounded ego. If Hamlet were emotionally overwrought by his discovery of Ophelia's death, he would not prioritise threatening Laertes and engaging in a battle of masculinity.

Two nineteenth-century images show Hamlet mourning unaccompanied. In both, he is in a cemetery, recalling Ophelia's funeral. These engravings cast Hamlet sympathetically as a grief-stricken (but still masculine) lover. One is a small unsigned and undated circular engraving portraying a stone tomb, on top of which rests a stone urn inscribed with "Ophelia"; above the inscription are the words "Scene, Elsinore." A young man sits on the tomb, resting against the urn in grief.[116] Also undated, the second engraving is by Achille and Alphonse Martinet; its design is borrowed from a painting by Jean Louis Bezard.[117] Hamlet is

[116] The origins of the engraving are unknown. The only copy which exists is in an extra-illustrated volume in the Folger Shakespeare Library (art vol. b55, Vol. XIV). Young remarks that: "[w]ere it not for its English wording, one might expect it to derive from a French adaptation of *Hamlet* in which Hamlet survives and is left to mourn the loss of his love, Ophélie" (2002, 344).

[117] It was published in Paris, London and New York by Goupil and Company. The painter's works were included at Salon exhibitions during the early to mid-nineteenth centuries (Folger Shakespeare Library, art file S528h1 no. 141).

swathed in black and leaning on his sword. A single tear falls from one eye as he gazes at a tombstone inscribed with "Ophelia." Below the inscription is a quotation from the play: 'forty thousand brothers / Could not, with all their quantity of love / Make up my sum.' Given that this claim (as discussed) is part of an aggressively competitive attempt to rival Laertes, removing this quote from its context casts Hamlet in a more favourable light than the play does. The engravers' oversight is accounted for by the patriarchal reading of *Hamlet* which dominated this era, prone to interpreting Hamlet's behaviour in an extremely forgiving light. As I have alluded to, the play offers no indication that its protagonist cries over Ophelia's death; however conveniently, his single tear in the engraving mitigates an impression of harsh indifference while avoiding the "woman[ly …] tears" (plural) condemned by a weeping Laertes (4.7.188; 185), implying "manly" suffering.

Despite the similarity between these images and Austen's, then, his achieves the opposite effect. Arguably, it points to an unsympathetic reading whereby Hamlet's grief in Austen's illustration may be intended to remind us of its absence in the text. In the first 'grief' image ("Ophelia Drowned"; p. 144/235), presenting another tableau independent from the play's events, Nemesis sits centre stage with Ophelia's dead body prostrated across her lap. With Ophelia draped face-upwards from left to right, her head falling back and one arm dangling limp as Nemesis looks down at her, this causes the pair's physical arrangement to resemble a Gothic *pietà*. Austen will have been familiar with them, given their prevalence in religious settings in England. This casts Ophelia as a Christ-like figure, either sacrificing herself for Hamlet or to cleanse Denmark of sin, in accordance with his wishes (he calls himself "their scourge and minister" (3.4.177)). Ophelia's Christ-like status implies that Hamlet is a kind of Judas figure, repentant after her death. This reminds the viewer of the actual Hamlet's failure to repent his betrayal of her and his indirect role in her death. Austen shows him kneeling by the goddess' left knee with his head bowed in misery, one hand lightly pressed on Ophelia's lifeless wrist. With particular ingenuity, this illustration evokes her tomb as shown in traditional depictions. Hamlet and Nemesis' bodies form a figurative bier which holds Ophelia. There is an ironic contrast between the Virgin's loving watchfulness and Nemesis' calculating surveillance, between the former's forgiveness and the latter's punitive whip. This contrast seems to imply that Hamlet's punishment for, among other things, mistreating Ophelia, is inevitable as well as warranted.

Highlighting Hamlet's emotional shortcomings, his posture in Austen's drawing ironically mirrors Ophelia's pleading pose in the "DP" image, although in this instance, his gaze is directed towards the ground rather than his lover. Hamlet does not seek her attention as there is little point. Their switched places imply a seismic and ironic shift in how they relate to one another; Ophelia's death releases her from pining for Hamlet, while he finally reciprocates her attention, although tragically too late.

Meanwhile, the ambiguous pattern on Hamlet's coat is different to that shown in previous illustrations in the edition. While its symbolism evokes the couple's prior romance and the misfortune which befalls them, it also suggests an ambivalence surrounding the accountability of either character. Although Nemesis' attire repeats the same pattern as previously (pp. 42/227 and 113/233), Hamlet's displays a new one altogether, with large suns, daisies or sunflowers. This contrasting consistency of the characters' costumes suggests that the change in pattern is significant. Daisies and suns are both suggestive in the context of Ophelia's drowning. Interpreted as daisies, the pattern evokes Ophelia's madness and alludes to the couple's former romance (daisies symbolising springtime love), implying that Hamlet has reawakened to his lover's existence. Construed as suns, the pattern recalls both the prince's wry pun that he is "too much in the sun" (1.2.67) — an oblique reference to Claudius' kingship and Hamlet's filial ties — and Polonius' warning that Hamlet is "out of [Ophelia's] star" (in the early modern period, "star" was an interchangeable term for sun).[118] The link between Polonius's claim and stars also suggests that this image depicts the outcome of Ophelia's aspiring to Hamlet's hand: like Icarus, she flies too near the 'sun.'

The artist's second illustration of Hamlet's grief (the "Tree-climbing" image; p. 145/235) is less macabre. Drawn with a sparing use of line, it depicts an invented situation in which Hamlet and Ophelia are alone together in nature, while analogously conveying the characters' reactions to her death. Both figures are naked, Hamlet resting on a bough in the top right of the image while, evoking her demise, Ophelia is falling in the bottom left, arms outspread like a bird about to take flight, or like an acrobat showing off her skill, wrists and hands curved elegantly like a dancer's. Separating the couple diagonally, a descending branch sweeps across the drawing, alluding to Ophelia's death permanently dividing them. Their eyes meet as she falls. Ophelia's expression is rendered ambiguous by an economic use of

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[118] See *OED*, "star n.1" & "2": "1601 R. Dolman tr. *P. de la Primaudaye* French Acad. III. 322 "There are some [trees], which naturally follow the Sun,..hauing a sympathy and secret inclination to this star.""

line and her physically awkward upward stare, thrusting her head back to retain eye contact with Hamlet. In contrast, his body language and features clearly denote distress: bending forward, he helplessly watches her drop, brows furrowed in anguish and lips parted in a gasp. Ophelia's outstretched arms imply liberation; Hamlet's elbows tuck in closely towards his body, suggesting anxiety and constraint. While this recalls his perception of Denmark as a claustrophobic "prison" (2.2.243), from which Ophelia is shown to free herself, it also ironically denotes the state of mind he *should* have towards her tragic demise.

The nudity in this drawing overtly implies sexually intimacy, suggesting the shared emotional vulnerability we might expect, but for which the play offers no concrete evidence. Interpreted in this way, the illustration reflects Edwin Austin Abbey's depiction of the couple in his painting *The Play Scene in Hamlet* (1897; fig. 35). Terry explains that her dress worn during the play scene in one of Irving's productions in London (possibly in the same year) was pink to symbolise love. Rhodes ties this to Austen Abbey's painting of the same scene:

> Given Terry's explanation of the colour symbolism, the pink dress suggests that Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship in Abbey's painting might be a sympathetic rather than a wholly antagonistic one. The proximity and illumination of the young lovers contrasts starkly with the position of Gertrude and Claudius behind them. The older couple lurks in the darkness and are separated by a wide expanse of wooden throne.
>
> (181)

Fig. 35. Edwin Austen Abbey. *The Play Scene in 'Hamlet' (Act III, Scene ii)*. 1897, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

Another illustration in Austen's edition ('A Pastoral'; p. 76/230) likewise points to the couple's sexual familiarity and emotional proximity, as they frolic naked outdoors. However, only if we look superficially at this image, does Austen depict Hamlet sympathetically as agonised by Ophelia's death. By simultaneously proclaiming the pair's sexual intimacy and Hamlet's misogynistic hypocrisy, Austen's illustration amplifies the trauma caused by Ophelia's loss, and suggests that her song about a jilted female lover reflects her own situation.[119] Related to this, the image also points to Ophelia's cruel objectification by both father and lover.

Coupled with the open, natural surrounds, Hamlet's sitting on a donkey evokes Ophelia's sobering allusion to a country maiden's undoing, as well as her mad appearance as a country maiden in the same scene. Further, in conjunction with the grapes, these visual elements ironically suggest that Hamlet is the Greek god Bacchus. These implications underscore Hamlet's destruction of their romance, and hatred of all things natural and bountiful. The donkey and surrounding pasture (likewise ironically) recall his self-reproach: "what an ass am I?" (2.2.578), while evoking Polonius' decision to "loose [Ophelia] to [Hamlet]" (2.2.162), and warning that she should "Tender yourself more dearly / Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, / Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool" (1.3.109). Both scenarios painted by her father portray her as a farm animal purposed for breeding. Hamlet makes a similar claim, insinuating that Ophelia is a "dead dog" in which "maggots" breed.

The "Tree-climbing" illustration (p. 145/235) is similarly interpretable as pointing to the insincerity of Hamlet's grief. A beautiful youth craning forward as he gazes down, Hamlet (the narcissist) closely resembles Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (1597–99; fig. 36). Both have hair several inches in length, swept to the side. The angle of their heads is the same: they look down and present the left side of their neck and face to the viewer. Leaning forward, they rest on the palms of their hands. This similarity is significant give that, as mentioned, Ophelia's plight bears comparison with Echo's. Harshly complementing Narcissus' narrative, Ophelia's story about a betrayed country maiden suggests that Hamlet sexually betrays as well as ignores her.

[119] The 1996 (filmed) Branagh production of *Hamlet* shows the couple naked in bed together, suggestive of the same.

Fig. 36. Caravaggio. *Narcissus.* 1597–99, Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica, Rome.

Austen’s third depiction of Hamlet’s supposed grief over her demise (“The Graveyard”; p. 148/236) situates him alone in the graveyard. Austen’s portrayal of Ophelia’s death is less sanitised than nineteenth-century depictions where Ophelia’s body is enclosed in a sepulchre, resulting in greater pathos. In this image, it is unclear whether the deep grave is occupied; however, Hamlet turns towards the sky with a tortured expression, implying that the grave is indeed Ophelia’s. The potentially empty grave casts Ophelia as Christ-like, suggesting that she has risen from it — accounting for her presence in the trees. Based on this reading, the skulls on Hamlet’s collar and wrist, the ground, and in the sky call to mind Golgotha. Hamlet’s ostensible agony recalls that of Judas, pointing to his betrayal of Ophelia and her sacrifice. Incidentally, the image opposite portrays Horatio sprawled over his corpse at the play’s end; such proximity of two detailed drawings is unprecedented in the edition’s layout, suggesting that events are reaching their climax, thus adding to the theatricality of the narrative. In the “drowned” image (p. 144/235), Ophelia’s body is on display, spread across the altar-like support that is Nemesis’ knees. Austen’s representations of Ophelia’s death are more morbid than traditional ones.

Casting Hamlet’s isolation in a (seemingly) sympathetic light, Austen’s “The Graveyard” illustration suggests an ambivalence towards the prince’s character. Pictured alone in the cemetery, Hamlet’s representation contrasts with the play’s events in which he happens across Ophelia’s funeral and violently intrudes on Laertes’ embrace of his sister’s corpse. Recalling his wild leap into the grave, Hamlet’s feet seem on the verge of slipping at its edge; this may also imply that his own death approaches. Austen’s initial depiction of Hamlet grieving (“Ophelia Drowned”; p. 144/235) also portrays the prince on his own, to his

knowledge: Ophelia is dead, while Hamlet seems unaware of Nemesis' presence — as in the preceding illustrations, she is invisible to human eyes. While his depiction as an isolated figure highlights his supposed, personal bereavement, it also alludes to his temporary excommunication from the court and self-imposed isolation. Distancing himself from others, Hamlet must mourn alone. Taken at face value, this image implies that he is emotionally bereft.

Hamlet's agonised appearance in the illustration suggests that he hopes to avenge Ophelia's death. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, he seeks to execute justice on an offender who will ironically turn out to be himself. Appropriately, his costuming — long white robes which gather at the shoulders — evokes the tragic plays of Classical Antiquity. His beringed hand gestures into Ophelia's grave, while the other extends towards the sky. Paired with Hamlet's skyward gaze, this suggests that he blames a higher power for Ophelia's misfortune. Given that the edition also frequently depicts Nemesis, a Greek goddess, Austen draws comparisons between *Hamlet* and Classical Greek tragedies. In addition to the allusion to Oedipus, in avenging his murdered father by slaying his mother's lover Hamlet also enacts the role of Aeschylus' Orestes. Thus, Hamlet's Greek attire in this image may suggest that Gertrude's frightened "What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?" (3.4.20) has more substance than seems to be the case.

The illustration underscores Hamlet's overwhelming and misguided preoccupation with vengeance, exceeding that necessary for ridding Denmark of Claudius. The swirling pattern on Hamlet's sleeve mirrors that which dominates Nemesis' robe in previous illustrations, implying that he subsumes her vengeful role in seeking retribution for Ophelia's death, in the misguided assumption that others are to blame. The diminutive skulls hanging from his collar and wrist may denote his fatal agenda. It is significant that Nemesis rather than the Furies is a central figure in Austen's imagery. She punishes hubris whereas the Furies punish blood-guilt. If Claudius were the target of the gods, we could reasonably expect the Furies to appear. Nemesis' presence instead seems attributable to Hamlet's claim to perform a Christ-like role in 'purging' Denmark.

Further subverting any tendency to sympathise with Hamlet's seeming distress, his pose is highly theatrical. In conjunction with his theatrical attire and Ophelia's suspicious gaze — her disembodied face lingers in the sky — this undermines the credibility of his grief.

Also contributing to this impression, the image casts him as alien and sinister, rather than as the handsome young lead of some of the edition's preceding illustrations. His head is thrown unnaturally far back as if in wordless despair, and it is unclear whether his eyes are closed or open, with just the whites visible. His mouth is misshapen, upper lip missing, with teeth and gums bared gruesomely. Given Hamlet's grief and longing for revenge, his ghoulish demeanour suggests that this has transformed him. Paired with the open grave and surrounding darkness, this recalls his disturbing adoption of the avenging role of the bloodthirsty Pyrrhus:

> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood
> And do such bitter business as the day
> Would quake to look on [...]
>
> (3.2.379–383)

The early moderns believed that witches sold their souls to the devil in return for magical powers and that they killed children, exhuming them and drinking their blood.[120] The yawning grave beside Hamlet may be a hellmouth — the tendrils of air emanating from the grave denoting its breath — or the grave of the innocent (and supposedly childlike) Ophelia, whom Hamlet psychologically devastates to the extent that she, possibly, kills herself. He behaves like a vampire, draining Ophelia emotionally dry, instigating her death.

Austen's depiction of Hamlet prompts us to consider whether he is diabolical. Hamlet's tone shifts abruptly after entertaining the sinister idea that he could be a witch:

> Soft, now to my mother.
> O heart, lose not thy nature. Let not ever

[120] "During the Middle Ages and extending into the beginning of the seventeenth century, witches were constantly accused of committing human sacrifices, drinking human blood, and eating human fat and meat, especially children's" (Robalino 51).

> The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom;
> Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
>
> (3.2.383–387)

The early moderns believed the mind to be located in the breast. Hamlet's insistence that "The soul of Nero" not enter his "bosom" reflects the Ghost's instructions: "howsomever thou pursuest this act, / Taint not thy mind nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught" (1.5.83–86). Its caution seems disingenuous; only a moment beforehand, the spirit injects a dreadful image into Hamlet's mind of the "royal bed of Denmark" as "A couch for luxury and damned incest," thus tainting his mind regardless (82–83).

His first flirtation with diabolism comes on the Ghost's departure in 1.5, where he refers disrespectfully to it as "this fellow in the cellarage" (the under-stage area referred to as 'Hell') and resolves to abandon God's commandments in favour of the devil's. Here, the prince voices a similar contradiction to the Ghost, desiring a "heart" which is "cruel" but not "unnatural," despite just indulging a nightmarish fantasy in which it is profoundly unnatural. In 2.2, he likewise entertains a lengthy description of a diabolic Pyrrhus "With eyes like carbuncles" (2.2.459). Echoing the former description, Hamlet claims that he "must be cruel only to be kind" in 3.4 (177; 180), appointing himself a "minister" of justice. Hamlet goes against nature (is "unnatural") in terrorising his mother. He visits the Queen after painting himself as a witch who kills children, a form of corrupted maternal archetype. Seeking to be 'cruel to be kind,' it is Hamlet rather than Gertrude who acts as a malignant mother figure. Austen's portrayal of the prince in this image elicits a series of worrying contradictions. His Hamlet is far from the admirable Romantic or Victorian prince.

Summarising Remarks

Like so much in this play, Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship is open to conflicting interpretations. Austen's nuanced and profoundly imaginative reading of it reflects this ambivalence without seeking to reduce it to certainty. The prince is shown confronting Ophelia's psychological collapse and death firsthand as a reminder and critique of his failure to do so in the play. Only in the "DP" illustration is he shown ignoring and neglecting her (as in the play). The artist casts him as vulnerable and yet menacing. He encourages us to judge Hamlet's actions by underscoring his misogyny. To the same end, he transforms Hamlet's grief into something monstrous, evoking Hamlet's eerie imagining of himself as a night-time ghoul, "drink[ing] hot blood / And do[ing] such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on." Ophelia's character is also given a very different treatment than that, until recently, typically portrayed in cinema and onstage. Austen grants Ophelia the fury and frustration denied her by the typical patriarchal reading of the play, showing her soliciting Nemesis for vengeance. He casts her as love's victim but without sentimentalising her, leaving her with partial autonomy. Ophelia's character and sexuality are shown to be complex, including in its sexuality. Austen returns her to her rightful status as Hamlet's equal.

Austen's Ophelia: A New Autonomy

Ophelia's mad [laugh] is licensed to command.

Nina Auerbach (1981, 240)

Introduction

Ophelia was a popular subject for Victorian artists and illustrators, in part because of the opportunity she provided to endorse a properly docile, infantilized femininity while at the same time offering the opportunity (through her madness and suicide) for a little sly sexualization. This somewhat hypocritical objectification can be found in cheap illustrated editions, keepsake portraits and popular artworks, most of which tended to reflect the general trend in the Victorian theatrical tradition of representation.[121] There were, of course (as mentioned), exceptions in which Ophelia is granted significant autonomy. For example, Rossetti produced a quietly controversial illustration of Hamlet and Ophelia (1858–59), in which Ophelia is depicted with unprecedented agency (see Moore). I suggest that Austen's representation of Ophelia in his illustrated edition of *Hamlet* looks like an attempt to deliberately subvert these stereotypes, reflecting emerging trends in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century performance.

Altick's *Painting from Books* (1985), Merchant's *Shakespeare and the Artist* (1959) and Salaman's *Shakespeare in Pictorial Art* (1916) catalogue representations of Shakespeare's characters, Ophelia included. A number of exhibition catalogues have scrutinised Ophelia's depiction: *Shakespeare's Heroines in the Nineteenth Century* (Buxton Museum and Art Gallery, 1980), *A Brush with Shakespeare* (Lucy Oakley, et al., 1985), *Unfaded Pageant* (Lucy Oakley, et al., 1994), *Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (Georgianna

[121] See Rhodes on keepsake portraits, in her chapter '"Pretty Ophelia": Mid-Century Ideals in the Parlour,' mentioned earlier.

Ziegler, et al., 1997), *Shakespeare in Art* (Jane Martineau, et al., 2003) and *The Myth and Madness of Ophelia* (Carol S. Kiefer, et al., 2001).[122]

In *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture*, Rhodes provides a detailed overview of visual depictions of Ophelia in isolation but also in relation to depictions of other of Shakespeare's female characters. As mentioned, she highlights the impact of socio-historical factors on this imagery "examin[ing] idealized representations of Ophelia that privilege her youth, beauty, and perceived innocence above the darker side of her character" (1). The "feminist vision" of Ophelia she offers "suggest[s] that [Ophelia] is usually a product of her time and that her image, in all its forms, is indebted to societal attitudes towards women and their bodies" (1). Young likewise explores Ophelia's depiction at length in *Hamlet and the Visual Arts*, observing that these images "reflect the critical reception of the play and simultaneously possess a significant role in the ever-changing constructed cultural phenomenon that we refer to as Shakespeare" (2002, 9). In Sillars' various extensive publications which look at Shakespeare in art more broadly (mentioned previously), Ophelia's representation is often discussed.

In 'Representing Ophelia,' Showalter demonstrates how Ophelia's madness has both reflected and inspired shifting views of insane women in Victorian society. Ophelia's afterlife in artistic representation extends far beyond the play; dead or dying, Ophelia becomes an eroticised object and ideal standard for feminine beauty (Rutter 301–13; Fraser 2000, 245–50, 253–55; Young 2000, 262–67; Romanska 2005, 496–97). Her death and shifting representation have become embedded in popular culture, as examined in exhibitions and recent publications. Given its small readership, Austen's depiction of Ophelia in his illustrated *Hamlet* is unlikely to have contributed overtly to her (still evolving) depiction in art and onstage. However, his work nonetheless builds upon a series of assertive stage Ophelias appearing in the late nineteenth century and continuing up until now.

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[122] Kiefer's catalogue investigates the visual representation of Ophelia in various artistic media from her first appearance in eighteenth-century illustrated editions of the play until the end of the twentieth century. Her essay within the catalogue (two are by other authors) examines the representation of Ophelia in respect of her popular association with female madness, changing perceptions of femininity, and her appearance in popular culture and contemporary art. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainstream academic criticism and the theatre followed similar trajectories in their representation of Ophelia. Feminist Shakespearean criticism, which largely sought to revise a patriarchal, reductive understanding of Ophelia, was viewed with suspicion after it took root in the 1970s. In the eighties, its scholarship fought for recognition (Loomba and Sanchez 1).

The Ophelia Austen Knew

Victorian (including *fin-de-siècle*) Ophelias as depicted and represented onstage are highly relevant to a study of Austen's work because they provide the Ophelia of the popular imaginary in his moment. Further, they bear on Austen's illustrations because the artist not only mirrors but also subverts common 'Ophelia' stereotypes. As mentioned, because of their close familiarity, D. Richardson's determination that, while living in London, "[Austen] devoted the scant leisure he allowed himself to amateur theatricals" needs to be taken seriously (D. Richardson 20). This suggests that he saw few, if any, highly professional Ophelias. However, for reasons already explained, this does not preclude the possibility that Austen was intellectually influenced by reviews and discussions of these performances.

The sentimentalized Victorian representation of Ophelia as "a picture of helpless, suffering girlhood" who "turn[s] all things, even the delirium of the mad scene, 'to favor and to prettiness,'" as *The Times* described Lily Brayton's performance at the Adelphi in 1905, persisted well into the twentieth century. In Olivier's 1948 film of *Hamlet,* Jean Simmons, probably the most widely-viewed and culturally influential Ophelia of her time, played the character as a physically and emotionally delicate girl, described by *Variety* as "perhaps too childlike" (12 May, 1948). The (silent) cinematic Ophelias Austen may have seen were similarly intended for a popular, unreflective audience and were similarly sentimentalized (see Buchanan).

As touched on in the Introduction, the New Woman movement of the late nineteenth century coincided with a series of more assertive onstage Ophelias. As shown in the previous chapter, we see this empowered version of Ophelia in Austen's illustrations; this has the effect of portraying Hamlet more negatively still, for having maltreated a believable, complicated, three-dimensional character rather than a mere patriarchal stereotype. Further, as mentioned, the increasing tendency of actors and directors to rely on an unbowdlerized text was also a factor in granting Ophelia's character more agency onstage; this allowed Ophelia's 'problematic' sexual awareness to resurface from the text. From the 1880s on, many stage Ophelias began to show something of the kind of independent agency that we see in modern productions. *The Times* complained, for example, of Bernhardt's 1886 performance of Ophelia in Paris (at the Porte Saint-Martin Theatre) that she "did not […] answer to the English ideal of the victim of filial, paternal and sexual love" (1 March 1886).

Duncan observes that, by this period, "popular culture depicted the successful star actress as an overwhelming, even magnetic figure" (20).

Some late nineteenth-century Ophelias were poised uncomfortably between traditional docility and emerging agency. As I will show, Austen's imagery reflects the tension created by these opposing forces in the public eye. Ellen Terry considered that "[Ophelia's] brain, her soul and her body are all pathetically weak" (1932, 165–66), portraying her as a "consistent psychological study in sexual intimidation, a girl terrified of her father, lover, and life itself" (Showalter 89). Despite this, the actress still sought to convey an impression of agency:

> Ophelia only *pervades* the scenes in which she is concerned until the mad scene. This was a tremendous thing for me, who am not capable of *sustained effort,* but can perhaps manage a *cumulative* effort better than most actresses. I have been told that Ophelia has "nothing to do" at first. I found so much to do! Little bits of business which, slight in themselves, contributed to a definite result, and kept me always in the picture
>
> (1932, 165–66)

American actress Julia Marlowe portrayed a possibly unprecedented degree of agency in the role of Ophelia. The *Sunday Times* described her as having "almost too much forcefulness of character for Ophelia" (5 May 1907), although C. E. Russell considered her to have the perfect amount, "suggest[ing] dignity, worth, a self-respect, without loss of sweetness and innocence" (362), and the *New York Herald* praised her emancipation of the role: "[h]ere was not a gentle lady going daft to slow music, but a woman of strong passions and fine intelligence who succumbs to a terrible catastrophe" (1907). Austen may also have been influenced by those *fin-de-siècle* artists who had begun to depict a less sexualized but more sexually aware character, reflecting a direct influence from the 'complete' text rather than the stage.[123] While it is not possible to compare directly the effects of frequency of representation in stage performances and in illustration, the prominence (twelve appearances,

[123] See Rhodes' discussion of this in her chapter "Performance Anxiety: Pictorial and Theatrical Representations at the Fin de siècle," with special attention to p. 160. As Rhodes observes, Edwin Austin Abbey's painting *The Play Scene in "Hamlet" (Act III, Scene ii)* (1897) exemplifies the way in which visual artists increasingly relied on textual evidence rather than memories of performances.

five of which are individual portraits), agency and complexity afforded to his Ophelia seems to exceed contemporary and preceding stage and visual artistic depictions.

The cumulative image we receive throughout this chapter of stage Ophelias in the early twentieth century is that maturity, both intellectual and sexual, and its attendant agency, were the hallmarks of an emerging new strain of characterization. Childlike, "pathetic" and prettified Ophelias were losing some of their popularity and being relegated to repertory (and amateur) theatre and popular film. However, this new emphasis on her adult sexuality retained an implication of non-threatening compliance. While Austen amplifies this emerging trend of Ophelia's independence, he invests Ophelia's sexuality with greater self-determination, even to the point of her sometimes appearing predatory. The illustration on p. 127/234 ("Midnight Ophelia") in which she stands in a small clearing in a dark forest, her sanity already slipping, is a particularly strong example of this. I will discuss these and related images (of Austen's) further below.

My focus here is on depictions of Ophelia as insane and isolated. How her madness is performed strongly influences our perception of her dependence or autonomy and reveals an interiority that is obscured in her interactions with others by social, familial and patriarchal conventions. As this chapter will show, traditional depictions of a mad Ophelia are extremely restrained when compared with Austen's versions. The images I will discuss here include those on pp. 29/225 (Ophelia's "Sane Portrait"), 127/234 ("Midnight Ophelia") and 141/234 ("Ophelia Drowning"). They will be examined in that order. First, I will broadly contextualise Austen's portrayal of Ophelia within eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century popular culture. I will then look at specific illustrations. To begin with, I will investigate the "whore/saint" dichotomy evoked by Austen's initial portrait of Ophelia. I will then analyse the "Midnight" illustration, in which Ophelia is cast as child-like and yet sinisterly threatening. Finally, I will investigate his depiction of Ophelia's death, the ostensible voyeurism of which is negated by her profoundly human suffering.

The onstage representation of Ophelia's madness became increasingly confronting towards the end of the nineteenth century. In 1863, psychiatrist John Conolly had encouraged actors to attend asylums to imitate the "partial rudeness […] acute observation, the sudden transitions, the broken recollections" of "mental disorder," rather than evoke Ophelia's sentimentalized "prettiness" (1863, 180). Terry attended a 'madhouse' in 1879 for inspiration (Terry 1908, 122). By contrast, Stella (a.k.a. Mrs Patrick) Campbell intended to play a

traditional, sentimentalized Ophelia, remarking that "[t]o my mind she should never be mad enough to lose her womanly charm. My one object will be to avoid anything approaching the maniacal" (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, September 11 1897) . But critical taste was beginning to change, the *Bath Chronicle* remarking dryly that "Mrs Campbell's Ophelia is a study of much refinement, a trifle too reserved in point of fact. […] The 'mad scene,' she will probably improve upon as the run of the tragedy proceeds" (16 September 1897). British sentiment increasingly preferred an Ophelia who exhibited convincing rather than prettified madness.[124]

Portraits of an insane Ophelia either bereft of context or during the flower scene represent one major trend in her depiction in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Austen pays credit to this tradition, although he also goes beyond it, adding greater complexity to her "mad" depiction. One early nineteenth-century critic wondered "what can be more beautiful, more sublimely pathetic, than Ophelia's manner of distributing flowers"? (Oxbery 1818, xxi). The first portraits of a mad Ophelia emerged in the late eighteenth century. Published in 1775, Bell's six-penny (third) edition of *Hamlet* includes one of actress Jane Lessingham, designed by James Roberts and engraved by Charles Grignion (fig. 38). Pictured against a blank backdrop, she extends one arm, offering flowers to someone we cannot see. Ophelia's expression lacks any obvious sign of madness, although her hair is decorated by flowers and partially unbound. To the early modern viewer, unkempt locks traditionally signaled insanity despair, or (as mentioned) a lack of sexual restraint.[125]

Austen's mad Ophelia has evolved far beyond Grignion's. Although she bears the standard signs of madness, including wild hair and sexual fixation, she is less naturalistic, her breasts are exposed, and she is sexually lewd and hostile, whereas Grignion's is not. In a portrait designed and engraved by John Hamilton Mortimer (1775; fig. 37), Ophelia is pictured from the elbow upwards against an indistinct background. She is clearly

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[124] It seems that Campbell may have hearkened to this criticism, because a few weeks later, George Bernard Shaw, an advocate of theatrical naturalism, praised her demonstration of madness: "[t]he part is one which has hitherto seemed incapable of progress. From generation to generation actresses have, in the mad scene, exhausted their musical skill, their ingenuity in devising fantasies in the language of flowers, and their intensest powers of portraying anxiously earnest sanity. Mrs Patrick Campbell […] does the right thing by making Ophelia really mad." She transformed "something that has always been pretty" into something "painful," rendering the audience "horribly uncomfortable" (1897, 365). Clement Scott was unenthusiastic precisely because her madness was "realistic, but it [struck] the note of pain, not pity" (1900, 168–69). He experienced the "shiver" of "something […] pretty" turned "painful" when watching her in the role (1900, 169).

[125] Consider Spenser's Despaire, whose "griesie lockes, long growen, and vnbound, / Disordred hong" (*FQ* 1.9.35). In Q1, the stage direction that begins Ophelia's mad scene (4.5) is *"Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing."*

psychologically disturbed, staring vaguely over her shoulder, her gaze fixed and yet unfocussed. Young claims that “this Ophelia’s expression shocks the viewer with its declaration of psychic disorder and is one of the most disturbing images of Ophelia’s madness that would ever appear during the eighteenth or the nineteenth-century” (2012, 313). The believable madness of Austen’s Ophelia does not exceed that of Mortimer’s. However, as I will discuss, her portrait image on p. 127/234 carries a menacing, sinister air which the other lacks.

Fig. 37. John Hamilton Mortimer. Engraving of the mad Ophelia. 1775, part of a set of twelve engravings entitled *Shakspeare’s Characters*. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Fig. 38. Charles Grignion. Engraving of a design by James Roberts depicting Mrs. Jane Lessingham as Ophelia. *Shakespeare’s Plays*, edited by John Bell, 1775–78. Held by the Folger Shakespeare Library.

As to nineteenth-century depictions of the flower scene, these were overwhelmingly sentimentalized, perhaps partly prompted by Laertes' patronising description of Ophelia's turning "passion, hell itself / […] to favour and to prettiness" (4.5.185–86). Austen's drawings reject this reductive assessment of her character. Frank Stone's *Ophelia: A Scene from 'Hamlet,'* engraved by the Dalziel Brothers [1839–42], portrays Ophelia on her knees in Act 4.4, one palm outstretched and gazing imploringly upwards as if wordlessly communicating with God (fig. 39). Henry Nelson O'Neil's *Ophelia* (1852) (of which now only an engraving exists) depicts her similarly; kneeling, she clasps one of Laertes' hands, who is shown standing, and locks eyes with him.[126] The tendency towards portraying a sublimely "pathetic" Ophelia continued late into the century. Robert James Gordon's mad Ophelia, displayed at the Society of British Artists' exhibition in 1885, is a case in point: her large eyes communicate a "pleading look" (Young 2002, 314).[127] Performing in the role in 1878 onwards (at the Lyceum, alongside Henry Irving's Hamlet), Terry, as mentioned, was among those actresses who sought to deliver a sentimentalized Ophelia onstage, hoping to instill "beauty," "nature," and "pity" in her movements during the mad scenes (1908, 154).

Fig. 39. Frank Stone. "Ophelia: A Scene from 'Hamlet.'" *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, 'Tragedies,' Vol. I., engraved by the Dalziel Brothers, edited by Charles Knight, London, Virtue & Co., [1839–42].

One of the most popular subjects for painters was Ophelia's drowning and the moments preceding it. Her madness is rarely confronting in these images, although it is in Austen's

[126] The Mander and Mitchenson Collection possesses an engraved copy (Hamlet Box — Designs, Paintings, etc); the original cannot be found.

[127] The painting for it appears to be lost. An unsigned wood engraving of it emerged in 1886 in the *Magazine of Art* (9:164).

depictions of the scene. She typically is shown alone within a natural environment of dense woodland or reeds, and often, a large body of water.[128] She is frequently trying to "hang" her "crownet weeds" (4.7.171–72), or is falling into the water, having failed in the attempt. Less often, she is submerged, face upwards. Romantic male artists developed a tendency towards merging Ophelia with her watery deathbed.[129] Millais excepted, these artists generally depict her in a white dress, fully clothed, with hair unbound and in disarray, often with her arms and/or legs exposed. In a few rare instances, at least one of her breasts is visible; Léopold Burthe's Ophelia (1852),[130] and those portrayals by Delacroix (discussed below) are early examples of this (Young 2013, 13). As we will see, overall, Austen's illustrations of Ophelia's insanity and resulting death draw upon, but also challenge, traditional depictions — subverting the voyeuristic depiction of her madness, while foregrounding her suffering and implying her self-determination.

Ophelia's Initial Portrait: 'Whore' or Saint?

In Austen's first portrait of Ophelia (the "Sane Portrait"; p. 29/225), although Ophelia's body language and facial expression in this portrait are stereotypically modest, her attire — a bodice that looks as if it would fall open with a single tug on its lacing — partially renders her a fetishised object, a contradictory juxtaposition that calls attention to the implicit hypocrisy of Victorian patriarchy. Despite this, she simultaneously conveys an impression of independent sexuality and agency.

The placement of this image opposite her and Polonius' exchange (1.3) suggests that this image represents her conversation with him rather than with Laertes. There is a fascinating double perspective in this representation of Ophelia. The same set of signifiers is used to depict two ostensibly conflicting evaluations of her: not only the reductive view that the men in the play take of her but also the more complex reality of her agency (as reflected in the text of the play). In this illustration, the curved lines of her neck, shoulders, breasts and face accentuate her softness and femininity, as does the roundness of her cleavage, reflected in the spherical bunches of her hair. The sinuous,

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[128] These are too numerous to require individual mention.

[129] Young places special emphasis on Delacroix and Millais as examples of this (see Young 2002, 338–41).

[130] Located in the Musées de Poitiers. See Lafond (177–78) for a more detailed description.

organic-looking patterns in her dress, reminiscent of vines and fish-scales, complement this effect, notwithstanding the diamonds in the pattern, framed by angular, radiating light.

Partially robed in white, with eyes cast demurely downward and hands clasped, Ophelia's guise resembles that of a saintly virgin and dutiful daughter or sister, ostensibly conforming to stereotypical Victorian portrayals of her character as exemplified by Stone's *Ophelia*. Sentimentalised depictions of Ophelia generally emphasise her filial piety: O'Neil's *Ophelia* is represented as if she were Mary Magdalene worshipping Christ. Incidentally, the penitent whore in early modern paintings is typically eroticised, reflecting the sexualised appearance of Austen's Ophelia. Titian's *Penitent Magdalene*(s) (c.1531; 1565; see figs. 40 & 41) are a case in point. In the later painting, her luxurious tresses barely conceal her nudity. Both breasts are exposed, as in Austen's representation of Ophelia more generally (albeit not in this portrait).

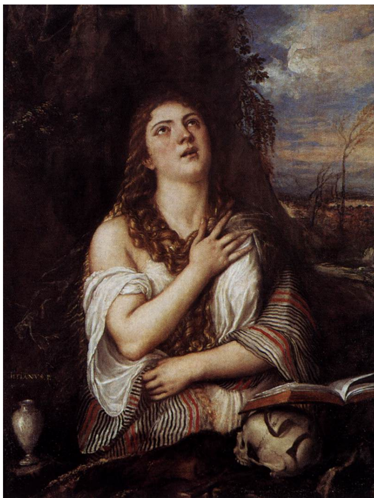

Fig. 40. Titian. *Penitent Magdalene*. c. 1531, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

Fig. 41. Titian. *Penitent Magdalene*. 1565, Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.

In Austen's illustration, Ophelia's demure expression and posture suggest that she is listening to her father's advice, while toying with a tassel in her hand. This is also suggested by the long-winded lecture delivered by Polonius on the opposing page. Her lowered eyelids suggest simultaneously that she lacks autonomy and that she lacks the opportunity to express it. The viewer is situated in front of Ophelia at an equal height. The composition is open; the bottom of her dress and the top of her hair disappear beyond the frame. The viewer's proximity suggests that we are on familiar terms with Ophelia and speaking to her directly, casting us uncomfortably in the role of a Polonius who is simultaneously *paterfamilias* and *voyeur*.

Contributing to the impression that she is a decorative object, particularly as she clasps it in front of her, the tassel in Ophelia's hands resembles a decorative lady's bag from the 1920s.[131] A tassel has never, to my knowledge, been included in any traditional depictions of her. In Austen's era, tassels were a common adornment on women's evening bags; sometimes, the entire bag resembled a tassel, as in the case of those with a fringed shawl. Similarly, the bodice or hem of evening dresses was often adorned with a (sometimes beaded) threaded fringe, reminiscent of tassels. Interpreted in this light, the tassel complements Ophelia's bespangled hair, large decorative earrings, exposed shoulders, and generous drapery in the skirt of her dress, all of which evoke 1920s evening attire. With its numerous strands, the tassel also anticipates the flower stems Ophelia will clutch in her madness.[132] Nevertheless, on the second view the tassels resemble Nemesis' whip, the significance of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Ophelia appears trapped by the attire that she wears, suggesting that the role of being a prettified object has been imposed on her. There are numerous rigid diagonals in the outline of her dress and sleeves, as well as in the diamonds in the pattern of her dress.

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[131] See Frances Kennett's *Collector's Book of Twentieth-Century Fashion* (1983), p. 178.

[132] Tassels also feature in Beardsley's portraits of women, such as in 'Réjane holding a fan' (1893), depicting the actress Gabrielle Charlotte Réju (known as Réjane) (Zatlin 215), reproduced in *A Second Book of Fifty Drawings*. A large tassel is suspended in front of Réju, while a second, smaller one decorates the neckline of her dress. She wears sophisticated evening attire, with opera gloves and a tiara, while grasping a fan. Austen's Ophelia is still more decorative in appearance, with large interlacing earrings and a heavily patterned dress. Both women have luxurious, thick, black hair, although in Ophelia's case her hair's volume, overwhelming her small face, indicates that it is unbound.

The diamonds' shape is mirrored in the angles of her sleeves; consequently, the lower half appearing two-dimensional, her gown seems rigid and restrictive. These combined features emphasise not only the superficial, decorative nature of her appearance, but also her being physically entrapped by her attire, and by extension, the patriarchy.[133]

Ophelia's highly sexualised, objectified appearance derives from nothing in the text except Hamlet's accusations, and so reflects his misogynistic perception of women, although it is intensified by Austen's chosen aesthetic (a decadent and sometimes tawdry style in the manner of Beardsley). Underscoring her decorative appearance, her unnaturally long legs cause her heavily patterned dress to take up over two thirds of the picture plane. Her face is heavily made up, while the neckline of her dress dips precariously low such that that her areolae are slightly exposed. Ophelia's revealed breasts recall Hamlet's love letters to her, interpretable as a kind of snide intellectual belittling through ambiguous praise (as with Claudius and Polonius). One of them begins "'in her excellent white bosom, these, &c'" (2.2.112). Ostensibly, Hamlet is referring to the bosom as "[t]he seat of emotions, desires, etc." (*OED* 6b), but his reference could also be to "[t]he breast of a human being" (*OED* 1a).[134] The prince could be crudely commenting on her 'excellent' sexuality, here so clearly on display.

Polonius' objectification of his daughter goes beyond the merely sexual. He determines to "loose my daughter to [Hamlet]" as a means of weighing the prince's sanity, joking that, should he be wrong about Hamlet's madness, "Let me [...] / [...] keep a farm and carters" (2.2.162; 166–67). He imagines Ophelia as livestock, telling her to "Tender yourself more dearly / Or—not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, / Running it thus—you'll tender me a fool" (1.3.107–9); Hamlet "may […] walk / […] with a larger tether than may be given you" (125–26). Polonius openly implies that Ophelia is a tightly controlled commodity destined for the marriage market. The placement of the image likewise suggests Polonius' possessive, patriarchal mindset, opposite his instructing Ophelia to "Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence, / Set your entreatments at a higher rate" (1.3.121–22).

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[133] As later to be expressed in Grigori Kozintsev's 1964 film of *Hamlet*, where Ophelia is shown being locked into an iron corset that recalls a medieval torture-device.

[134] *OED* 1(a): "Shakespeare Venus & Adonis (new ed.) sig. Eijv 'Within my bosome. My boding heart, pants.'"

In Austen's illustration, the onlooker's voyeuristic gaze is challenged by the disturbingly disembodied eyes that stare out from Ophelia's bodice in place of her nipples. Echoing them, the diamonds in the pattern of her gown have small dark interiors. These eyes may at the same time suggest Polonius' possessive surveillance of potential suitors, evoking Ophelia's commodification and warning the viewer ('look but do not touch'). Paired with her sexualised appearance, this recalls his desire to advertise her sexuality but to also keep it under lock and key (preserving it for the highest bidder); tellingly, her brother explicitly mentions her "chaste treasure" (1.3.31) in relation to the 'marriage-market.' The staring eyes also recall Polonius's use of Ophelia to spy on Hamlet.

Ophelia's eroticised and highly decorative appearance reflects Hamlet's hysterical condemnation of women through his rant at Ophelia: "I have heard of your paintings well enough. God has given you one face and you make yourselves another. You jig and amble" (3.1.144–46). Austen's painted Ophelia, for which there is no textual basis, is a grotesque projection of Hamlet's diseased imagination. Disillusioned with the opposite sex, he considers the female body a tool for exploiting men: "for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd" (3.1.111–12). Gazing out from her breasts, the sinister eyes could also be intended to imply Hamlet's belief in the monstrosity of feminine sexual appetite, reflected in his descriptions of Ophelia and Gertrude (as discussed in other chapters).

Despite the objectifying aspect of her attire, Austen's depiction of Ophelia suggests her autonomy. Barely fitting within the frame, she dominates an empty space devoid of visual distraction, granting her significant presence despite her downward-cast eyes. If interpreted as belonging to her, the eyes in her dress could be empowering, contrasting with the weakness implied by traditional representations. While her exposed neck and décolletage might invite our gaze, drawing our eyes from her face towards a surprisingly provocative suggestion of areolae, the eyes which rest there aggressively hold us to account. These may constitute her challenge to the viewer rather than her father's challenge, a return of the 'male gaze' which her passivity and hyper-sexualised appearance otherwise seem to invite. When in her private chamber, Hamlet objectifies (and frightens) her with prolonged staring and bodily imprisonment. However, by

allowing her to reject the prince's violation, Austen's illustration affords her an opportunity she lacks in the play.

Hinting at sexual independence, the narrowed eyes suggest Ophelia's sexual knowledge, as implied by her tales of sexual betrayal. Although she is pictured as demurely innocent, the eyes peering from her corset and her partially exposed breasts are interpretable as pointing to sexual availability. The centre and vanishing point of the former illustration are at Ophelia's shielded groin; it seems intentional that our gaze be drawn there. However, her hands cover her pubic area as though defensively, suggesting that the watchful eyes denote a wariness of men. This motif repeats itself in her "mad" portrait on p. 127/234. Her ostensibly passive exterior seems to denote self-containment rather than vulnerability. Overall, it seems on the one hand that Austen portrays Ophelia as Hamlet and Polonius see her (as a sexual commodity) in order to critique this treatment; on the other, it appears that he presents her as an independent agent returning Hamlet's (and our) stare. The next portrait of Ophelia (the "Midnight" image; p. 127) demonstrates the same challenging gaze.

Austen's Ophelia: A Midnight Encounter

In one of two separate illustrations of her impending death, Austen portrays Ophelia treading on winding grass and ferns, probably a riverbank (the "Midnight Ophelia" portrait; p. 127/234). She is encompassed by darkness and an ominous wilderness. Evoking the stereotypical setting of Gothic horror novels with their typical narrative of threatened virginity (Young 2002, 325–27), this was a strong motif in Victorian depictions of the scene. Reflecting visual tradition, Ophelia's style of dress is both Victorian and early modern. Her beauty spot, the last suggestion of heavy makeup which dishevelment has worn away, adds an exotic French touch to her appearance. This recalls Hamlet's misogynistic tendency to link Ophelia with cosmetics. He sardonically addresses a love-letter to "the most beautified Ophelia" (2.2.109–10), another example of his belittling her through ambiguous praise (she is meant to take *beautified* — cosmetically enhanced — for *beatified*). Here, Ophelia's make-up reminds us of the prince's misogynistic condescension, but simultaneously, her representation challenges it. Her depiction also points to Claudius' agitation (on the page opposite), exacerbated by a tragically transformed Ophelia.

Claudius laments to Gertrude ("O, this is the poison of deep grief" (1.5.75)) after Ophelia has left them — that "poor Ophelia / [is] Divided from herself and her fair judgment, / Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts" (85–86). His reference to "pictures" is ironically mirrored in the picture shown opposite. Equally ironic, the reductive patriarchal view of women is that they are both aesthetic objects and mere beasts, whether unruly or domesticated. The placement of Austen's illustration points to this contradiction. In conjunction with her wild appearance and decision to position herself within a protective cluster of trees, Ophelia's wary, hostile gaze hints at her having become the "mere beast" Claudius imagines, "divided from herself": Austen provides his own re-imagining of what had become a cliché.

Ophelia stands on a patch of daisies, suggesting that she picks flowers. It may be these to which she points, foreshadowing the cause of her death: "There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds / Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke" (4.7.171–72).[135] It is interpretable that in pointing toward the daisy-covered ground, Austen's Ophelia silently insists on her innocence. If we take this as a refutation of Hamlet's claim that she is corrupt, Ophelia demonstrates agency. John Waterhouse's 1910 Ophelia (fig. 42) clasps daisies in the folds of her dress, while Arthur Hughes' Ophelia of 1871 (fig. 43) carries a daisy amid miscellaneous flowers; Young suggests that this denotes her "purity" (2002, 332). Daisies are an ambivalent symbol, pointing to both corruption and innocence.

[135] Mentions of daisies as signifiers of innocent springtime love in literature go all the way back to Chaucer.

Fig. 42. John William Waterhouse. *Ophelia*. 1910, Private collection.

Fig. 43. Arthur Hughes. *Ophelia. Ophelia ("And will he not come again?")*. 1863, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Given that daisies may connote infidelity and deceit but also innocent love and romance, Ophelia also appears to be directing our attention to the subject of her grievance: her lover cruelly turning against her. Their pervasive presence in Austen's illustrations amplifies Ophelia's sense of suffered injustice, contributing to a more complex and negative reading of Hamlet. Greene (1592) makes a clear link between daisies and masculine infidelity: "the dissembling daisie, to warne such light a loue wenches not to trust every faire promise that such amorous batchelers / make them" (A3ff.).[136] This recalls Ophelia's unhappy song about a sexually betrayed maiden. In pointing to the daisies, she highlights Hamlet's

[136] Greene's reference to "Rue […] called herb grace" suggests Shakespeare might have had this passage in mind. See Thomas and Faircloth (85–86) for a discussion of the variations in meaning attached to daisies. They claim that the darker meaning for daisies is contentious.

betrayal and seeming deceit, having proven himself an inconstant “amorous batcheler.” It is significant that Ophelia also clutches daisies in the mad scene, because it is left unclear who receives Ophelia’s daisy. Gertrude’s supposed infidelity and deceit partly precipitate the problems of the play, suggesting that they are intended for her; alternatively, Ophelia may hold onto the daisies because they represent her grievance. Like Hamlet, communicating covert but intelligible meaning, Ophelia conveys an impression of feigned insanity.

The effect of the rigid lines in the composition is to make Ophelia seem less aestheticized than in traditional depictions and to contribute to an impression of psychological tension, suggesting mental instability. Ophelia’s non-naturalistic features, including her huge eyes and sharply pointed chin, contribute to this impression. The numerous straight lines are found in the diagonals of Ophelia’s dress and necklace, the verticality of many of the trees and their horizontal stripes, and the harsh angularity of her face. She bends diagonally from the waist without curving her back. Geometric triangles feature prominently: the angle of her necklace is mirrored in the gesture of her hands, while there are also triangular shapes in her outer sleeves and the hem of her dress.

The surrounding darkness seems to signify the dim obscurity of Ophelia’s unstable mind. Hughes’ Ophelia of 1852 is cast in moonlight; according to Young, this “suggest[s] the disorder of Ophelia’s psychological state” (2002, 332). Jameson’s unsigned engraving entitled “Ophelia and the Fates” (fig. 44) in her *Characteristics of Women* (188), may have been first to portray Ophelia thus, a crescent moon hanging in the night sky. This dark landscape bears little relation to Ophelia’s mental disposition, however, as she is already dead; the waning moon seems to reflect this. Via bold contrasts and increased shadow, the moonlight in Austen’s monochromatic illustration throws the central figure and surrounding objects into stark relief. This luminescence seems to sear itself onto the landscape. Suggestive of a spotlight being cast on Ophelia during a performance, this emphasizes the shocking transformation of her psyche, as well as her importance in the play.

Fig. 44. Anna Jameson. "Ophelia and the Fates." *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical*, 2 vols. London, Saunders & Otley, 1832.

A motif which he borrows from traditional depictions and exaggerates, the moon frequently features in Austen's edition. There are any number of possible, likely coexisting, reasons for this. The Ghost comes at night-time, and its influence drives the narrative such that its presence is constantly felt. Further, Horatio describes how in "Rome, / A little ere the mightiest Julius fell," the "moist star, / […] / Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse" (1.1.116–17; 121, 123) — such imagery also may account for the edition's frequent inclusion of pitch-black darkness and waxing moons. Likewise, as a ghost story set in medieval Denmark, Austen's *Hamlet* almost demands a dark Gothic setting. Moons also symbolize madness and the feminine, themes which pervade the play's text.[137] Reinforcing this impression, Austen frequently portrays Ophelia resembling or pictured within the moon. Lastly, Diana is the goddess of the moon; as discussed below, this classical motif appears in the play's text. The moon's emphasis in Austen's illustrations underscores Ophelia's significance in the play, despite her relatively few lines. Indeed, the imaginary feminine is a prominent theme in the play, as discussed in the following chapter.

Despite the moon's symbolization of female chastity, Ophelia's appearance in the "Midnight Ophelia" drawing (p. 127/234) is highly sexualized, as in the previous portrait of her (the "Sane Portrait"; p. 29/225). This reflects her objectification on the late nineteenth-century stage, in response to growing public expectations. Terry's distinctive brand of sexual allure boosted her success (Young 2002, 50). Henry James considered her "lovely [, …] a somewhat angular maiden of the Gothic ages, with her hair cropped short, like a boy's, and a

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[137] "That were a sudden change, and would shew More of the Moon in him, than is in a Mad-woman" ("W. Davenant, *Law against Lovers* in *Wks*. (1673) 295": *OED* "Moon n. 1. 1b"). The OED also lists "Moon-mad" as an adjective. As mentioned elsewhere, the moon is also the goddess Dianna's symbol.

straight and clinging robe" — in short, an "embodiment of sumptuous sweetness" (143). John Martin-Harvey viewed the actress in the same light, considering her "long virginal limbs, her husky voice, her crown of short flaxen hair, her great red mouth" as altogether demonstrating an "absolutely irresistible physical attractiveness" (1933, 29).

Marlowe's Ophelia was imagined in comparable terms. In transcribing a promptbook for a performance of hers, Lark Taylor appears to imagine a barely masked passion on Ophelia's side: upon entering in the nunnery scene, she "presses [Hamlet's love poems] to her breast, looks at it again, presses it to lips"; she also "fondles" the pearls gifted to her by the prince, and "extends arms tenderly towards Hamlet" before he questions her honesty (qtd. Young 2002, 52). Images of Marlowe in performance also carry a faint tinge of eroticism (52). However, unlike Terry's and Marlowe's Ophelias, Campbell's was not described in erotic language (Duncan 119). The *Era* seemed disappointed that her Ophelia was not more licentious: it "half expected that she would adopt the ancient German and 'up-to-date' English theories of Ophelia's impurity [...] in her embodiment. But this did not happen; and the Ophelia was quite singularly unconvincing and unimpressive" (18 September 1897, 13). That Ophelia's sexuality was a focal point both in performance and in critical discourse reflected a more sophisticated awareness of the male characters' obsession with it in the play.

At her first appearance in 1.3, Laertes and Polonius independently obsess about Ophelia's sexuality as a kind of threatened asset, a theme taken up by Hamlet in 2.2 ("Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive—friend, look to 't" (2.2.184–86). Laertes also insists that Ophelia "keep you in the rear of your affection / Out of the shot and danger of desire" (34–35). In reacting to this obsessive commodification of her sexuality, Ophelia subtly demonstrates agency in response to Laertes' anxiety about the security of her "chaste treasure," which erases her as a subject, a moral agent capable of choice. Ophelia reproves his objectification by speaking as though he had expressed his concern for her moral agency, and thus covertly but adroitly rebuking him:

> Do not as some ungracious pastors do,
> Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven
> Whiles, a puffed and reckless libertine,
> Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
>
> (1.3.47–50)

The ways in which Ophelia is characterized in the play by the men around her also point to her objectification and infantilization even when mad, despite her disturbing comportment. We see this ironically reflected in Austen's illustration. Claudius calls Ophelia "pretty" despite her madness and Laertes similarly claims that "She turns [all] to favour and to prettiness" (4.5.41; 186). "Pretty" is a diminutive term, used either for women or children; it has the potential to be extremely condescending.[138] In any case, Ophelia's insanity is anything but "pretty." Her disturbing songs aside, the garland she attempts to "hang" before she drowns is sinister, its flowers either noxious ("crow-flowers", i.e. buttercups, and "nettles") or obscene: "long purples, / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name" (4.7.168–69). Laertes reverts to demeaning, sexist cliché when describing his sister, failing to perceive the more frightening aspect of her comportment. Gertrude, in contrast, notices it: she chooses the less desirable name for buttercups, unnecessarily points out the lewdness of "long purples," and describes the garland as "weeds" (171), recalling Hamlet's description of Denmark's "rank" garden (1.2.136). The Queen does not objectify another woman.

As Young observes, Victorian artists exploited Ophelia's madness as a means of highlighting her desirability (2002, 337). He emphasizes "the erotic potential available to artists who depicted her in her mad state" (337). Similarly, Rhodes notes that "the portraits of Ophelia served to normalise mental illness as an attribute of femininity by representing the heroine as beautiful and desirable in her madness" (12). In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century visualizations of Ophelia's madness and/or death, her expression is often vacant and staring, allowing the viewer a more objectifying gaze; Waterhouse's 1910 Ophelia is a case in point, although she also appears vaguely distressed. More unusually, Hughes' 1852 (fig. 51) and 1863 (fig. 43) Ophelias gaze downwards, lost in melancholy thought; inspiring sympathy, these figurings partially undermine a detached voyeuristic appraisal.

Thwarting this kind of objectifying gaze although she ostensibly invites it, Austen's Ophelia subverts stereotypical depictions. Her shoulders are bared, while her breasts almost seem to spill from her corset, nipples revealed. The artist exaggerates and distorts the voyeuristic trend of exposing Ophelia's body. However, despite the prolonged scrutiny which her naked flesh might invite, her glare inhibits it; instead, we are made to feel that we are

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[138] For example, in *Emma,* Harriet is often called "pretty" while Emma is called "handsome." The *New English Dictionary* (1908) has the following comment: "*Pretty* is somewhat of a condescending term; we grant it: *beauty* is imperious, and commands our acknowledgement" (*OED,* "pretty, adj. 2(a)").

intruding on her privacy. Watching us determinedly as we watch her, this Ophelia challenges voyeuristic looking, and thus can be compared to a select few, highly unusual, works from the late nineteenth century which demonstrate similar agency.

Madeleine Lemaire's Ophelia (painted some time during the 1880s; fig. 45) wears an extremely unorthodox expression, gazing coyly at someone or something beyond the frame.[139] Combined with bare arms and breasts, and a deeply suggestive pose, her appearance strikingly contrasts with traditional depictions. It is suggestive that Lemaire was a female painter and, seemingly, one of few artists of her time to depict Ophelia in complete control of her sexuality; this implies a feminist agenda, making her Ophelia virtually unique among its contemporaries. Rhodes provides a more detailed argument to this effect regarding Lemaire's painting (169). Rosemary Betterton remarks that "one strategy [used by late nineteenth-century woman artists] was to assert a different relation to history, one which would lead to the creation of a new identity for women and a resistance to patriarchal history" (25). Austen's echoing representation of Ophelia conveys a similar impression. While Lemaire's Ophelia looks away from the viewer, allowing a prolonged gaze, her confident sexuality implies that she is indifferent as to how and whether we might look at her. Further, her almost mischievously childlike expression makes the act of looking seem distasteful; she mocks the viewer. Austen's Ophelia presents a similar challenge. Her concentrated look and revealed breasts indicate that she is profoundly aware of her sexuality and unperturbed by its open display. However, glaring at us without the slightest trace of embarrassment, she thwarts a voyeuristic appreciation of her nakedness.

[139] The original cannot be located and its exact date of production is unknown. However, Goupil and Company produced a photogravure in the 1880s which still exists.

Fig. 45. After Madeleine Lemaire. *Ophelia*. 1880s, Goupil and Company, London.

In conjunction with her exposed breasts, the direct gaze of Austen's Ophelia denotes sexual autonomy. The public reception of Georges Clairin's portrait of Bernhardt, exhibited at the 1876 Salon (fig. 47), reflects the perceived late nineteenth-century association between a woman's direct glance and sexual independence. The painting e from audiences and the following remark from a contemporary cr have allowed herself to be pictured in such intimate attire or in so inviting a position" (qtd. Gold and Fizdale 1991, 134). These critics perceived Bernhardt's direct, steady gaze as a sexual invitation when paired with her boudoir attire, and relaxed, reclining posture, head propped up by one elbow: if the less prudish French found her physical attitude and direct stare unacceptable (as in the case of the famous outrage at the confrontational stare of Manet's world-weary *Olympia* (1856; fig. 46)), the Victorians almost certainly would have. In terms of patriarchal anxiety, a woman's sexual invitation is problematic because it implies female agency. Austen's Ophelia draws on the same assumption, because she ostensibly solicits sexual attention with her direct stare and revealed bosom, signifying sexual independence, although her menacing appearance suggests otherwise, and forestalls any suggestion of a general invitation.

Fig. 46. Édouard Manet. *Olympia*. 1856, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 47. Georges Clairin. *Portrait of Sarah Bernhardt*. 1876, Petit Palais Musée des Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Paris.

Fig. 48. John William Waterhouse. *A Mermaid*. 1900, Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Fig. 49. Dante Gabriel Rossetti. *Lady Lilith.* 1866–7, Delaware Art Museum, Delaware.

The falling figures in Austen's portrayal of Ophelia's drowning (p. 141/234) seem extremely confident in their sexuality, suggesting agency. They pose like Bernhardt, seeming to stretch languidly despite being mid-air, their elbows bent to guide their heads. A well-established pornographic trope, leaning back has the effect of lifting the breasts, while implying vulnerability and sexual availability.[140] In Austen's time, Bernhardt's pose would have been thought a provocative, even if no longer shocking, physical attitude for a model to adopt. The figure in Waterhouse's painting *A Mermaid* (shown at the Royal Academy in 1901; fig. 48) folds one arm at a similar angle as she combs her hair, the other extended completely in the process of combing, like Austen's central Ophelia, who points. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1866–7; fig. 49) likewise combs her hair in an absorbed way, seemingly indifferent to the viewer's gaze but unconsciously drawing attention to the beauty she contemplates in a mirror. Elisabeth Gitter observes that "the combing and displaying of hair, as suggested by the legends of alluring mermaids who sit on rocks singing and combing their beautiful hair [as Waterhouse's mermaid does] constitute a sexual exhibition" (938). The preening motion of Austen's figures would have seemed sexually charged to Victorian sensibilities. In the same way, infantilization, to the anxious Victorian male gaze, makes women more attractive by taming their 'dangerous' sexuality.

[140] Similarly, Beardsley's 'Toilette of a Courtesan' (1920) in *Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, Selected from the Collection owned by Mr H. S. Nichols* (1920, 154) shows her with back arched and breasts thrust forward, as one hand arranges a hairpiece on her head.

Ophelia: Mad and Bad

While Austen's and Lemaire's childlike Ophelias ostensibly reflect the Victorian male tendency towards infantilizing her character in theatrical commentary and visual art, their sinister appearance undermines it. This reflects the ostensibly childish buttercups she clasps in her final garland instead being described as "crow-flowers." Compared with traditional depictions, these Ophelias almost seem to menace the viewer with their aggressive sexuality. The traditional Ophelia's often childlike appearance was probably attractive to the Victorian male gaze because it rendered her sexuality less threatening, as in Lewis Carroll's disturbing photo-portrait of six-year-old Alice Liddell as a beggar maid (1858). As Vicky Lebeau notes, "the image of the nude, or semi-clothed, child was ubiquitous in late Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* iconographies of childhood"(92). Bram Dijkstra observes of this period that "a genre was born in which crass childhood pornography disguised itself as a tribute to the ideal of innocence" (195). Lemaire's Ophelia adopts a coy, childlike expression, her profusion of tangled hair and exaggerated features, large eyes, small pointed chin, and full mouth also contributing to an impression of extreme youth. Coupled with her upward gaze, she resembles a child coyly defying a superior. Austen's Ophelia appears equally young, drawn cartoonishly with large eyes in a small face, and a petite figure somewhat dwarfed by its attire. The unselfconscious sexuality of these Ophelias is reminiscent of a naked child unperturbed by the fact of its displayed sex.

Sophie Duncan claims of Stella Campbell that "[a]s [her] thin body entered the New Woman iconography, reinscribing her body as childlike reimagined the volatile 'New' body as that of a docile, controllable child" (113). She points to Bernard Shaw's insistence on Campbell's greenness as an actress: he patronizingly queried whether the actress was able to "fully appreciate the value" of her Ophelia, describing her performances as "immature," her achievements far from "conscious" (Shaw, 2 October 1897, 365). Similarly, the *Standard* dismissed her performance as that of "an overgrown child" who failed to be "sympathetic" (1897; qtd. Duncan 122). Some Victorian depictions of Ophelia appear extremely juvenile, such as Arthur Hughes' *Ophelia* of 1852 (fig. 51), and Henry Lejeune's of 1857 (fig. 50). Quite often, Ophelias of the period, particularly those in keepsake portraits, have idealized, child-like features. This widespread tendency likely would have provoked critics to perceive Campbell's performance of Ophelia as childlike.

Fig. 50. Henry Lejeune. *Ophelia*. 1857, Walter Arts Museum, Baltimore.

Fig. 51. Arthur Hughes. *Ophelia*. 1852, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

Austen's and Lemaire's Ophelias challenge this trend. For example, both complicate the daisy and 'purity' motif as it pertains to Ophelia. Lemaire's Ophelia pinches a daisy between forefinger and index as if freshly plucked; as Young observes, its symbolic contrast with her conscious display of sexuality seems ironic (2002, 334). Austen's Ophelia symbolically points to the daisies at her feet, despite her suggestively exposed bosom. If interpreted as symbols of sexual deceit, the daisies these women hold may denote their mockery of the stereotypical sexual purity of nineteenth-century Ophelias. Both Ophelias have breasts which seem to perch above the bodice of their dress. With a partially rather than completely revealed chest, Ophelia's depiction is more erotic than in cases where her breasts are totally unconfined, as for example, Delacroix's 1844 Ophelia, who is naked from her neck to her stomach. In this painting, "[Ophelia's] clothes are being stripped from her body

by the motion of her fall" (Young 2013). In contrast, the nakedness of Lemaire's and Austen's Ophelias seems brazenly intentional, particularly as, unlike Delacroix's Ophelia, a fear of dying does not distract them from covering themselves.

The sexuality of Austen's Ophelia seems even threatening when viewed alongside her frosty, forthright gaze. She seems to stand still, her feet neatly positioned side by side and her arms hanging in front of her as she stares ahead. Her apparent unconcern with her isolation in the wilderness at night exaggerates her seeming mental instability. Even more unsettling, we are her only company; isolated, Ophelia looks straight at the viewer. Situated high in the picture plane on a slope which runs downward towards the front of the image, she looms slightly; positioning Ophelia slightly higher than the viewer, this suggests authority and, on account of her irate stare, possible danger. Rendering her mad appearance more dramatic, her body fills the image vertically. She even appears cramped, hunched forward while the top of her head vanishes beyond the frame.

The coldly rejecting female is a Symbolist trope, appearing numerous times in Beardsley's illustrations. 'Figure peering through the trees' (1893; Book IV, chapter xxvii of *Le Morte D'Arthur*; fig. 52) has its protagonist wearing a scrutinising, angry expression. Coupled with the white, stick-thin trees, black background, and sense of confinement, this causes Beardsley's image superficially to resemble Austen's. However, in terms of composition, and the central subject's physiognomy, physical positioning, and attire, the illustrations are contrasting: Beardsley's figure is shown chest upwards and partially in profile, while Austen's is depicted in a full-body portrait, facing the viewer. The body of Beardsley's figure is obscured by her thick, long hair, while Austen's wears medieval dress. What they share is antagonism towards the viewer.

Fig. 52. Beardsley. *Figure peering through the Trees*. 1893, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; also in *Le Morte D'arthur*.

Like Austen's Ophelia, Lemaire's is menacing. She gestures ambiguously, one hand teasingly raising her skirts to expose an ankle before stepping into the water. Paired with her wolfish expression, this could be interpreted as both a sexual invitation and an implicit dare that we prevent her from drowning. Dijkstra remarks that Lemaire's Ophelia "leer[s] with the glowering light of the vampire in her eyes, thus emphasizing the sexual origin of her madness — an aspect further accentuated by the very indecorous fashion in which her dress has slipped off her shoulders to reveal her breasts" (44). The word "leer" is traditionally associated with the male gaze because it denotes the sexual objectification of another person. Due to Dijkstra's emphasis on the "sexual origin" of Ophelia's insanity, his description recalls the Victorian male anxiety that assertive female sexuality could endanger masculinity. The myth of the vampire epitomises that deep masculine fear (and fantasy) of the predatory feminine as draining men's vitality, devouring their very life-blood.[141]

Austen's Ophelia shares some of the vampiric characteristics described by Dijkstra with Lemaire's. The former tilts forward and to the left slightly, her eyes fixed on the viewer. Imagining Lemaire's Ophelia as a "vampire," and her bared breasts to be "indecorous," Dijkstra implies that she threatens the viewer with her unashamedly voracious sexual appetite. This recalls Hamlet and the Ghost's conviction that Gertrude's desire is parasitic and excessive: "she would hang on him / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–45), though "lust, though to a radiant angel link'd, / Will sate itself in a celestial bed / And prey on garbage" (1.5.55–57) When painting Ophelia, Lemaire may have borrowed from these characters' description of Gertrude, with its implication of an indecorous sexual appetite and thus unforgivable sexual agency. More recently, Seth Lerer (2012) plainly speaks of the "creepy eroticism" of this Ophelia, comparing her to "a kind of crazy Liberté — her breasts bare, her hair disheveled, her flowers falling out of her hands" (18). This description, falling flowers excepted, also suits Austen's Ophelia. This figure's madness is not sentimentalized and prettified; rather, she genuinely seems deranged. Given that Delacroix's three depictions of Ophelia lack the same aggressive sexuality and thus implied autonomy, their eroticism is unlikely to be termed "creepy."

As Rhodes observes, Henrietta Rae's *Ophelia* (1890; fig. 53) resembles Lemaire's on account of its subversive nature. Arguably, this comparison can be extended to include

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[141] Victorian vampires tend towards the feminine in appearance: some, like Sheridan LeFanu's Camilla are simply female; others' like Bram Stoker's Dracula, are pale-skinned with ruby lips.

Austen's Ophelia.[142] Rhodes attributes this resemblance to the fact that both were women artists (169). Rae was the first female artist whose work was included in the autumn exhibition of the Liverpool Corporation Galleries (now the Walker Art Gallery) (Fish 36). The Royal Academy previously had also hung her work, albeit in an obscure viewing spot.[143] In the painting, Ophelia stands before Claudius and Gertrude who are shying away from her in their seats. She turns back to look at them, proffering flowers; this creates a seductive, serpentine curve in her body. Bernhardt strikes a similar pose in a select few portraits, such as that painted by Clairin in 1876, showing her in her role as the Queen in Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas*. As Young remarks, turning back to look at the viewer while walking away, Bernhardt's dress and train create a "serpentine movement" in her figure (2013). Bart Westerwheel observes that this snake-woman motif was "an attribute of the *femmes fatales* of the *fin de siècle*" (266).[144] It is significant, therefore, that Austen's and Lemaire's Ophelias lean forward and to the left slightly, like serpents. We also find this motif in Beardsley's *Salome,* most notably in "The Peacock Skirt" image (fig. 55) and the "Contents Page Design" (fig. 54) — in the latter, Salome's pose is strikingly similar to Bernhardt's.

Fig. 53. Henrietta Rae. *Ophelia*. 1890, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

[142] For a detailed description of Rae's painting and biographical background, see Rhodes (165–174).

[143] In a small room and above the line (Fish, 58).

[144] Westerwheel argues that the woman-snake emblem was "not just an attribute of the *femmes fatale* of the Fin de siècle; it is an aesthetic ideal that pervaded all aspects of the culture" (266–67).

Fig. 54. Beardsley. "Contents Page Design."
Salome, 1894.

Fig. 55. "The Peacock Skirt" image.
Salome, 1894.

As discussed at length in the following chapter, Austen includes *femme fatale* imagery in his *Hamlet*. "Midnight Ophelia" (p. 127) may be another such example. While visual evidence points to his being influenced by Lemaire's *Ophelia*, this superficial resemblance to Rae's *Ophelia* suggests a second inspiration. While Austen's inclusion of the snake-woman motif may merely reflect his adoption of artistic tropes popular in the *fin de siècle*, including Symbolist motifs ("snaky monsters […] *femmes fatales*" (Lucie-Smith 78)), further similarities with Rae's work also suggest that she influenced him. For example, both

Ophelias intimidate their viewers with their direct stares, Austen's wearing a baleful expression.

Rae's Ophelia stands, dominating the foreground, unlike traditional depictions of the mad scene, where she is often shown kneeling in others' presence: O'Neil's *Ophelia*, for example, kneels while surrounded by courtiers and clasping Laertes hands.[145] Lemaire's Ophelia is similarly empowered, standing front on while prompting the viewer to shy away like the King and Queen in Rae's painting. Austen's Ophelia echoes this in her unabashed frontal stance. Correspondingly, both Austen's and Rae's Ophelias disturb their audience with what their hands display. In Rae's painting, the King and Queen shy away from Ophelia's outstretched hand which clasps flowers, the traditional associations of different flower types communicating silent judgment. In Austen's image, Ophelia makes a harsh, phallic gesture. Rhodes suggests that Rae's work carries strong feminist undertones, and that this is reflected in her signing of the 1899 *Declaration in Favour of Women's Suffrage* (166). She determines that Rae's drawing, like Lemaire's, was highly unusual for, and ahead of, its time. Given that both resemble Austen's Ophelia in some way, avant-garde, feminist readings of Ophelia likely inspired his interpretation of her character.

Considered alongside her mad appearance, the shielded "lap" of Austen's Ophelia suggests that Hamlet's brute sexism partly precipitates her psychological decline. Ophelia's taut, downward pointing hands shield her groin protectively. While this implicitly revokes sexual access, suggesting sexual independence and the end of her and Hamlet's relationship, it also signifies her refusal ("No, my lord") of the prince's lewd request to "lie in [her] lap" (3.2.110–12). After subjecting Ophelia to a misogynistic tirade in the preceding scene: "I have heard of your paintings well enough" (3.1.144), Hamlet sexually harasses her.

While implicitly rejecting any sexual encounters with Hamlet, Austen's Ophelia contemptuously defies onlookers with the same gesture. The positioning of her hands also alludes to her bawdy songs, her right hand with index finger pointed imitating a phallus. Ophelia traditionally is shown holding flowers, in part because it is the hanging of these "weedy trophies" which causes her to drown (4.7.173). In contrast, Austen's Ophelia asserts a stereotypically masculine authority, obscenely gesticulating in front of her groin in imitation of a penis, as if to confuse and intimidate the viewer. Gertrude mentions "dead

[145] Of which now only an engraving exists.

men's fingers" that "liberal shepherds give a grosser name" as among the flowers in Ophelia's "garlands" before she drowns (167; 169–70), suggesting that this could be a textual influence on Austen's "readerly" imagination. The appearance of Austen's Ophelia mimics a "cold maid" (170), but does so with aggression and irony, as her "cold[ness]" also anticipates her death. Prompting prudish viewers to recoil from her lewdness, this Ophelia evokes Hamlet's disgust towards female sexual desire. Lemaire's Ophelia has the same effect. Imagery of the natural world (*natura naturata*) can also convey motifs pertaining to feminine sexuality (*natura naturans*).

The natural surrounds in this drawing are laden with feminine symbolism, suggesting that Mother Nature protects Austen's Ophelia but also that the latter is confined to her role as a woman. Although it is implied that Ophelia is in a forest, a few scrawny, perhaps ash, trees punctuating the foreground, the background is pitch-black, ostensibly denoting the dead of night. This also recalls her "good night" as she departs the first madness scene (4.5.72), and the death that this portends; this line is shown on the opposite page. This inscrutable darkness is also reminiscent of a womb, the formation of the trees protectively clustering around Ophelia seeming similarly womb-like. Split along their center, their leaves resemble vulvas, while the pendant around Ophelia's neck mirrors ovaries and a uterus; the 'pendant' seems also to refer to the "pendent boughs" on which Ophelia attempts to hang "her crownet weeds" (4.7.171).

Because this drawing hints at Ophelia's immersion in mother nature, it intimates her liberation from patriarchal oppression. Freed from its constraints, however, she poses a threat to the masculine world in which she lives and her demise may represent the only plausible outcome. The vertically diagonal folds of Ophelia's dress and inner sleeves in Austen's image, as well as the leaf pattern of her blouse, cause her to mirror the trees and thus merge visually with her surroundings. A similar effect is produced in a wood engraving of Ophelia by Lucien Pissarro, employed as the frontispiece to Volume Two of Jules Laforgue's *Moralités Légendaires* (1897; fig. 56); the sweeping upward lines of Ophelia's skirt and hair resembles the vertical greenery, prompting Young to remark that "[Pissarro's Ophelia] seems to have nowhere to go except forward into the brook at her feet" (2002, 329).

Fig. 56. Lucien Pissarro. Frontispiece illustration of Ophelia by the brook. *Moralités Légendaires*, Vol. 2, by Jules Laforgue, London, Eragny Press, 1897.

It is also interpretable that, underscoring women's close connection with nature and thus their "natural" "womanly" roles as domestic child-bearers, the womblike enfolding of Ophelia in Austen's image also represents this role's (ultimately deadly) domination over her. Given her situation on a raised mound and surrounded by a few fragile-looking trees, it is ambiguous whether Mother Nature, and Ophelia's reproductive potential, protects her or renders her vulnerable, leaving her out in the open. Contributing to an impression of peril, Ophelia's mistrustful expression and wary body language, together with her positioning in a small protective space, call to mind a deer spied while grazing. Austen's imagery here (and elsewhere) demonstrates his imaginative close reading of Shakespeare's text and its hints of Ophelia's occluded sexual agency. Other themes relating to Ophelia which tend to be simplified or obscured by a traditional patriarchal reading are sex, death and suffering. This process makes Ophelia's humanity partly invisible, contributing to a more sympathetic impression of her abusive lover.

The Three Ophelias Portrait: Sex, Death and Suffering

Sexuality, power and death are typically united in images of Ophelia dead or dying. A complicated cultural phenomenon, her depiction opens up a discourse in which Austen's drawings silently participate. His images (especially "Ophelia Drowning" (p. 141/234) and "Ophelia Drowned" (p. 144/235) emphasise Ophelia's suffering, and undermine the voyeuristic appreciation of her death. Having already shown Ophelia mad and alone in a densely wooded setting, in the "drowning" image, Austen renders her actual demise. This illustration anticipates Gertrude's description of her death on the following (recto) page; due to the image's positioning, we are presented with it before encountering the event itself, suggesting the significance of Ophelia's drowning. All three figures have the loose, disordered, flowing hair, falling down their backs and/or gathered around their shoulders, stereotypical of Victorian portrayals of Ophelia's madness in visual art and onstage.

The complexity of the illustration, even such that three separate moments in time are pictured — a pair of identical, naked women fall into the water at staggered heights, while another is submerged while clothed — reflects that Gertrude describes Ophelia's death in voyeuristic detail, and that the play's text elaborates the moments leading to Ophelia's death sequentially. One of the most innovatively conceived designs in the collection, the drawing combines the two remaining traditional modes of representing 4.7: Ophelia falling into the water, and also lying in it. Duchamp's painting *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912; fig. 57) and Eadweard Muybridge's collection of photographs entitled *Horse in Motion* (c.1878; fig. 58) reflect the same motif of simultaneously portraying consecutive moments in time. Austen may have been influenced by these works, as also by the manner of Ophelia's eroticization in nineteenth-century art — whether straightforwardly sexualized or infantilizing, necrophiliac, or, more unusually, aggressively dominating.

Fig. 57. Marcel Duchamp. *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*. 1912, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

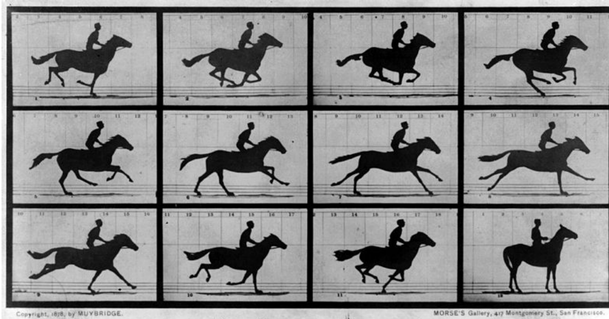

Fig. 58. Eadweard Muybridge. *Horse in Motion*. c.1878, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas, Texas.

Young remarks of Victorian depictions of Ophelia that "when [her] madness leads to death, she is rendered even more powerless before the voyeuristic male gaze: her sexuality that is both attractive and repellent to the Victorian psyche is now fully contained" (2002, 337). Magda Romanska makes a related observation: "representations of the dead Ophelia that originated in nineteenth-century theatrical and visual discourses initiated the modern necrosexual aesthetic, which came to constitute the "essence" of the feminine subject and which continue[d] to dominate twentieth-century visual culture" (47). However, Austen covertly undermines the objectification inherent in this type of aesthetic. For example, as I shall explain, his nude Ophelias are not sexually objectified, unlike the semi-attired figures in traditional depictions. One reason for this is that their nudity is humanizing. This is because partial nudity exists to please a voyeuristic gaze (hence the appeal of a striptease), while simple nakedness is less titillating and can be private and/or entirely self-contained (as in the case of performative, expressive dance — and as I explain below, the falling figures appear to engage in sensual dance).

Austen's nude falling figures in the "Ophelia Drowning" illustration abruptly depart from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portrayals of the scene, through complete, rather than suggestively partial, undress. Both have full, delicately curved breasts and one, a suggestively arched back — her groin is visible, although without labia. In traditional depictions, only a combination of arms, shoulders and legs are exposed. Generally, Ophelia's breasts are hidden, but exceptions include Bernhardt's sculpted *Ophelia* (1880; fig. 59), who is naked but only with neck and a single breast visible above the water, Auguste Préault's bronze bas-relief (1876; fig. 60), in which Ophelia is nude save for a sheet which clings to her body in the river — mirroring the drapery on antique sculptures — and Delacroix's and

Lemaire's paintings in which one or both breasts are exposed.[146] The partial revelation of these bodies, in contrast with Austen's completely nude falling figures, contributes to Ophelia's eroticization.

Fig. 59. Sarah Bernhardt. *Ophelia*, 1880, Private Collection, France.

Fig. 60. Auguste Préault. *Ophelia*. 1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Another major departure in Austen's treatment of the nude, falling Ophelias in the "drowning" image is that it is highly stylised. Ophelia's nudity is simultaneously rhetorical and symbolic in meaning — a symbolic reading is encouraged by the counterfactual nature of her falling nakedness, as opposed to her drowning body clothed in garments "heavy with their drink" (4.7.180). Although all three figures appear to be moving, the drawing appears static because the pose of the two falling figures is unrealistic. With the bearing of beautiful Greek sculptures, their bodies are frozen mid-air; the topmost Ophelia commands the space around her as if she were a statue on a plinth. In contrast, the drowning Ophelia is far less visible: much of her body is submerged and she wears patterned clothing — our eye is immediately drawn to the falling figures instead.

[146] Préault's relief is now held in the Musée d'Orsay (Paris), it was copied from a plaster version he had made in 1842, which was shown in 1850–51 at the Salon.

The unaffected nudity of Austen's Ophelias, both in this and in the "drowned" illustration, lends a humanizing quality to her portrayal. Their nakedness is unashamedly on display, but without soliciting a merely physiological response. Instead, it suggests a symbolic 'laying bare' of her authentic self in the empowering act of suicide — in the same way, King Lear strips away his clothing in a symbolic gesture of self-realisation as "unaccommodated man." Although Austen's falling figures have arched backs as if engaged in a sexual act, and despite their alluring beauty, they do not invite (and are not complicit in) a voyeuristic gaze. Moving in the air like graceful dancers or acrobats, their aesthetic is sophisticated and not purely sexual. Their movements, like those of belly dancers, comprise an erotic and yet self-contained art form. Their performative space is private and impenetrable; they are not reliant on, and are possibly even indifferent to, the viewer's gaze. They appear engaged in a process of self-actualization.

The figures resemble Préault's sculpture in part due to their full-length portrayal, prominent curves, and sinuous, relaxed-looking posture. In contrast, however, Préault's and Bernhardt's somewhat pornographic figures invite our participation. Due to the sheer quantity of gathered drapery and flowing water which envelops her, Préault's appears wrapped in bedsheets, as if implicitly inviting us to join her in bed. Bernhardt's Ophelia has lips parted and turns her head to the side, exposing and thus emphasizing her long elegant neck. It and her full, revealed breast dominate the sculpture's composition. Her naked flesh looks tantalizingly smooth to the touch, in contrast with the surrounding ripples of water, the flower wreath which frames her head, and her drenched, clinging dress. As in the case of Préault's Ophelia, her expression is one of sexual bliss, her eyes closed and mouth open as if in an ecstasy that recalls Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Theresa* (1647–52). Similarly, both Préault's and Bernhardt's figures are presented frontally, allowing us to gaze freely at their features and orgasmic rapture. In contrast, in Austen's image the women are not complicit in our voyeurism, as their faces are turned away from the viewer entirely: their expressions are unreadable and thus private.

Stray branches or vines descend diagonally across his drawing, their downwards sweep suggesting that Ophelia's falling body has torn them from their elevated position, evoking the "envious sliver" which breaks under the strain of her weight in the play (4.7.172). This visual allusion to the branch which snaps recalls traditional images of the scene in which Ophelia clasps it when about to fall, or already having fallen, such as in the case of Delacroix's

Ophelias. Whether these “sliver[s]” are in front of Ophelia or share the same pictorial plane, thus touching her, is difficult to discern; if the latter, then one intersects with her ankle, another, a breast, and a third, her lower chest — all sexually charged areas to Victorian sensibilities. Based on this reading, the boughs draw the viewer’s eye to sensual areas of skin, emphasizing the sexuality which Hamlet reproaches women for ‘misusing.’

Although the branches or vines direct our gaze to erogenous zones, specifically nipples and ankles, they don’t invite us to participate. Instead, they seem to jealously guard her sexuality, suggesting Mother Nature’s possessive ownership of it. The lowest branch crosses a considerable distance to reach her. Curving upwards slightly, it appears to erotically caress her skin. The same branch jealously conceals her groin from spying eyes, although ironically, with an attention-grabbing, vulva-shaped leaf. It masks her vulva while at the same time drawing attention to it. In similar fashion, the eyes on Ophelia’s dress in her “sane” portrait are positioned directly over her nipples while partially evoking them. The eyes draw attention to, but also jealously mask, her sexuality — demanding that we look elsewhere. The touch of all three branches seems possessive, recalling the “envious” ones described by Gertrude. In early modern usage, “envy” denotes “desire” but also ‘ill will.’ The Queen’s personification of nature makes it seem malevolent and even lascivious. Caressing Ophelia covetously, these branches also echo and underscore the voyeuristic, detached way in which Gertrude recounts her death.

Here, as in the “Midnight” portrait, the natural settings visually characterize female sexuality, and nature appears sinister rather than nurturing. This reflects Hamlet’s perception of female sexuality as monstrous, and suggests that dark, patriarchal forces threaten nature’s fecundity, Ophelia’s own sexuality, and thus Ophelia herself. With splits down their center, the vulva-like leaves in both illustrations are identical; the flowering water lilies are also sexually suggestive, while the generic-looking flowers mirror Ophelia’s nipples.

Ophelia’s death is also aestheticized — although not objectified — in this image because the composition is carefully organized, creating a misleading impression of calm. The artist subverts our expectations in this scene. The lines in the drawing are mostly curved, creating a softness which complements Ophelia’s sensuous nudity. Most likely due to their association with the moon — itself associated with madness and the feminine — circles are a strong geometric motif here and, as mentioned, in Austen’s illustrations more generally. A

circular ripple in the water surrounds the lowermost Ophelia; this shape is mirrored in the numerous lily pads. In portrait rather than landscape form, the drawing easily accommodates the three bodies, two of which fall at staggered heights. The image is organized into thirds horizontally, water constituting the lowermost section; each third contains the head and torso of one of the figures. The hips and upper backs of the falling Ophelias create long intersecting diagonals, while the darkness along the lower left border is mirrored in the darkness following the top right. Contributing to an atmosphere of (seemingly) serene order, the outline of the topmost Ophelia's abdomen marks the central vertical of the illustration, while the trees mirror her raised arm and the slender legs of the falling figures, emphasizing their downward trajectory.

However, the disordered logic of representation disrupts the aesthetic equilibrium of the image: the jarring discrepancies in how the figures are represented point to Ophelia's disorganized mental state. Despite following a chronological sequence, the progression of her changing movements is illogical. Her bent elbow switches sides, and even though she is mid-air, neither Ophelia resembles a person falling but rather stretching languidly. The central Ophelia occupies the frontal plane of the image, while the drowning Ophelia is clothed and at the back. The distressed emotional response of the submerged figure contrasts starkly with the relaxed bearing of the other two. These discrepancies disorientate the viewer, and despite the distractingly overt sexuality of the two falling figures, reflect Ophelia's psychological confusion. Thus, although these Ophelias lack obvious signs of madness — recalling that late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artistic visual depictions could push in either direction — the disturbed chronology implied by the illustration alludes to it regardless.

The image's unsettling atmosphere also hints at her insanity. As in Ophelia's "Midnight" portrait, the background behind the trees is ominously dark while the moonlight seems piercingly bright. In both images, the women's bodies, the trees and the flowers are all a bleached white, contrasting with their surroundings. In the "drowning" image, the water is ink-black, seeming to swallow the lower-most Ophelia in a noxious substance. Resembling moons mirrored in water, the lily pads compensate for the canopy of leaves obscuring the night sky. While the aestheticized nudity of Austen's falling figures' ostensibly distracts from the reality of Ophelia's madness and the drowning figure in the water — lessening the horror of what is taking place — their visual appeal may in fact be designed to lure the viewer in

under false pretenses, only to shock them with the grim reality of death. The trauma of the event is left for the attired figure, lying in the water, to convey.

While most Victorian paintings show a dead or dying Ophelia with partially exposed flesh, there are some exceptions in which she is covered almost entirely, such as Millais' iconic *Ophelia*, dating to 1851–52 (fig. 61). Both his and Austen's drowning figure are fully attired, lying on their backs with only face, chest and hands above the water, lips parted and palms facing the sky. Millais' Ophelia is fetishized as part of the Victorian 'necrosexual aesthetic.' However, the same is not true of Austen's, in part because her implied emotional state is very different. This Ophelia's obvious misery and alarm emphasizes the scene's pathos more than in Millais' painting, humanizing her. This suggests Austen's correction of Millais' objectified rendition of her suffering. While Millais' Ophelia seems quietly at peace, gazing vacantly upwards with fingers gently curling inward, Austen's Ophelia shows clear signs of distress, with hands tense, fingers outstretched, and her face fearful, chin straining upwards as if to prolong the availability of oxygen. Although Gertrude describes Ophelia as clutching "weedy trophies" as she sinks, the bundle of flowers is nowhere to be seen (that is, unless loosely represented by the dispersing daisies). Whereas Millais' hands form a gesture of welcome, Austen's appears to grasp despairingly at the air. Lips parted and expression despairing, she seems to issue a low cry, rather than just sing "snatches of old lauds" as she sinks "As one incapable of her own distress" (4.7.176–77). Her obvious anguish disrupts a voyeuristic gaze.

Fig. 61. John Everett Millais. *Ophelia*. 1851–52, Tate Britain, London.

Fig. 62. George Frederic Watts. *Found Drowned*. c. 1850, Watts Gallery, Surrey.

Likewise, on the one hand, Austen's lowermost Ophelia ostensibly fits Victorian depictions of drowned women (having suicided after suffering "ruin"; see fig. 62) because she lies on her back — the same can be said of the supine Ophelia in the "drowned" image. Rhodes observes that Millais' famous Ophelia evokes these depictions, exploiting their confrontational value because the women's physical positioning was considered sexually suggestive (94). However, on the other hand, the same does not appear true of Austen's drowning and drowned Ophelias. The former is submerged chest downwards, her body disappearing under the water instead of being displayed, and she is fully conscious rather than deceased, physically expressing intense anguish. In contrast, Millais' Ophelia is glassy-eyed, and despite being mostly underwater, her entire (clothed) body is visible. Austen's dead Ophelia in the "Ophelia Drowned" image comes closer to reflecting representations of 'fallen,' drowned, Victorian women, except that she is nude, and — as discussed in the "Austen's Terrifying Feminine" chapter — she appears inhuman, detracting from her visual appeal. Her limbs are unnaturally long, and her physical fragility (even frailty) contrasts with traditional, curvier Ophelias. Further, as in the case of Austen's falling Ophelias, her full nudity suggests human vulnerability and psychological authenticity, rather than voyeuristic titillation. Millais' Ophelia is objectified, whereas Austen's Ophelias are sympathetic.

Despite the distractingly beautiful figures in the "Ophelia Drowning" illustration, the manifest distress of the drowning Ophelia makes the illustration deeply affecting. Austen amplifies the pathos of Gertrude's description because his Ophelia recognizes what is taking place, despite her implied madness; her agonized features underscore the harsh reality of the situation. Delacroix's 1843 lithograph of Ophelia (fig. 63) resembles Austen's drawing in that, gaping slightly, she wears a look of exhausted melancholy rather than vacancy as she drowns. In earlier versions of the same design, Delacroix positioned Ophelia further into the background; by comparison, the dramatically increased proximity in the final work renders her misery and death more confronting. The perspective in Austen's illustration is extremely

shallow, achieving a similar effect. Yet, depicting Ophelia in acute distress, Austen's image is more disturbing and more engaging than Delacroix's.

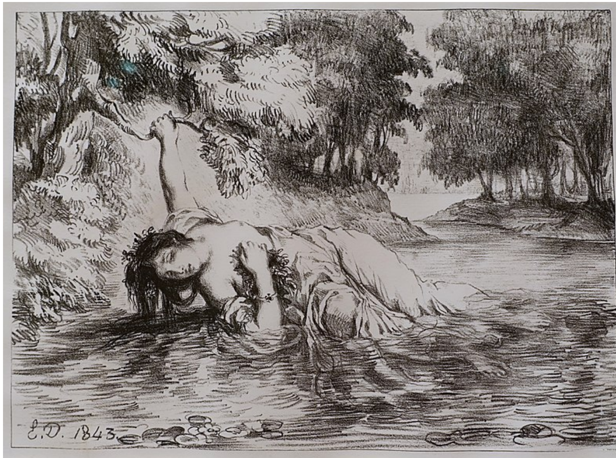

Fig. 63. Eugène Delacroix. *The Death of Ophelia*. 1844, Louvre Museum, Paris.

Austen's drawing makes the viewer feel that they are situated outdoors with Ophelia, as if helplessly witnessing her demise. Unlike many of the other illustrations in the edition, there is no evidence of a stage and a theatre backdrop: Ophelia is in actual wilderness. Although the figures are in a self-contained configuration, this in an open composition. The hand of the topmost Ophelia disappears beyond the border of the picture. Coupled with the fact that our line of sight situates us slightly higher than the second Ophelia, this creates the impression that we occupy the image and are either suspended in space as if falling, or are positioned on a riverbank opposite. The illustration's centre is somewhere around the topmost Ophelia's groin, barely masked by a vine. Although this demands that we notice her sexual appeal, the second Ophelia gestures towards the third in the water, as if to appall us with the contrasting horror of the situation.

The composition underscores Ophelia's plight by highlighting her entrapment in the river and consequent helplessness. The lowest third of the illustration, dominated by water, has more visual depth than is found in any of the other images, furthering the impression that this is a natural environment. The lily pads decrease in size as the eye follows them up the image. Recognizable by the numerous ferns, the riverbank is only just visible in the background. Its distant removal points to Ophelia's inability to escape the river. Adding to a sense of entrapment, much of the background portrays a wall of forest which lacks depth, compressing and overwhelming the image. Austen's depiction of nature also suggests Symbolist influences. Lucie-Smith observes of Symbolism that "[i]t does not depict nature as

it actually exists, but brings together various impressions received by the mind of the artist, to create a new and different world, governed by his own subjective mood" (151).

However, as outlined above, the artificial, controlled way in which the figures fall, with the grace of dancers or acrobats, suggests an alternative reading of Ophelia's agency in this situation. It implies that Ophelia suicides rather than haplessly falls into the stream, and that her expression lying in the water simply denotes her grief. This possibility can be viewed through the lens of competing philosophical frameworks. As mentioned, the play deliberately entertains conflicting belief systems, particularly as evidenced by Hamlet's changing deliberations. The gravediggers and the priest draw attention to the fact that Ophelia's "death by misadventure" (the official story) may in fact be suicide, the unforgivable sin warranting burial in unconsecrated ground and eternal damnation. Considered in terms of stoicism, however, Ophelia's suicide would be a reasonable course of action. The Stoics valued self-determination highly, considering suicide an act of independence, a viable means of escaping otherwise ineluctable suffering and indignity. Ophelia has lost her paternal carer in a world ruled by men, been rejected and perhaps "spoiled" by Hamlet, been rejected by the Queen and court despite her father's death (whose funeral is — worryingly — discreetly dealt with) and faces an uncertain future. Suicide may provide the only realistic means of escape.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explored how Austen's drawings re-envisage the sentimental Victorian perception of Ophelia as tenderly pathetic and lacking in agency, a view rooted in the patriarchal reduction of the feminine which produces a 'flattened' reading of Ophelia's textual complexity. This re-envisaging partly reflects contemporary onstage practices but also exceeds them in the degree to which they portray her with psychological autonomy. Ophelia is moved into a new space regarding the control she has over her image and herself, including with respect to her sexuality. These images draw the viewer's attention to her rather than to Hamlet's suffering, portraying her as a victim but not of the sentimentalized variety (the victim of her own weakness). The reading they offer consolidate an emerging trend of (female) artists depicting Ophelia with agency, as in the works of Rae and Lemaire.

Austen’s Terrifying Feminine: Women and the Supernatural

Introduction

Austen’s illustrations develop an unprecedented interpretation of *Hamlet* which prioritises the feminine, despite the derogatory ways that women figure in Hamlet’s imagination, the cruel treatment and judgment they face at his hands, and the scant lines given to women in the play’s text. We have seen this reading partially examined in previous chapters: Ophelia is granted visual prominence and empowerment, bringing sharply into question Hamlet’s mistreatment of her in the play. Paradoxically, the feminine in the play announces itself partly through being stifled. For example, the prince and Laertes reject any “female” tendencies: Hamlet accuses himself of being “like a whore, unpack[ing] my heart with words” (2.2.581), while Laertes considers it “shame[ful]” to shed tears: “When these are gone, / The woman will be out” (4.7.187–88) — both men associate femininity with uncontrolled excess, calling to mind female ‘hysteria.’ Ophelia is forced always to listen rather than speak, despite demonstrating formidable insight into the inner workings of those around her, presenting others with flowers which carry implied and accurate judgements, and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, implicitly criticising her brother for his gendered double standard on sexuality morality while probably resenting his decision to lecture her on the obvious: “Do not as some ungracious pastors do, / Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven, / Whiles like a puff’d and reckless libertine / Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads” (1.3.47–50).

Partly accounting for its (and her) prominence in popular culture, Ophelia’s madness is among the most memorable facets of the play. This also partly explains its frequent appearance in the edition, as well as the imagery’s evocation of the supernatural. The deep and ancient association between madness and the supernatural is illustrated in the shared meaning of “derangement” between Latin *vates* (‘priest’) and the related English word *wood* (“mad”).[147] The pairing of female insanity and the supernatural became a staple in Gothic fiction, in part because the Victorians attempted to understand each with reference to the

[147] Derived from “Indo-European *wāt-* , represented by Latin *vātēs* seer, poet” (*OED,* “wood, *adj.*, *n.*2, and *adv*.”).

other, in an effort to make both more explicable. *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) are examples of this.

In this chapter, I primarily explore Austen's representation of the supernatural, through which (it is implied) the feminine pervades both the play and Hamlet's thought processes. Related to this, Austen's illustrations insinuate that some male characters (Claudius and Hamlet) also have feminine qualities, even such that they resemble *femmes fatales*. His illustrations' evocation of this theme also partly reflects that, as Nina Auerbach observes, onstage and painted Ophelias formed a kind of "visionary cult" in the nineteenth century:

> Delacroix painted [Ophelia] as a harbinger of Romantic transformations, bare breasted like his personified female Liberty, suspended between air and water as she is between humanity and divinity, reality and myth. [The] later Ophelia by Madeleine Lemaire is a Dionysian spirit of natural and sexual renewal, invading enfeebled citizens to transform them. […] Ophelia is reborn and redeemed as a symbol of revolutions in nature and art, obscuring the tragic posturings and long speeches of the tragic hero
>
> (241)

Overall, the five main imaginative motifs which dominate my argument include *femmes fatales*, 'Mother Nature,' 'Death and the Maiden,' the muse, and the sorceress. These motifs emerge in the text itself, reflecting their currency in early modern Europe and Shakespeare's imagination, but they receive special amplification in Austen's art, reflecting the sensibilities of his own era and his interpretive project. My investigation primarily traverses the artist's depictions of Hamlet's entry into both Ophelia's (p. 74/230) and Gertrude's closets (p. 105/232) (examined in depth in previous chapters), the mousetrap scene (p. 95/231), and Ophelia's descent into madness and death: pp. 116/233 ("Ophelia Hallucinates"), 141/234 ("Ophelia Drowning") and 144/235 ("Ophelia Drowned"), explored in previous chapters.

First, I will discuss briefly the influence of nineteenth-century European artistic tropes, especially those found in Symbolism, on Austen's work, with particular reference to *femmes fatales* such as sirens, and the virgin/whore dichotomy. I will argue that these and other Symbolist motifs, such as death and suffering, are also conveniently suited to *Hamlet*. Following this, I will address the influence of sirens on Austen's imagery, especially as regards his depiction of Ophelia, while examining their relationship to nineteenth-century perceptions of Ophelia as "undine". I will then discuss the semantic relationship between

sirens, nymphs and prostitution, and their bearing on *Hamlet* and Austen's drawings: he depicts Ophelia and Gertrude as courtesans (or prostitutes), reflecting Hamlet's misogynistic contempt. Subsequently, I will turn to the visual correlation in Austen's imagery between nature, mythological feminine creatures and Ophelia, and how this is echoed in the play. As case studies, I will look at the "Ophelia Drowning" and "Ophelia Drowned" illustrations. I will chart the visual and symbolic correlation between baroque sculpture and Austen's falling Ophelias in the "Ophelia Drowning" image.

In addition to associating Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet with *femmes fatales,* Austen's illustrations depict Hamlet as an unsympathetic, feminine and dangerous partner to Ophelia. These *femmes fatales,* primarily appearing as miniatures, reflect Ophelia's nymph-like appearance in the edition's later illustrations. As I will explain below, Ophelia is pictured as having nymph-like qualities in the "Ophelia Drowning" and "Ophelia Drowned" illustrations in particular, while the title image on p. 116/233 ("Ophelia Hallucinates") suggests the beginning of her transformation. The play likewise describes the Queen, Ophelia, Claudius and even Hamlet in a way that evokes *femmes fatales:* Hamlet tells Ophelia that women "make […] monsters" of "men" (3.1.140–41), and describes Gertrude as if she were a parasite, claiming that "she would hang on" Hamlet's father "As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–45). Claudius pours poison through his brother's ears — poison is a traditionally female weapon — and prefers feminine diplomacy over battle as a means of overcoming enemies. In conjunction with the fact that forcing it through an orifice against the victim's will can be analogised to rape, its use in this scenario can be analogised to the sexual domination typically attributed to *femmes fatales*. These events and Hamlet's equally feminine traits will be discussed shortly.

Nineteenth-century Europe was fascinated by the idea of the *femme fatale*, as demonstrated by its permeation of art and literature of the period, from Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1819) and Heine's "Die Lorelei" (1824) to Wilde's *Salomé* (1891) and Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911). Beardsley's artistic treatment of Keats' and Wilde's texts strongly emphasise the *femme fatale* motif. Austen's inclusion of *femmes fatales* suggests influence from this period. Lucie-Smith observes that "the passive or captive female was […] in the process of being displaced in European art by a rival archetype — the dominating woman" (148). Heather L. Braun remarks that "[t]hroughout the nineteenth century, the [*femme fatale*] was a ready symbol for a variety of cultural

concerns including sex, aggression, disease, madness, foreign contagion, and social degeneration" (2).

Two interrelated nineteenth-century artistic movements which reflected these widespread anxieties were Symbolism, which originated as a literary movement in France with poets such as Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, and Decadence, with its focus on the occult and humankind's primitive urges. These emerged in England, France and central Europe, when darkly sinister, supernatural motifs relating to death and suffering became particularly prominent in the visual arts. This fascination originated with the early Romantics, as suggested by Goya and Fuseli's works, and reached a climax with Symbolism.[148] These movements flourished well into the 1890s, and almost certainly influenced Austen's inclusion of *femmes fatales* in his drawings.

While Decadence rejected notions of progress, whether spiritual or material, Symbolist art was fundamentally literary in conception, making it well suited to literary illustration. In Symbolist art, "the figure of the femme fatale served as a catalyst for revising biblical and mythical tales: Eve, Salome, Medea, Circe [etc.]" (Braun 3). In general, a "list of typically Symbolist subject matter" includes "'nothing but the eternal things, day and fire and the sea, and motherhood and the dead'" (G. K. Chesterton, qtd. Lucie-Smith 49). Hamlet's fixation on death and Gertrude, and the play's references to purgatory ("sulph'rous and tormenting flames" (1.5.3)), night and day (as reflected in the timing of the Ghost's arrival and departure, for example), and the sea ("What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord" (1.4.69)) anticipate Symbolist motifs.

Returning to the subject of *femmes fatales,* Symbolism's focus on them is also attributable to the Neoplatonic idea of androgyny, for which Gustave Moreau's androgynous figures set a precedent (Lucie-Smith 68). Moreau painted beautiful, powerful and sinister women, such as found in *Fairy with Griffon* (1876; fig. 64) — anticipating male Victorian anxieties surrounding symbolic impotence and castration (according to Freud) — as well as delicate, languid, epicene men, faced with destruction, as in *The Suitors* (1852; fig. 65). Symbolism's emphasis on androgyny may have likewise influenced Austen: such epicene male figures evoke Hamlet's feminine, Romantic persona, which we see portrayed in the delicate, languorous Hamlet found in Austen's illustrations. Symbolism was also concerned

[148] Fuseli *The Nightmare* (1781); Goya, *The Colossus* (1808–1812).

with conveying more abstract concepts by way of mythology and fantastical monsters, including not just death, but love, anguish, dread, sexual awakening and unrequited desire. This likewise accounts for *femmes fatales* being central to its creative imagining, while echoing themes apparent in *Hamlet*.

Fig. 64. Gustave Moreau. *Fairy with Griffon*. 1876, Musée national Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Fig. 65. Gustave Moreau. *The Suitors*. 1852, Musée national Gustave Moreau, Paris.

Probably due to its literary allegiance, Symbolism became more prevalent in book illustration than in painting (Lucie-Smith 138); this also partly accounts for its presence in Austen's images. Dulac and Rackham's popular illustrated editions (mentioned in the Introduction), published at the beginning of the twentieth century, employed a Symbolist style. Beardsley was a late Symbolist, as partly evidenced by the *femmes fatales* in his illustrated *Salome* and *Messalina*. Art Nouveau emerged from Symbolism, accounting for their concurrence in

Beardsley's work.[149] "[I]t has sometimes been remarked that the rapid spread of Art Nouveau throughout Europe tended to coincide with a distinct slackening of the Symbolist impetus in painting and sculpture" (Lucie-Smith 194). "Symbolism can be regarded with equal justice either as the precursor of Modernism, or as the last flowering of the European civilization which was to be destroyed by the First World War" (Lucie-Smith 193).[150] In the wake of the War, many Symbolist artists turned to Primitivism. Consequently, illustrating post-War, Austen was unusual in continuing to adopt a Symbolist, as well as art nouveau and loosely Surrealist, aesthetic.

Ophelia: A Nymph in Nature

> Ophelia […] teases the spectator into imagining that she has an Undine-like other-worldly identity the play refuses to show us. Ellen Terry longed for that self. "What news of the little 'Undine,'" she wrote ruefully to the adaptor of the German version of the legend. "Why did I miss that when I was young? Young & alive"
>
> (Auerbach 241)

Two contrasting female archetypes — *femmes fatales,* such as sirens, and virgins — feature strongly in Moreau and (Symbolist painter) Odilon Redon's paintings. Depicting Ophelia according to a virgin/whore dichotomy (see previous chapter), in addition to interspersing a variety of *femmes fatales* throughout his illustrations, Austen in his work exhibits (as mentioned) strong Symbolist influences.[151] Like the Symbolists, or perhaps numbering among them on account of his Pre-Raphaelite status,[152] the painter John Waterhouse was deeply interested in the *femmes fatales* of Greek mythology, depicting

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[149] According to Lawrence Gowing in *The Encyclopedia of Visual Art: A History of Art* (1983), "[t]here is no clear distinction to be made between the Symbolist Movement and Art Nouveau: they were interdependent in a complex way" (823). However, Joann Skrypzak observes that, "[d]espite the stylistic overlap between symbolism and art nouveau, on a thematic level, the former pursued more pronounced metaphysical concerns" (50).

[150] "Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and during the first decade of the twentieth, Symbolist art was internationally dominant" (Lucie-Smith 143).

[151] "[M]ost of the standard Symbolist properties [are] masks, snaky monsters, severed heads, *femmes fatales* [etc.]" (Lucie-Smith 78).

[152] See Lucie-Smith on Waterhouse and the Pre-Raphaelites in *Symbolist Art* (1972).

sirens, mermaids and nymphs.[153] However, Waterhouse's supernatural figures are visually pleasing and far from menacing, as well as being similar in appearance regardless of the creature represented:[154] they differ from the supernatural beings found in traditionally Symbolist works. In this regard, Waterhouse's nymphs and Austen's nymph-Ophelias (discussed below) are similar. Austen may well have been inspired by Waterhouse, given that the latter's works became highly influential and were readily accessible in London's galleries.

Austen's inclusion of sirens, the influence of Symbolism notwithstanding, may partly be a vestige of the Victorian fascination with mermaid folklore,[155] "siren" being often confused with "mermaid" (*OED* 2).[156] As I will discuss, Austen seemingly also draws on the perceived link in the Victorian era between Ophelia and supernatural, underwater creatures. Ambiguous *femme fatale* imagery, avian but also aquatic, dominates the interior of the disc-shaped border of the throne's backrest in the "Mousetrap" image (p. 95/231). This evokes a similar motif to that found in the illustration on p. 8/224, where a serpent encircles a woman on the hilt of a sword. Reminiscent of harpies or creatures spiralling through an ocean's depths, female figures with abdomens covered in feathery down and eerie, attenuated limbs terminating in feather-like fingers are shown circling within an indiscriminate revolving mass of scaled tails. Although the sinuous, naked bodies and scale-like covering of the female figures suggest that they are mermaids, the addition of bird-like attributes cause them instead to resemble the sirens of classical mythology.

Sirens call to mind Hamlet's misogynistic perception of Ophelia and Gertrude in terms of his aversion to, and fear of, female sexuality. Mythologised as devouring men and using their fatal beauty to this end, sirens are archetypal *femmes fatales*. In this image, they inhabit a sun or star, evoking Horatio's description of the "disasters in the sun" (1.1.120). "Star" could refer to any of the planets, including the moon (as per

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[153] For example, *The Siren* (1900) and *Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus* (1900).

[154] Notwithstanding his repeated employment of the same model.

[155] As illustrated in popular fictions like Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Little Mermaid* (1837) and Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), and in Tennyson's famous poem "The Mermaid" (1830), which begins "Who would be / A mermaid fair, / Singing alone, / Combing her hair."

[156] "Oh traine me not sweet Mermaide with thy note / […] / Sing Siren for thy selfe, and I will dote" (*Comedy of Errors*, 3.2.45ff).

Horatio's reference to the "moist star" (120)), which the early moderns believed influenced a man's sanity.[157] Given that Ophelia descends into madness and drowns, these creatures' conspicuous presence within a star or moon seems especially foreboding. Austen deliberately unsettles the viewer by alluding to grim future events.

The sirens not only evoke Hamlet's belief in female sexual duplicity but his ambiguous description of Ophelia as a "Nymph" (3.1.89). Sirens "lure sailors to destruction by their enchanting singing" (*OED* 2) and are conversationally used to describe "one who [...] sings sweetly, charms, allures, or deceives" (*OED* 3). Their characterisation reflects Hamlet's misogynistic commentary, telling Ophelia that "wise men know well enough what *monsters* you make of them" (3.1.140–41; my italics), implying that women 'lure' men to immoral 'destruction,' and are themselves hybrid monsters, like sirens. Similarly, he claims harshly that "You jig and amble, and you lisp, [...] you make your wantonness your ignorance" (3.1.146–48), evoking "sing[ing] sweetly, charm[ing], allur[ing], or deceiv[ing]." The "You" here is ambiguous: it can refer to women in general or Ophelia in particular.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, "siren" and "nymph" could mean "prostitute" (*OED* 3a).[158] The inclusion of sirens as well as nymphs in Austen's imagery may be accounted for by Hamlet's suspicion of Ophelia's potential for sexual promiscuity. Hamlet ambiguously calls her a "Nymph" before her confirmation of his suspicion that she is deceiving him ("Where's your father? / At home, my lord" (3.1.89; 130–32) prompts an angry verbal attack in which he questions her "honesty," instructs her "Get thee to a nunnery" and tells her that "beauty" and "bawd[ry]" (3.1.103; 121; 111–12) are inseparable — supposedly, the "fair Ophelia" is less "honest" than she seems (89). In Austen's drawings, Ophelia and Gertrude share a debauched and sexualised appearance, not unlike the typical female figures in Beardsley's "Decadent" imagery. However, where the appearance of the latter is primarily a feature of style, that of Austen's figures is rhetorically significant, reflecting both Hamlet's hysterical misogyny and his cynical assessment of the moral and political climate of Denmark.

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[157] "It is the very error of the moon, / She comes more near the earth than she was wont, / And makes men mad" (5.2.109–111).

[158] The *OED* reports that, although rare, this is still (1969) in use. Like the word 'mermaid,' "nymph" denotes "[a] beautiful young woman; a maiden; a damsel" as well as "a prostitute" (*OED* 1b; 2a).

The same juxtaposition exists between the pervasive sexual nudity in Beardsley's illustrations and that found in Austen's, the latter conveying, among other things, Hamlet's distorted perception of women.

Austen and Waterhouse's illustrations both imply — although Waterhouse's more tenuously — a thematic relationship between Ophelia and mermaids/nymphs. Rhodes notes that Waterhouse's *The Mermaid* of 1901 bears striking resemblance to his *Ophelia* of 1894 (fig. 66), because both figures pose almost identically (118).[159] Ophelia is almost in profile, while the mermaid is positioned at a three-quarter angle. Rhodes explains that the "[latter] suggests [the mermaid's] role as a temptress" (118), adding that, "by showing the mermaid and Ophelia in corresponding poses, Waterhouse seems to be [...] aware of the final lines of Gertrude's monologue that compare Ophelia to a mermaid and the sexuality inherent in her character" (118).

Fig. 66. John Waterhouse. *Ophelia*. 1894, Private Collection.

An 1898 engraving by Bourdon and Keilhaur (discussed in the "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship" chapter) presents an unconventionally erotic portrayal of Hamlet's entry into Ophelia's private chamber. A mermaid decorates the end of Ophelia's bed. Young, as mentioned, considers this to contribute to an impression of eroticism (2002, 291). However, while Bourdon and Keilhauer's engraving validates

[159] Displayed at the New Gallery and the Liverpool Autumn Exhibition within the same year.

Hamlet’s belief in Ophelia’s probable sexual availability, Austen’s imagery is more ambiguous in its treatment. It emphasises Hamlet’s fixation on her sexuality, and implicitly concedes, like Waterhouse’s painting, that Ophelia is a sexual being. However, it does not render Ophelia a stereotype of passive, feminine, sexual availability. Austen’s illustrations insinuate a parallel between Ophelia and mermaids in respect of their tangible sexuality. They do this by including mermaid-like creatures, by causing Ophelia to resemble one (as I discuss below), and by repeatedly alluding to her (and their) sexuality.

Like nymphs and sirens, Ophelia, as a woman, has an affinity with (mother) nature. Austen’s illustrations draw out this motif. Sirens reside in the ocean, nymphs “inhabi[t] the sea, rivers […] woods, trees, etc.” (*OED* 1). Hamlet calls Ophelia a “Nymph,” and this is what she becomes, venturing into the forest, ascending a willow, and in death, merging with the water of a creek. Ophelia’s physical integration with nature is suggested by her nature-like attributes in Austen’s drawings, such as her reed-like hair on p. 144/235. Similarly, in a bronze bas-relief by (Sarah) Bernhardt dating to c.1890, the curls in Ophelia’s hair closely mirror the movement of the water. In Austen’s drawing “Ophelia Drowning” (p. 141/234), the two falling Ophelias have unnaturally elongated legs, creating the impression that Ophelia’s body will slip seamlessly underneath the water as if native to it. This bears comparison to Lucien Pissarro’s engraving (discussed in the previous chapter) and Young’s assessment of it: “she seems to have nowhere to go except forward into the brook at her feet” (2013, 329). Further, their slender legs denote the fragility of youth and the artist’s aesthetic preference — the fashion of Austen’s time preferred thin women.

As discussed in the previous chapter, albeit in regard to the “Midnight Ophelia” illustration, Austen’s drawing “Ophelia Drowning” also implies that Ophelia’s sexuality is mirrored by or incorporated into Mother Nature. The natural surrounds are sexually suggestive and a vulva-like leaf on a hanging branch or vine possessively masks Ophelia’s groin. Nature is commonly used as a metaphor for sexuality in the play: Ophelia’s bouquet contains species of flower associated with sex, while her country

maiden-appearance in the singing scene — grasping flowers, with hair unbound and a somewhat wild appearance — is often thought to imply sexual largesse.[160]

Also suggesting Ophelia's (and women's) almost supernatural affinity with nature, the artist's depiction of Ophelia drowning (p. 141) strikingly resembles Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* (1622–25; fig. 67) and *Rape of Proserpina* (1621–22; fig. 68). Given their fame, it is likely that Austen could have seen reproductions or representations of these works in London. Through making a connection between women and nature, Austen's imagery empowers Ophelia; her death is no longer the sentimentalised, "pathetic" one often preferred by Victorian artists and critics. Mirroring the female figures in the (aforementioned) sculptural works, Austen's falling figures curve their backs while one stretches upwards. Both manoeuvre their bodies as if trying to escape a man's grasp. Combining Ophelia's nymph-like immersion in water and Daphne's branch-like arms, the hands of the underwater female creatures portrayed on Claudius' throne (p. 95/231) resemble branches. While Daphne becomes a laurel tree, and Proserpina's (Persephone) abduction results in seasonal variation, Ophelia merges with a stream like a naiad. All three narratives imply a relationship between women and nature.

Fig. 67. Gian Lorenzo Bernini. *Apollo and Daphne.* 1622–25, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

[160] Recall Thomas Campion's poem 'I Care Not for These Ladies.' The first four lines run: "I care not for these ladies, / That must be wooed and prayed: / Give me kind Amaryllis, / The wanton country maid."

Fig. 68. Bernini. *The Rape of Proserpina*. 1621–22, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Indeed, Austen's depiction of Ophelia's death promotes the idea that it is as an empowering, symbolic transformation. Based on this reading, her demise liberates her from a male-dominated society, allowing her to coalesce with a powerful Mother Nature, represented, perhaps, by both the tireless momentum of intersecting female entities portrayed on the throne in the "Mousetrap" illustration, and their frequency in Austen's *Hamlet* illustrations more generally. Daphne's physical change likewise represents a liberation into nature from the world of men. Arnold Böcklin's Symbolist painting *Battle of the Centaurs* (1873; fig. 69) "symbolises the blind, brute force of nature" (Lucie-Smith 151), largely through the presence of mythological creatures.

Suggesting the power of mythological female figures, in Böcklin's painting depicting a mermaid and a triton entitled *Calm Sea* (1887; fig. 70), "[i]t is the mermaid who is shown as dominant; siren-like, she reposes on her rock, and gazes out at the spectator, while her male partner sinks impotently away into the depths" (Lucie-Smith 151–53). According to myth, nymphs were semi-divine, rendering Austen's Ophelia more powerful in the wake of her transformation. Another facet connecting Daphne, Persephone and Ophelia is threatened or nonliteral rape: Daphne narrowly escapes being raped, Persephone is abducted, while Ophelia is sexually threatened (and even symbolically raped, as I argue elsewhere) by Hamlet. Thus, their visual resemblance suggests that Austen was inspired partly by their overlapping narratives, and contribute to an impression of his Hamlet as being a sexual aggressor.

Fig. 69. Arnold Böcklin. *Battle of the Centaurs*. 1873, The Basel Art Museum, Switzerland.

Fig. 70. Böcklin. *Calm Sea*. 1887, Museum of Fine Arts Berne, Switzerland.

Returning to the subject of women's immersion in nature, Austen's "The Graveyard" drawing (p. 148/236) likewise implies that women are so bound to nature that they coalesce with it after death. The sky's ambiguous contents loosely suggest a canopy of leaves. The most clearly identifiable objects within this disordered mass are a skull and disembodied female faces. What look like long winding strands of hair occupy the top left of the picture plane, appearing to emanate from Ophelia's disembodied head. The trees pictured opposite are covered in small spherical shapes resembling fish eggs — recalling the pattern on Ophelia's dress in her first portrait image — suggesting either leaves or flowers. Daisies fan horizontally outwards in the air, resembling the lily pads suspended in water in Austen's depiction of Ophelia drowning. Collectively, these motifs, including the flowing hair, evoke water, recalling Ophelia's death, while also reflecting the underwater *femme fatale* imagery permeating the illustrations.

The disembodied female faces punctuating the air are interpretable either as women who have died and been subsumed by nature, or as forest sprites, Mother Nature's ethereal servants. Their expressions alternate between self-satisfied, resentful and peaceful. Some are old, with sunken eyes and weathered skin, while others are young and beautiful. Their diversity contrasts with an earlier illustration ("Ophelia Hallucinates") in which the faces are equally youthful; this suggests that here, these women represent individuals who have died

and become part of nature — their varied demeanours denoting, perhaps, their reactions to their deaths. Other possible interpretations are that firstly, they are forest sprites individually reacting to Ophelia's demise. Ophelia's incongruously large head, causing her to stand out, implies that she is a recent addition to their (potentially deceased) throng. Secondly, they may represent unrealised Ophelias, shown at various stages of her life (had she lived).

Austen's drawing imaginatively repurposes motifs found in Beardsley's images. The faces described above resemble those in Beardsley's illustration "Four Heads in Medieval Hats" (1892), in which four disembodied male faces of diverse ages, three of which have their eyes shut, wear a mixture of disgruntled and restful expressions. In Austen's drawing, the women are likewise separated into groups of three or four. Thus, the portrayal of these figures suggests Beardsley's influence. Meanwhile, Ophelia's manifest fury as she gazes at Hamlet causes her to resemble a disembodied creature in Beardsley's illustration "Of a neophyte and how the black art was revealed unto him by the fiend Asomvel" (mentioned previously). As in Austen's drawing, the head is female, inhumanly large, suspended in the air, and glaring intently at the human figure beneath it. Austen draws on Beardsley as a way of communicating Ophelia's ire and significance in the play, even after her death.

Ophelia's nudity in Austen's illustrations of her drowning or drowned (pp. 141/234 and 144/235) contribute to an impression of her as a supernatural, water-born creature. Ophelia's resemblance to a nymph in these images suggests that Hamlet seals Ophelia's fate by ambiguously calling her one and claiming that, like such a creature, she is sexually wanton and duplicitous. In Austen's figuration of Ophelia, Hamlet's perception of her is literally realised in the flesh, suggesting that the prince's condemnation of her precipitates and anticipates her death.

Although Austen ostensibly fetishises Ophelia's death by removing her attire, voyeurism is rendered problematic by not one but both illustrations. Aside from the reasons already discussed in relation to the "drowning" image (such as the jarring incongruity between a suffering, drowning Ophelia and the beautiful, falling figures), this is also due to the inhuman aspect of her appearance. In the "Ophelia Drowned" image (p. 144/235), her appearance rejects voyeuristic appreciation because it is asexual and alien. She is extremely slender, her breasts are barely apparent (although this is partly because she lies on her back), while her vagina is only tenuously implied.

Partially inhuman, Ophelia looks like a fish or supernatural creature. Despite her aquatic appearance, her nakedness increases the scene's pathos by suggesting her vulnerability when alive. In her initial portrait illustration (p. 29/225), a fish scale pattern is visible on the sleeves of her dress, while small clusters of what resemble fish eggs punctuate the pattern of her skirt.

The incongruity present in Austen's "drowning" image (p. 141/234), whereby three consecutive moments in time are presented, but only in an approximate sense (as a body would not fall diagonally and then land in water two metres away, only to then be suddenly clothed), suggests that, as Ophelia draws towards death, she enters a supernatural dimension where time and reality are altered. The fact that Austen's figures strike a profoundly unrealistic, leisurely, attractive pose, despite that they are falling, contribute to this impression. Paradoxically, Mother Nature preserves Ophelia by absorbing and annihilating her: absorbing her spirit and annihilating her body.

Ophelia Poisoned

By depicting nature's uncontrolled and uncontrollable fecundity, Austen's illustrations body forth Hamlet's detestation of female sexuality as "an unweeded garden; / Things rank and gross […] possess it merely" (1.2.135–36). The enduringly robust sexuality of Hamlet's mother, and the instability which it generates in his world, thwarting his hoped-for election, arguably prompts his revulsion toward nature's uncontrolled beauty. Based on this interpretation, Hamlet prefers patriarchal order and control, a preference which his mother's seemingly insuppressible sexuality strengthens. While this denotes his anxiety regarding the corruption which supposedly permeates Denmark, of which Claudius' election is an ostensible symptom, Hamlet implicitly prefers a symmetrical, topiaried Renaissance garden, representing a fantasy of patriarchal control in which, as Pope puts it, "Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother; / And half the platform just reflects the other" (*Epistle to Burlington*, 1731, 8). Hamlet's resentment at the "unweeded garden" represents his patriarchal anxiety over his inability to control Gertrude's (and Ophelia's) sexuality.

Hamlet's contempt for female sexuality is underscored by his ironic claim that "the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion" (2.2.181–82). He desires that

Ophelia remain "chaste as ice" (3.1.137) rather than "breed" — reproduction and contamination seeming to him inseparable. He would rather that Ophelia figuratively number among the lifeless statues in a Renaissance garden, than participate in reproduction as a warm-blooded creature. He calls her a "Nymph," confusingly both "a maiden inhabiting the sea" (see above; *OED*) and the apotheosis of unrestrained sexual enjoyment and procreation. In contrast, he also calls her 'beautified' in his letters to her (2.2.110), suggestive of objectification and her appearance being tightly controlled, as if she were an ornamental garden feature — when Polonius claims that this is an "ill phrase, a vile phrase" (110), he may not be far off the mark. The prince describes Ophelia as "metal more attractive" than his mother (3.2.108), dismissively objectifying both women in the one sentence.

Hamlet's belief in the corrupt nature of sexuality, and by extension, the play's evocation of toxic masculinity, is reflected in Austen's renderings of Ophelia mad, dead and dying: her demise is symbolically depicted as a metamorphosis, corrupted by Hamlet's poisonous psyche. Rather than becoming a naiad, she drowns, nature and by extension her mind having become infected. Given that *femmes fatales* represent a corrupted form of nature, the creatures pictured on Claudius' throne in the "Mousetrap" image may represent harshly transformed nymphs. This poisoning of nature has its source in the male protagonists: in Claudius, who "poisons [his brother] i' th' garden" (3.2.255), and in Hamlet — Claudius calls Ophelia's madness "the poison of deep grief; it springs / All from her father's death" (4.5.75–76). Most sinister of these male poisons is Laertes' nature-destroying "unction […] So mortal that […] no cataplasm so rare, / Collected from all simples that have virtue / Under the moon, can save the thing from death / That is but scratch'd withal" (4.7.139–45). A possible interpretation is that, given the close imaginative link between nature and the feminine in early modern culture,[161] Ophelia too is a victim of this "poison of patriarchy" — as is Gertrude in a more literal sense. Thus, the confused, writhing mass of sinuous, otherworldly figures on Claudius' throne may also denote Ophelia's psychological disorder and infected psyche. Moreover, suggesting nature's corrupting embrace, the branches encompassing

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[161] This goes back at least as far as Chaucer: "Nature hath with souereyn diligence Yformed hire in so greet excellence As thogh she wolde seyn, 'lo! I, nature, Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature.' ("Physician's Tale" 9, c. 1390). And contemporary with Shakespeare, see John Brereton: "Euen the most wooddy places […] doe grow so distinct and apart, one tree from another, vpon greene grassie ground […] as if Nature would shew herselfe aboue her power, artificiall" (*Briefe Relation Discouerie Virginia* 8, 1602).

Ophelia on p. 141/234 ("Ophelia Drowning") enviously caress her skin, while on p. 116/233 ("Ophelia Hallucinates"), fey women entrap her in the wild, imbuing her mind with madness. In this way, Hamlet's diseased perception of Mother Nature may be discretely implied.

Likewise, lying across Nemesis' lap, Ophelia's mermaid-like corpse in the image on p. 144 ("Ophelia Drowned") may signify that a malignant, supernatural force, an extension of Claudius' and possibly Hamlet's pernicious influence, has consumed her: her transformation may be symptomatic of "Something [...] rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.90). Ophelia's long hair evokes reeds or tentacles. Equally dehumanising, a flower rests in place of her right ear. Also suggesting that Ophelia's insanity reflects tainted nature, in Austen's illustration of her drowning, the hair of all three figures resemble reeds, as does that of the spirit women in the "Ophelia Hallucinates" illustration who witness or perhaps induce her madness.

Even the flowers in Ophelia's garland in the play are poisonous, being toxic, otherwise noxious, or obscene (as discussed in the previous chapter). Recalling Hamlet's scathing description of Denmark's corruption, they are all kinds of "weed," "rank" or "gross" "in nature," such as the "long purples, / That liberal shepherds give a grosser name" (4.7.168-89)). Ophelia's "weeds" ironically recall mourning attire (a 'widow's weeds'), appropriate given that she loses her father because of Hamlet and is also violently rejected by him.

Hamlet's poisoning Ophelia with words and actions evokes Claudius' poisoning of Old Hamlet through "the porches of [his] ears" (1.5.63), recalling, according to Christian iconography, Eve's figurative insemination by Satan's words. Wilson Knight was later to (unintentionally) confirm Austen's insight, describing Hamlet's "cynicism" as a "deadly and venomous thing [...] a poison in the midst of the healthy bustle of the court," likewise painting Hamlet as snake-like. Hamlet's psychological corruption of Ophelia, beginning with his invasion of her chamber, arguably resembles Claudius enacting a figurative rape, forcing his way past a threshold to harm his victim. Both can be taken to represent a form of masculine domination.

Marking the onset of Hamlet's wayward and often capricious behaviour, his penetration of Ophelia's closet (*OED* 1a: "A private or secluded room; an inner chamber"), which symbolises her psychological and bodily interior, suggests the invasion and subsequent

tainting of her mind and body. He menaces Ophelia and drives her towards madness — Claudius is not the only one with a psychologically corrupting influence. Prior to Hamlet entering Ophelia's closet, she has "repell[ed]" his letters (2.2.146), demonstrating a clear reluctance towards receiving romantic attention or even seeing him at all. Despite this, he enters the only private space where she is free from the controlling desires of men. Critics have often commented on the barely masked sexual innuendo contained within this scene. Ophelia reports that Hamlet "comes before [her]" partially clothed, "his doublet all unbrac'd, / No hat upon his head, his stockings […] / Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ankle" (2.1.84; 78–80). 'Coming' and undress are sexually suggestive. Evoking penetration, Ophelia's "sewing" (77) takes place in a private enclosed space. She reports that Hamlet

> took me by the wrist and held me hard.
> […] falls to such perusal of my face
> As a would draw it. Long stay'd he so.
> At last […]
> He rais'd a sigh […]
> As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
> And end his being. That done, he lets me go
>
> (87; 90–92; 94–96)

all of which suggests a metaphorical rape. Adding to the impression of threatened sexual violence, Ophelia's closet is a private interior with only one exit, evoking a vagina or womb. Psychological themes are unusually prominent in Austen's drawings, reflecting their centrality in *Hamlet*. Symbolism's focus on human interiority partly explains the artist's evocation of its heavily emblematic style.

Ophelia: Madness Meets the Supernatural

Symbolism's insistence on psychological themes may also partially account for Austen's emphasis on both Ophelia and Hamlet's mental instability, discussed throughout these chapters. Symbolism routinely engaged with mental illness in its artistic expression, assumedly "because it [wa]s a movement whose essence derive[d]

from the importance of the unconscious, the uncontrollable and irrational part of the human inner world" (Neginsky 2017, xii).[162]

Austen's illustration of Ophelia losing her sanity ("Ophelia Hallucinates") implies that her madness anticipates her transformation into a nymph-like creature, interpreted literally as her drowning. As in previous drawings in the edition, this image presents — rather than an actual scene, one which actually occurs in the play — an imagined one. Echoing the illustration of Hamlet's mad appearance before Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildernstern, an assembly of (this time female) faces surround Ophelia as she trespasses through the wilderness, several of whom gape as if calling to her, filling her mind with lunacy.

The visual combination of flowers, overwhelming darkness, and sinister nymphs/spirits in this illustration reflect Hamlet's description of Denmark as a "rank" garden, (again) suggesting disordered nature "Corrupting in it own fertility" (*H5* 5.2.40). While abundant flowers might ordinarily seem out of place in such an ominous context, Ophelia's flowers are manifestly sinister in the play, especially those which she carries in her "garlands" before she drowns (4.7.167).[163] Their presence in this image of her walking in the forest anticipates the flowers Ophelia conveys to other characters in the castle; that she is in a garden or forest in the drawing suggests that she is gathering them in preparation. Further, that Ophelia is shown succumbing to insanity in this environment implies that in the play, her mind irretrievably wanders while walking through the woods. This likewise suggests that her descent into madness is followed by her transformation into a nymph, a woodland creature.

The nymph-like creatures and their pitch-black surrounds may also represent the inhospitable interior of Ophelia's unstable mind, further indicating that it is not only Hamlet's psychology which Austen's imagery strives to represent. Mirroring the preceding illustration of Hamlet (p. 71/229), the image background presents a stark contrast of darkness and light, evoking Horatio's ominous description: "the moist star / [...] / Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse" (1.1.121, 23). Like in the illustration of Hamlet on p. 42/227, shadows encompass or 'eclipse' Ophelia, suggesting that she is

[162] See the collection of essays titled *Mental Illness in Symbolism* (2017), edited by Rosina Neginsky.

[163] See 'Ophelia: A New Autonomy' chapter for discussion of this.

made 'sick' by the moral disease — or Hamlet's/his uncle's contamination — which consumes Denmark. The claustrophobic proximity of the white circle containing the scene's title also calls to mind Othello's claim that the moon "comes more nearer earth than she was wont / And makes men mad" (5.2.109–111).

The link between the moon, madness, poison and sickness is evident in *Hamlet* as well as Austen's drawings, pointing to inspiration derived from his readerly imagination. It is suggested by Laertes "anoint[ing his] sword" with

> an unction of a mountebank
> So mortal that but dip a knife in it,
> Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
> Collected from all simples that have virtue
> Under the moon, can save the thing from death
> That is but scratch'd withal. I'll touch my point
> With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
> It may be death.
>
> (4.7.139–147)

The early moderns believed that magical herbs were at their most potent during the full moon,[164] accounting for the enduring association between full moons and witches. Given that Ophelia is collecting flowers and weeds by moonlight in preparation for her friends at the castle, this associates her with female wisdom and healing magic. Her disclosure of uncomfortable truths is an attempted salve, seeking to heal fractured, hypocritical relationships. But this news is resisted through incomprehension, and much like the village witch, patriarchal suspicion contributes to her watery demise. Indeed, Gertrude draws attention to Ophelia's temporary floating — evoking the early modern method of detecting witchcraft.[165] Laertes' evocation of witchcraft is appropriate given that Claudius has corrupted him. Initially he courageously storms the castle, seeking justice for his dead father

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[164] Jenkins, *Hamlet*, n. 144.

[165] King James himself had recently praised the "floating-test" or *judicium aquae frigidae* as "a supernaturall signe of the monstruous impietie of the Witches, that the water shal refuse to receiue them in her bosom" (*Daemonologie* (1597), Bk III, ch. vi); *Daemonologie* was to be an important source for the witches in *Macbeth*). It is significant, therefore, that Ophelia is vindicated by being finally accepted as "a creature native and indued / Unto that element" of water (4.7.178–79).

in stereotypically heroic fashion, but through Claudius' rhetoric is persuaded to exact vengeance via a deceptive and dishonest method. Laertes also associates the moon and poison with "contagion," suggesting that, from a patriarchal perspective, Ophelia has become 'infected' (like Denmark) and thus mentally sick.[166]

The "Ophelia Hallucinates" drawing provides a supernatural, disturbing picture of her brewing insanity. Dots decorate her cheeks, suggesting flushed skin. It is disturbingly ambiguous whether her eyes are open or shut — whether we are looking at pale eyelids or the whites of eyes rolled back. Coupled with a vacant expression and backwards-tilted head, this makes her appear bewitched. Despite seeming to stare vacantly as if impervious to her surroundings, Ophelia's reclining head suggests that she listens to the figures around her. Their open mouths and the flowers in their long winding hair signify her descent into madness and the singing which accompanies it. Her lips are parted and her hair is almost obscured by flowers: in this regard, she resembles these surrounding figures. Likewise, the hair of the latter fans outwards as if submerged in water; similarly, Ophelia's tresses are long and winding like seaweed, anticipating her drowning.

These women may be nymphs hoping to entice Ophelia into joining their ranks with song. Her open mouth suggests that she responds in kind, while anticipating the "snatches of old lauds" she continues to "chant" when drowning (4.7.176). To the lower left, one of the women appears to be falling backwards, arms outstretched as if for assistance. In conjunction with her naked body, this foreshadows Ophelia's fall into the water, shown in Austen's drawing of Ophelia drowning. Bending backwards to an inhuman degree, the nymph-like figure is evidently supernatural. Her posture can be read as inviting Ophelia into a dangerous embrace — one from which, if taken to symbolise the clutches of insanity, she may never extricate herself.

Although highly original, this depiction of Ophelia's madness has its influences. Discussed in the previous chapter, a 1775 engraving by Mortimer likewise presents a

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[166] In its abhorrence of female power of any kind, patriarchal commentary tended to confuse and conflate the healing herbs of the village wise-woman with the *maleficium* of a witch.

disturbing depiction of her insanity.[167] Her eyes are wide and staring, her pupils small pinpoints in pale, sickly-looking irises; her lips part slightly as if in song, or as if her mouth is slack or gaping slightly. Mortimer captures a look of psychological vacancy with startling realism. Despite the comparatively pared back detail of Austen's Ophelia, symptomatic of the artist's highly stylistic aesthetic, her madness is nearly as disturbing, head rolling back as if unconscious of her surroundings, eyes (whether open or closed) without pupils, and lips parted in a manner suggestive of mental vacancy and mad song. Although lacking madness, Gordon's *Ophelia* of 1885 (see previous chapter) also resembles Austen's.[168] This Ophelia has hair falling down her back and over her shoulders, her locks are threaded with flowers, her eyes are bright and imploring, and her full lips are parted slightly as if in speech. That she appears more psychologically stable signifies Gordon's reluctance to emphasise the gravity of her situation. Although madness, whether aestheticized and/or dramatized, was crucial to nineteenth-century stage and artistic depictions of Ophelia, in a few rare instances, it was not the sole identifying factor. Ophelia was, at times, cast as a sorceress or prophetic muse.

Ophelia: Sorceress, Prophetic Muse or Both?

The nineteenth-century perception of the disturbing power of Shakespearean actresses when in strong female roles likely influenced Austen's depiction of Ophelia as a partial *femme fatale*. As Duncan observes, journalists in this period described "the star [actress] as a siren" (2). In her role as Rosalind in *As You Like It,* Madge Kendal was "bewitching" and "indescribably captivating […] with all the spontaneous naturalness and cultivated art of one of our most charming actresses" (*Penny Illustrated Paper,* 27 February 1875). Terry made Lady Macbeth "beautiful and bewitching," "fragile and [yet] feline," "a siren in place of a virago" ("London Correspondence," *Freeman's Journal,* 31 December 1888, 133; Pennyng 1889, 8) (see fig. 71). These Victorian reviewers hint at sexual allure ("bewitching," "feline," "siren"), but are reluctant or perhaps unable to voice it explicitly.

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[167] Mortimer also designed the image, which was one of a set of twelve engravings entitled *Shakspeare's Characters* (held in the Folger Shakespeare library). Engravers continued to reproduce the latter for book illustrations after its conception (Young 2002, 312).

[168] Exhibited in 1885 at the Society of British Artist's exhibition (Young 2002, 314).

That the actress was considered a "siren" rather than a "virago" suggests that dangerous sexual allure was a prominent aspect of her performance. This description also implies that, despite Lady Macbeth's reputation as a *Weibermacht* figure, Terry's performance was not especially warrior-like. Suggesting the opposite, however, Duncan notes that these actresses' "performances [including Terry's] could be overpowering" (2). Constance Benson's Katherine (*The Taming of the Shrew*) was sufficiently fierce that Max Beerbohm was unnerved by such a "malevolent being" and fought the urge to cry out "Don't" when she menaced Bianca with a pin (1901, 320). Arthur Symons sensed "'almost a kind of obscure sensation of peril'" when observing Bernhardt in the role. She "tears the words with her teeth, and spits them out of her mouth, like a wild beast ravening upon prey" (1903, 27–30). These descriptors are reminiscent of a sorceress, a kind of *femme fatale,* notwithstanding that they also allude to sirens, another strain of dangerous, empowered female. Similarly, Austen's "Midnight" portrait of Ophelia on p. 127/234 (discussed in 'Ophelia: A New Autonomy') casts her as almost 'ferocious' and 'malevolent,' gazing threateningly at the viewer, while the illustration of her drowning, eroticised and seductive, casts her as a 'bewitching' 'siren.'

Fig. 71. John Singer Sargent. *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth.* 1889, Tate Gallery, London.

Another trope associated with Ophelia in the Victorian period was that of a sacrificial, muse-like figure. Contrasting with the motif of the sorceress, however, this presented an impression of feminine vulnerability and weakness, rather than "New Woman"

empowerment. The following images share an impression of the artists' having paid attention to prophetic foreshadowing and sacrificial themes in the play. As discussed in the "Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship" chapter, Austen's drawing of a dead Ophelia lying across Nemesis' lap ("Ophelia Drowned"; p. 144/235) evokes a Gothic *pietà,* casting her as a Christ-like sacrifice. Markedly different from other images of the same period, an engraving by Francesco Bartolezzi after a design by Henry Tresham (1794; fig. 72) portrays Ophelia about to fall into the brook, while three women reminiscent of classical figures reside on the far bank, two of whom raise their arms in distress as they witness the horror unfolding; Young suggests that these figures represent the three Fates (2002, 328), implying that Ophelia is a kind of sacrificial muse. Another example of this motif can be found in an unsigned wood engraving included in Jameson's *Characteristics of Women* (1832), discussed previously. Three figures representing the Fates stand over Ophelia's prone form, their arms outstretched. Austen's three Ophelias in "Ophelia Drowning" seemingly allude to the same trope, implying, perhaps, that her death presages the disintegration of Denmark's court. These allusions to the three Fates recall Horatio's macabre imagining: "harbingers preceding still the *fates* / […] prologue to the omen coming on" (my emphasis).

Fig. 72. Francesco Bartolezzi. Engraving of Ophelia, after a design by Henry Tresham. 1794, published in London. Held in the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Indicating that Austen may have been influenced by Tresham in particular, the bare arms and breasts of Austen's Ophelia in the initial forest scene ("Ophelia Drowning") mirror that found in Tresham's. Fuseli's drawing of a dying Ophelia can also be compared to Austen's, given that it repeats this motif. Fuseli's Ophelia also resembles Austen's in "Ophelia Drowning": in both instances, Ophelia's body is elongated and her right arm aspires upwards over her head — she has just attempted to

"hang" the garlands, only to have "an envious sliver" break (4.7.172).[169] As discussed in the chapter "Diabolical Influences," artistic parallels between their depictions of Hamlet and the Ghost likewise imply that Austen was inspired by Fuseli.

Austen's illustration "Ophelia Drowning" implies that Ophelia is a sorceress, empowered by her death and immersion in Mother Nature. This impression co-exists with the fear and vulnerability suggested by the appearance of the drowning figure, underscoring the complexity of Ophelia's character. The lower figure extends an arm and hand forebodingly, reminiscent of the sorceress topos of the Shakespearean actress. Fingers pointed, this recalls traditional portrayals of sorceresses casting spells, such as in the case of Bertram Mackennal's bronze sculpture *Circe* (1893; fig. 73). Pre-dating Austen's work by approximately three decades, this was exhibited at the Paris Salon and in London as a plaster, and so may have influenced Austen's portrayal of Ophelia. Similarly, Fuseli's *The Weird Sisters* (c.1783; fig. 74) shows the witches with arms outstretched like crooked branches, several fingers ominously extended. Austen's drawing may also visually reference female magic because of Shakespeare's frequent allusion to the feminine supernatural — partly inspired by witch trials — such as the witches in *Macbeth*.

Fig. 73. Bertram Mackennal. *Circe*. 1893, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

[169] This was drawn sometime between 1770 and 1778 while Fuseli was staying in Italy. It is a brush drawing with grey wash over pencil.

Fig. 74. Fuseli, *The Weird Sisters*. 1783, Zürich Kunsthaus, Zürich.

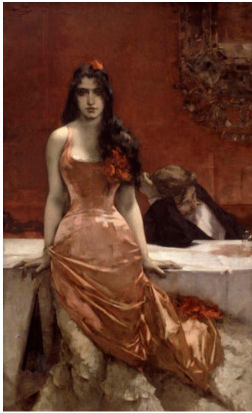
Circe's inclusion in a number of Symbolist works suggests another possible influence on Austen's Ophelia. Circe became a popular motif in the nineteenth-century visual arts in general, as demonstrated by works such as a photograph by Julia Margaret Cameron titled *Circe* (1865; fig. 75) and Charles Hermans' painted *Circe the Temptress* (1881; fig. 76). Lévy-Dhurmer produced at least three Circes, all in 1897, while French artist Gustav Mossa painted one in 1908.[170] Waterhouse likewise depicted Circe.[171] Austen's allusion to sorcery not only empowers Ophelia but contributes to a representation of her as a seductive *femme fatale*.

Fig. 75. Julia Margaret Cameron. Model: Kate Keown. *Circe*. 1865, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 76. Charles Hermans. 'Circe the Temptress.' 1881, Private Collection.

[170] Lévy-Dhurmer's were titled *La Magicienne Circé* and *La Sorcière*. Mossa's was titled *Circe*, of which there is also a sketch.

[171] He painted *The Magic Circle* (1886), *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* (1891), *Circe Invidiosa* (1892), and *The Sorceress* (c.1911).



The apparent eroticism of Austen's falling figures recalls that typical of *Weibermacht* figures in visual art, such as Salome, Judith and Circe (whose sorcery was allegorised in the early modern period as representing the power of women to enslave men through desire). Circe has been eroticised in painting from as early as in the High Renaissance/Mannerist period, such as in Dosso Dossi's *Circe and her Lovers* (c.1525; fig. 77) and Bartholomeus Spranger's *Ulysses and Circe* (1580–85; fig. 78). Implying a link between feminine sorcery and unrestrained sexuality, the pedestal of Mackennal's *Circe* displays numerous naked figures partaking in an orgy. Similarly, Henrietta Rae's *Ophelia* resembles an erotic enchantress: drawing attention to her figure, her body twists like a snake,[172] a girdle flatteringly cinches her dress at the waist, and the bodice of her dress clings enticingly to her breasts and stomach. As mentioned, paired with her sexualised appearance, her direct gaze at Claudius and Gertrude invokes the Victorian assumption that a woman's prolonged scrutiny denotes a sexual invitation. That they recoil in response suggests that her prominent sexuality is disturbing. Ophelia's tangled, flower adorned hair calls to mind a forest witch. In conjunction with the royal couple's reaction, her erratic hairstyle, dominating pose and, like Austen's Ophelia in the "drowning" image, outstretched hand as if casting a spell, also contributes to an impression of her as a sorceress. It is perhaps unsurprising that Claudius and Gertrude appear frightened by her power. This impression of magical potency is especially strong in Austen's illustration of Ophelia drowning: in addition to Ophelia's sorceress-like gesture, the figures (as mentioned) seem to occupy a supernatural dimension, as the image conveys three consecutive moments in time.

[172] As discussed in the 'Ophelia: A New Autonomy' chapter.

Fig. 77. Dosso Dossi. *Circe and Her Lovers in a Landscape*. c. 1525, National Gallery of Art, Washington.

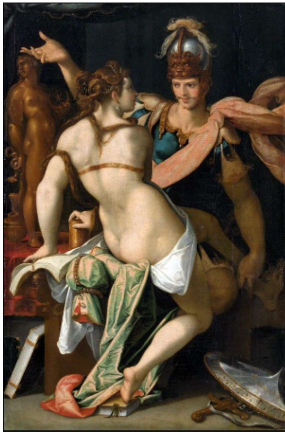


Fig. 78. Bartholomeus Spranger. *Ulysses and Circe*. 1580–85, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Suggesting that Ophelia's ethereal Victorian persona influenced Austen's somewhat mystical depiction of her, Terry's Ophelia was perceived as a sybil-like figure. The actress' first performance in the role at the Lyceum with Henry Irving in 1878 inspired George Frederic Watts to rework his painting of Terry as Ophelia (fig. 79), so that she appeared more fairy-like and ethereal.[173] Auerbach describes the impression Terry had on audiences and painters alike in prophetic terms, while, notably, alluding to *femmes fatales*:

> Terry never bared her breasts; […] Yet her Ophelia transmitted hidden symbols and prophecies. From the myths of Romanticism to Watt's dark obsessions and the fascinated psychologizing of *fin de siècle* sophisticates, Ophelia's self-transfiguring madness was more appealing than Hamlet's portentous soliloquizing. Mad, Ophelia bore the trumpet of prophecy; drowning, she mingled mystic words with familiar ones, joining a host of compelling hybrid women, water nixies, mermaids, lamias, serpent women, and Undines, who haunted

[173] The second image was painted around 1879 and resembles a Window & Grove carte-de-visite photograph of Terry in the role during her first Lyceum season. The first was created in 1863–64 and shown at the 1878 Grosvenor Gallery exhibition.

Victorian dreams of a new dispensation.

(241)

Auerbach takes notice of the Victorian obsession with female, supernatural creatures, observing that Ophelia's ethereal nature caused her to be numbered among them. Her belief in Ophelia's virtual transmogrification ("joining a host of compelling hybrid women, water nixies, mermaids") fits Ophelia's appearance in Austen's drawings. Incidentally, lamias are serpent women, a Symbolist motif—"snaky monsters […] *femmes fatales*" (Lucie-Smith 78)—recalling the creatures shown on Claudius' throne in the "Mousetrap" image, the King's femininity and resemblance to a snake, and finally, enchantresses.

Fig. 79. Watts. Painting of Ellen Terry as Ophelia. 1878, Private Collection.

Austen's depiction of Ophelia as bare-breasted in general reflects stereotypical depictions of prophetic muses. In observing that Terry carried a sexualised and mystical aura regardless of her covered breasts, Auerbach refers to the fact that prophetic muses were traditionally portrayed as bare-breasted. Victorian convention would have prevented Terry from doing anything so daring as to expose herself onstage — not that the actress would have wanted to anyway, given English standards of propriety. However, Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* artists were not bound by the same degree of societal restraints that actors were — although models were not entirely unrestricted in this regard either. Further, granting Austen greater artistic freedom than his predecessors and contemporaries, his drawing style is only loosely mimetic; this allowed him to include nudity in a wider range of contexts than in the more naturalistic works of his peers. He had no need of a model. However, bare breasts are not a necessity in implying that Ophelia is a muse-like figure.

Austen's first portrait of Ophelia (p. 29/225) creates an impression of her as a prophetess, regardless of the fact that her breasts are covered. Given that the early moderns believed that the stars' alignment determined human fortune, those pictured in Ophelia's hair may point to her role as a doomed, prophetic (Cassandra-esque) figure — as the sounder of Auerbach's "trumpet of prophecy." Simultaneously evoking Ophelia's madness, "star" may also mean the moon.[174] Consequently, this visual motif ostensibly implies that Ophelia's mental collapse foreshadows the disintegration of the court. It is interpretable that Austen's portrayal of Ophelia as a muse not only draws on this metaphor in the play, but ironically reflects that Hamlet rejects his vague, ultimately accurate, premonition.

Hamlet misogynistically dismisses his "female" sense of foreboding: "Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart; but it is no matter […] It is but foolery […] such a kind of gaingiving as would perhaps trouble a woman" (5.2.208–9; 211–12); he rejects his half-formed premonitions, much like he rejects Ophelia, suggesting that this is what she (partly) represents. However ironically, this half-formed premonition turns out to be entirely justified, underscoring his fundamentally misguided misogyny. His "ill" feeling "about [his] heart" becomes his literal poisoning from an "envenom'd blade" (5.2.323). Hamlet's reluctance to acknowledge his feminine side and rejection of all things (and persons) female may partly account for Nemesis' prominence in Austen's illustrations, thereby highlighting the suppression of the feminine in the play.

Nemesis: I Am Woman

Inciting the events of the play, Nemesis becomes a central character in Austen's interpretation. The artist foregrounds the importance of female characters as catalysts, despite their appearing relegated to the play's background — Nemesis' centrality in Austen's imagery is symptomatic of this. Gertrude and Ophelia's sexuality is both prominent and problematised in Austen's illustrations, reflecting Hamlet's fixation with

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[174] "In wider use: any celestial object visible in the sky in the day or night, including the sun, moon, and planets" (*OED* 2). For example, Bernardo speaks of the "star" which illuminated his first encounter with the Ghost, and seems likely to do so again (1.1.39–41).

it. The Queen's sexuality partly instigates and drives the plot. The timing of the Ghost's intervention suggests that it is prompted less by the murder than by Gertrude's remarriage, particularly as it aggressively insists that the prince prevent further "incest." The Queen's supposedly aberrant sexuality also provokes Hamlet's emotional outbursts when confronted with women. He and the Ghost treat her sexuality as deeply problematic to the extent that they are partially obsessed by it.[175] Suggesting a possible influence, only a year before Austen's edition was published, T.S. Eliot claimed in "Hamlet and his Problems" that *Hamlet* failed as drama because it lacked an "objective correlative" (1928, 100): "Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem. Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but […] his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelops and exceeds her" (101). Nemesis (or Vengeance) is as prominent a figure in Hamlet's thinking as his mother is. Freud's ideas were increasing circulation when Austen illustrated *Hamlet*, so it is reasonable to expect evidence of Freud's influence in Austen's Symbolic, psychological imagery.

As explored in "Diabolical Influences," Austen's illustrations depict the Ghost as Nemesis' agent. This contributes to the impression that Hamlet's acts on Nemesis' as well as the Ghost's behalf, seeking vengeance in her name. It also prompts the viewer to consider Hamlet's degree of success in this role, particularly as he harms characters other than Claudius. Accordingly, in the "DP" image (p. 5/224), Nemesis is shown inviting the spirit into the play to obtain the justice she considers due on the Ghost's behalf. Her horizontally extended left arm delineates the top third of the illustration; in conjunction with the pyramidal arrangement of figures and her vivid white attire, contrasting with the black background, this causes her arm to form the image's vanishing point. Immediately drawing our eyes to where she pulls back the curtain to

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[175] It is true that, as Dorothea Kehler points out, "Pernicious clichés about widows (but not widowers) are found in polemics, household manuals, and plays of the period and can be explained politically, in that, of the socially endorsed roles available to women—maid, wife, widow—the last is most perplexing for patriarchal theory. [...] widowhood is problematic […] because she may remarry, thus, some would say, cuckolding her former husband(s), albeit belatedly. In consequence, remarrying widows are liable to be figured as 'lusty widows'" (399–400). Nevertheless, great writers are not bound by clichés, and the "lusty widow" *topos* cannot normalise Hamlet's and the Ghost's strange fixation any more than in *The Duchess of Malfi* it can justify Ferdinand's pathological obsession with his sister's remarriage.

reveal the Ghost, this arrangement suggests that her introduction of the spirit into the play is the most significant element in the illustration's narrative.

Nemesis' head is the same size as the grotesque masks to either side of the image, while the same tassels descend from her temples. Paired with her black or simply hollow eyes, matching theirs, this casts her as potentially monstrous while also implying that she wears a mask, or that her intentions are hidden from the characters — eyes being popularly described as the window to the soul. In the illustration concluding 5.2 ("The Rest is Silence"; p. 173/237), Nemesis removes a mask as she looks down at Hamlet, who seems to be gazing back in horror. As mentioned in the 'Dark Prince' chapter, if his staring eyes denote remaining consciousness, this suggests his realisation that the goddess of vengeance has driven the play's events and avenged not just Claudius' damnable deeds but Hamlet's.

Another indication of women's implicit centrality in *Hamlet* is that the prince's encounter with the Ghost leads to Ophelia's insanity and consequent death. This encourages vigilant audiences to keep her at the forefront of their minds, regardless of her actual presence during, or awareness of, the play's events. Ophelia's madness is one of the most memorable tragedies of the play — it serves as a foil to Hamlet's, but his is a weak echo of hers. Despite Ophelia's ignorance of Hamlet's ill-fated meeting with his mother in her closet, the outcome (his murder of Polonius) precipitates her psychological decline. Hamlet's lewd abrasiveness in the mousetrap scene and cruelty in the nunnery scene seem destined to do the same. By way of contrast, his feigned insanity anticipates and amplifies Ophelia's own. The Ghost speaks of "Lethe wharf" (1.5.33), concerned that Hamlet will forget to avenge it. However, this also anticipates Ophelia's drowning in a brook. She has ample cause to desire that her life on earth be wiped from her memory. This is suggested by the possibility that her death is a suicide, and implied by her insanity, which points to an inability or unwillingness to confront both harsh events and her resulting predicament as a female orphan. As discussed in 'Hamlet and Ophelia's Relationship,' Austen's illustrations imply that Nemesis participates in Ophelia's fate, albeit in regard to Hamlet.

In these drawings, Nemesis' presence and its implication for Hamlet's implied thinking is pervasive. Her likeness is also found in smaller, less obvious figures. In the images where

the Ghost looms portentously over Hamlet ('Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost (p. 46/228) and "Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure" (p. 51/229)), the handle of the Ghost's sword portrays a naked winged woman, suggesting multiple overlapping meanings. She may signify the symbolic unity of Nemesis — traditionally shown winged, grasping a sword — and the Ghost, the spirit bearing Vengeance as its insignia. Further, given that the figure is shown on a sword, she could also represent Hamlet's sublimated sexual desire, transitioning from romantic interest in Ophelia to a preoccupation with revenge. Lastly, she conveys the centrality of Hamlet and the Ghost's anxiety regarding feminine sexuality to the play's narrative. These respective impressions are reinforced by the winged figure's proximity to Hamlet's head, suggesting that Gertrude's problematic sexuality and the Ghost's related demand for revenge dominate his thinking, as indeed evidenced by the play.

Ophelia's visual association with Nemesis in Austen's drawing empowers her. The implied parallel between these figures is interpretable as their representing Hamlet's powerful feminine opposite. Because Nemesis traditionally is portrayed as a beautiful woman carrying a whip (and/or sword, scales or measuring rod), the whip Ophelia holds in the illustration on p. 29/225 (her "Sane Portrait") may imply that she, not just the prince, is Nemesis' agent. This suggests that Hamlet as well as Claudius is an object of intended vengeance. Interpreted with regard to Jungian theory, Nemesis can be considered Hamlet's rejected anima, traditionally symbolised in dreams as an evil old witch — it seems intuitive that a woman (Ophelia) should be her representative. When a healthy anima, represented in dreams as a beautiful wise young woman (such as Ophelia), is ignored, it becomes angry and destructive towards its host. For example, Lady Macbeth and her husband deny their feminine qualities of compassion, leading to catastrophic psychological consequences: she loses her sanity and Macbeth, his humanity. In *Hamlet*, the prince rejects his feminine qualities, while Nemesis haunts and will ultimately destroy him.[176] Showalter also presents an interpretation of the play (which she ultimately dismisses, as there can be no individual "true Ophelia," save for "a Cubist Ophelia of multiple perspectives" (79; 91)) which casts Ophelia as Hamlet's anima. This is because Ophelia is able to vocalise what Hamlet cannot, due to

[176] In Spencer's *Faerie Queene*, the Red Knight turns from Una — in the false belief that she has betrayed him — to Duessa the witch, who is secretly an evil crone. Needless to say, this causes serious issues for the knight.

patriarchal constraints and deep-seated inhibitions which result. Ophelia's whip carries an additional significance, contributing to an impression of her as a prophetess.

Arguably, Ophelia's whip casts her not just as Nemesis' — and possibly Fate's — agent, but implies that she is their muse. Auerbach imagines the impression Terry's performances made on audiences as "transmit[ing] hidden symbols and prophecies," evoking the motif of the 'muse'; likewise, in Ophelia's portrait image (p. 29/225), the whip is a foreboding symbol, prophesying Hamlet's downfall. In the "DP" drawing, Nemesis' right arm and Ophelia's body provide diagonals which not only organise the composition into diagonal thirds but produce a mirroring effect, underscoring their symbolic connection. By determining the outcome of mortal wrongdoing, Nemesis embodies one aspect of Fate, suggesting that the "DP" illustration indirectly links Ophelia to Fate. In the closet scene, the whip hanging off Hamlet's leg implies that he is also figuratively (and literally) tied to Nemesis, albeit in the erroneous belief that he acts as her agent of vengeance. Austen insinuates that Ophelia and Hamlet perform contrasting roles as arbiters of justice. Hamlet is self-deceived, his increasingly immoral behaviour making him a thorn in Nemesis' side. Ophelia, however, is an unspotted victim, justified in desiring recompense. Driven by misguided vengeance and misogyny, Hamlet decimates their relationship.

Death and Disease: Hamlet's Take on Romance

Austen's depiction of Gertrude and Ophelia as overtly sexualised and wearing decadent, perhaps even party, attire reflects not only Hamlet's unrelenting focus on their sexuality, and (related) criticism of fickle women and Denmark's supposed over-consumption, but early modern and nineteenth-century concerns regarding prostitution, excessive sensual indulgence and resulting disease. This in turn reflects the increasing popularity of *femmes fatales* in art and literature in the Victorian era, influenced by the spread of tuberculosis in Europe and England in the nineteenth century. More precisely, Austen's overtly sexualised rendering of the play's female characters reflects the widespread anxiety regarding the perceived relationship between prostitution and venereal disease, in London and Paris, in this period.

Braun observes that "harsh medical exams were imposed in the 1860s on prostitutes, who were considered the sole cause of the venereal disease epidemic in Victorian London" (95).[177] "The literary femme fatale became symptomatic of such fears" (95); "[b]y the second half of the [nineteenth-]century, parallel epidemics of prostitution, pornography, and venereal disease emerged in fictional works depicting *femmes fatales* who were eventually punished for their deviant acts of seduction" (2). As discussed, Ophelia is 'extravagantly dressed' in Austen's first portrait of her (p. 29/225), as is Gertrude when pictured in the closet scene (p. 105/232). Throughout the edition, both characters possess any combination of beauty spots, heavily made up faces, ornate hair arrangements, exposed breasts emphasised by corsetry, sumptuously patterned attire, and large decorative earrings. They resemble courtesans.

A prostitute's sexuality is objectified, controlled, commodified, and essentially without agency, thus appealing to a deeply patriarchal mindset. Austen's sexually explicit, objectifying depiction of Gertrude and Ophelia suggests that this is Hamlet's simplistic perception of these women, as he desires to control their sexuality. The images may be interpreted as reflecting only Hamlet's objectifying view of women, which perhaps is why we are not tempted to read the illustrations as Austen's direct commentary upon these characters.

[177] Thus, there were "controversies of the 1860s and 1870s regarding the long-term effect of prostitution and venereal disease" (Braun 57).

Despite this visual emphasis on the women's sexual duplicity, the artist's illustrations also, paradoxically, link prostitution to *femmes fatales*, creatures in possession of significant autonomy and self-determination. This evokes Hamlet's anxiety surrounding female sexual agency. Similarly, in stage production, characters are often realised as Hamlet perceives them: for example, Claudius has often been represented as openly lecherous.[178]

The implied association between *Hamlet*'s women and prostitution in Austen's drawings also reflects that the play, through Hamlet, repeatedly emphasises the link between sexuality and disease. Prevalent in Europe during the Renaissance, syphilis seems to be reflected in Old Hamlet's disease-like symptoms when poisoned, having been symbolically 'penetrated' and 'inseminated' by his brother: like a diseased tree, his skin forms a "crust," a "lazar-like" "bark" (1.5.71–72). Similarly, associating sex with death and decay, Hamlet obliquely disparages Ophelia, questioning Polonius: "For if the sun breeds maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?" (2.2.181–82). Hamlet prevails upon Gertrude to abstain from sex with Claudius by calling him a "bloat" king (3.4.184). He reacts to their marriage and thus sexual relationship by asserting bitterly that the "world […] / […] 'tis an unweeded garden / That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (1.2.134–37). This unpleasant sentiment is echoed in his imagining of the royal couple's bed: "but to live / In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, / Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love / Over the nasty sty" (3.4.91–94) — he emphatically repeats the word "rank," while a pig "sty" evokes putrefaction.

Whether in a moral and/or sexual sense, Hamlet imagines Denmark, its women, and the royal bedchamber to be equally "corrupt[ed]." Recalling Wilson Knight's description of Hamlet's hatred of life, the prince detests the "heavy-headed revel" of Denmark's manner of celebrating, imagining "The King […] swagg'ring upspring reels / […], as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down" during the wedding feast (1.4.8–10). Knight accounts for Hamlet's harsh perspective by claiming that he possesses "the negation of any passion whatsoever. His disease—or vision—is primarily one of negation, of death." In the same way, Claudius links Hamlet with disease, worriedly reflecting on what to do about the prince's antics: "Diseases desperate grown / By desperate appliance are reliev'd" (4.3.9–10). Hamlet deems reproduction as well as sexuality to be repugnant, telling Gertrude not to

[178] The Claudius (Eduard Winterstein) in the Gade/Schall film (1921) is an example.

"spread compost on the weeds / To make them ranker" (3.4.153–43) and Ophelia that "we will have no more marriage" (3.1.149). Incidentally, Shakespearean characters who resent or reject the joys of living can be interpreted as sadistic, their sexual desire having transformed into sadism (delight in exerting power over others) — such figures include Octavius and Richard III, among others.

Hamlet draws parallels between death and the dangers of pleasure, echoing the Ghost and Hamlet's perception of women as harbouring a deadly, corrupting sexuality. Reflecting this, and the perceived relationship in the nineteenth century between prostitution and disease, Austen's drawings portray skulls in relation to celebration and sexual love. In the image introducing 3.1 ("Puppeteer Death"; p. 78/231), a hooded skeleton manipulates the play's characters on puppet strings while they frolic cheerfully. Recalling traditional depictions of Ophelia, a garland encircles its head; this alludes to her onstage resemblance to a country maiden, proverbially considered to be sexually unrestrained. Similarly, in the image on p. 71/229 (presumably representing 3.2, as Hamlet is eccentrically dressed and carrying pipes), a *putto* toys with a flower wreath adorning the skull on which it sits. Given the close association between Ophelia and garlands, this seems to presage her death. In the first image, coupled with Ophelia's presence, the skeleton's hood and garland recall stereotypical "Death and the Maiden" imagery, popular in the Renaissance and Romantic periods, where Death is pictured alongside a beautiful woman; this topos was related to the medieval *Danse Macabre* (discussed in "Hamlet and the Ghost").[179] Death's frequent gaiety in these works implies that indulgence, particularly the sexual kind, will have grim consequences. Similarly, the *putto* in the second image seems to signify physical love or at least life's open enjoyment, despite ominously sitting on a skull. This also evokes Old Hamlet's claim to have been, perhaps somewhat self-indulgently, sleeping off his lunch before being murdered, "Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd, / No reck'ning made, but sent to my account / With all my imperfections on my head!" (1.5.76–79). Austen's skulls evoke not only the dangers of sexual love but Hamlet's preoccupation with death.

[179] See "Death and the Maiden" entry in de Pascale, *Death and Resurrection in Art* (237).

The skulls in Austen's images signify *memento mori*, foreshadowing the play's grim conclusion, but also signalling Hamlet's obsession with death (according to Knight) and disease, and the Victorian fascination with the same themes. The 'Death and the Maiden' topos was often used in the nineteenth century to ironically highlight the perceived connection between sexual pleasure and disease, whereas previously it had tended to serve as a *memento mori,* reminding the viewer that the blooming maiden and grisly death were separated only by time.[180] The skulls recall Hamlet's infamous encounter with Yorick's skull ("Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio" (5.1.178)), and the play and edition's Gothic setting, such as in the frequently dark surrounds and the characters' often mediaeval attire. Austen's interest in the Gothic is partly attributable to the Victorian fascination with it, reflected in their focus on death and, to modern day thinking, morbid rituals of mourning.[181]

Austen's "Puppeteer Death" illustration (p. 78/231) may implicitly cast Hamlet as a kind of Grim Reaper figure, evoking his fascination with death and disturbed view of Ophelia, here pictured as Death's "maiden." Hamlet is ostensibly absent from the image, even though he numbers among the characters that die, shown here. Given that he controls the other characters, although they — like the figures in this image unaware of Death's presence — do not realise it, and instigates or contributes to their deaths, Hamlet may instead be embodied symbolically by the Grim Reaper. Knight calls "Hamlet […] a living death in the midst of life."[182] Hamlet considers himself the "scourge and minister" of Denmark (3.4.177), as if he were an angel of Death. His cruel treatment of Ophelia brings about her demise. Indeed, their relationship can be likened to Hans Baldung

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[180] In Elana Shapira's review of an art catalogue titled *Gustav Klimt: The Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections* (edited by Renée Price), she remarks that "[the book …] describes Klimt's […] innovative handling of the traditional theme of Death and the Maiden in his later work. [... Marian Bisanz-Prakken] concludes by interpreting [Klimt's] *The Bride* as an allegory of death. She recognizes the skull above the figure on the right side as Death and refers back to other treatments of the theme by Klimt such as *Death and Life* (1911–1916). The man on the left in The Bride, she concludes, is probably imagining his bride being taken by the figure of death on the right, suggesting his fear of infecting her with a venereal disease" (175–76).

[181] Such as taking photos of dead relatives, positioned upright as if alive, for posterity — seances became popular in this period.

[182] "Nothing I believe" Bradley observed, "is to be found elsewhere in Shakespeare (unless in the rage of the disillusioned idealist Timon) of quite the same kind as Hamlet's disgust at this uncle's drunkenness, his loathing of his mother's sensuality, his astonishment and horror at her shallowness, his contempt for everything pretentious or false, his indifference to everything merely external" (112).

Grien's painting *Death and the Maiden* (1517; fig. 80) in which a naked maiden with tears streaming down her face mutely begs Death for mercy as he crudely grasps her hair by the roots with one hand. In the "DP" illustration, it may be Hamlet, rather than Nemesis, whom Ophelia is importuning for mercy.

Fig. 80. Hans Baldung Grien. *Death and the Maiden*. 1517, The Basel Art Museum, Switzerland.

Casting himself as a vicarious Death figure, Hamlet jokingly instructs Yorick's skull "Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come" (5.1.186–88). Hamlet turns his back on nature's growth and fecundity, instead fixating on, and perpetuating, stultifying inactivity "rank and gross in nature" (insisting on there being "no more marriage"), as well as death. Ophelia's description of Hamlet's letters insinuate that his psychological processes are corrupted by implying a comparison with decomposing flowers: "words of so *sweet* breath *composed* / As made the things more *rich*. The *perfume lost*, / Take these again" (3.1.98–100; my emphasis). Evoking Hamlet's grim obsession, Austen's illustration severely detracts from a sympathetic reading of the prince.

Notwithstanding the presence of macabre themes in *Hamlet* and the protagonist's fixation on them, Symbolism's fascination with death may partly account for its prominence in Austen's drawings. The early Symbolist printmaker Rudolph Bresdin produced *The Comedy of Death* (1854; fig. 81), explicitly drawing on the *memento mori* topos. As mentioned, the general subject matter of Austen's illustration also suggests a Symbolist influence. These artists often emphasised irrational evil and personal fantasies of a disturbing, if not horrific, kind, ostensibly symbolising subjective experience. In

contrast, Austen's illustration of Hamlet as Death is a visualisation of Hamlet's, rather than the artist's, dark imagination.

Fig. 81. Rudolph Bresdin. *The Comedy of Death*. 1854, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris.

Another motif present in Austen's drawings which reflects Hamlet's implied interiority, casts him in a negative light, and points to Symbolism's influence, is that of the satyr. Implying that this was a popular artistic motif before Austen's time, Richard Jenkyns observes that "[b]y the end of the [nineteenth] century, artists rendered satyrs without the vitality such Greek motifs had in art of earlier decades" (264–330). Beardsley's Symbolist 'satyr' drawings perhaps also account for the presence of a satyr in Austen's imagery, especially given that one of them includes two nude figures in the wilderness. In 'Satyr and Peacock' (1892; fig. 82), the creature's long, untamed, tendril-like hair evokes that of Austen's Hamlet in the "Medusa" image (p. 103/232). Despite the fact that satyrs are traditionally male, it has breasts, rendering it a *femme fatale* of sorts. 'Satyr offering Fruit to a Seated Figure' (1892; fig. 83) in Book 1, chapter xv of *Le Morte D'Arthur* provides another such androgynous figure.

Fig. 82. Beardlsey, "Satyr and Peacock." 1892. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Fig. 83. Beardsley, "Satyr offering Fruit to a Seated Figure." 1892, *Le Morte D'Arthur,* London, J.M. Dent, 1892.

While the inclusion of satyrs in Austen's imagery generally evokes Hamlet's description of Claudius, one illustration ironically reverses this, turning the prince's words back onto himself. According to Hamlet, the new king has made Denmark and the royal bed "rank." A satyr, a half-man, half-goat creature with its connotation of lechery, implies Hamlet's disgust towards Claudius' desire for Gertrude. The 'Two Doves' drawing (p. 44/227) portrays Hamlet as a satyr, despite his renouncing sexual desire. This may denote Hamlet's disturbed view of sexuality as being inherently depraved. Two naked youths spring forward lithely on their toes, their gaits harmonised. The woman has flowers in her hair while the man resembles a satyr. Given the latter's appearance, it is peculiar that these figures should resemble Hamlet and Ophelia instead of the royal couple, and that the pair of kissing doves in the top right of the illustration symbolise enduring love. The doves recall that Hamlet destroys the "pure love" he shares with Ophelia, irrevocably demolishing her trust. Instead, as reflected in his satyr-like appearance in this image, he insists on the corrupting influence of sexual desire. Satyrs resemble *femmes fatales* on account of their corrupt, dangerous lust. In Austen's drawings, they are congruent motifs, and both generally reflect Hamlet's perception of other characters.

***Femmes Fatales*: Gertrude, Claudius and Pretty Ophelia**

The overtly sexualised rendering of the play's female characters seems like an extension of the motif of *femmes fatales,* abounding in Austen's illustrations. Interpreted in this respect, the sexualised depiction of Ophelia and Gertrude grants them genuine agency, despite (paradoxically) reflecting Hamlet's reductive assessment of them. Austen again relies on a single motif to convey two conflicting meanings.

In the play, it is possible to see a correlation between the play's female characters and *femmes fatales*. Austen's illustrations evoke this parallel. *Femmes fatales* are desired and feared because of their dangerousness and potency; this is reflected, for example, in Moreau's female figures, "personages who are both powerful and, for all their beauty, sinister" (Lucie-Smith 69). Hamlet and the Ghost's anxiety surrounding female sexuality suggests that they fear it. In the prince's case, his mother's sexual desire undermines his lifelong expectation of becoming king. The Ghost likely realises that his murder was partly due to Claudius' desire to supplant his sexual relationship with Gertrude, and his ire suggests that he feels emasculated by being effectively cuckolded by his wife's remarrying shortly after his death. Adding offence to injury, she marries the man that murdered him. Killed while "Sleeping within my orchard, / My custom always of the afternoon" (1.5.59–60), his warrior-like, masculine persona has suffered. The Queen's sexuality has proven detrimental to both father and son, as if she were a *femme fatale*.

Hamlet's remarks when referring to women sometimes elicit *femme fatale* myth wherein women kill, devour or transmogrify men. A famous example of magical transformation is when Circe turns Odysseus' companions into pigs. As discussed, Hamlet is adamant that marrying women is men's misfortune because of the "monsters you make of them" (3.1.140–41), and claims that "[Gertrude] would hang on [Old Hamlet] / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (1.2.143–45). This latter remark corrupts the Early Modern analogy between a married couple and ivy encompassing an oak. The Queen's "feed[ing]" on Old Hamlet with a "grow[ing]" "appetite" reflects the effect of disease on the body, calling to mind the old King's symptoms of poisoning. A possible interpretation of this is that Gertrude's supposedly perverse sexual appetite is parasitic, symbolically sating itself on the king when he dies. The words 'feed,' 'grow' and "within a month" (1.2.145) — recalling the calendar month of a woman's fertility cycle — seem to denote some kind of aberrant birth, as if Gertrude's sexual "appetite" were monstrous. Thus, the Queen can also

be considered a *femme fatale* because her tainted or "fall[en]" sexuality metaphorically consumes Old Hamlet. The prince's belief that female sexuality is grotesque may also account for the sinister, disembodied eyes peer from Ophelia's bodice in her first portrait image (p. 29/225).

Claudius's sexual desire proves as problematic as Gertrude's, the Ghost and Hamlet insisting on his lechery or insatiable sexuality. Coupled with the fact that the play portrays him in feminine terms, Claudius can be analogised to a *femme fatale*. As I will explain, Austen's illustrations evoke this parallel, suggesting his close interpretive reading of the text. Early modern indicators of apparent femininity, Claudius prefers assassinations and political negotiation over battles and seduces Gertrude and Laertes with dexterity, encouraging the latter to avenge himself on Hamlet and participate in Claudius' murderous scheme. Claudius symbolically enacts *femme fatale* tendencies by poisoning old Hamlet and by figuratively transforming him: Old Hamlet describes his "body" being "instant tetter bark'd about, / Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust" (1.5.71–73) as if he were a tree. This resembles Daphne's transformation as she attempts to escape being raped, suggesting that Old Hamlet's death is ultimately feminising.

An illustration by Fuseli of Claudius' murder of King Hamlet (1771; fig. 84) underscores Claudius' stereotypically feminine mode of assassination and the analogy between Old Hamlet's murder and rape. As discussed above, Claudius forces fluid through an orifice (the "porches of my ears" (1.5.63)) resulting in disease-like symptoms. The artist daringly depicts a nude Claudius appearing to climb onto the (also nude) seated king's groin, thus portraying the king's death as a sexual encounter between the men. Similarly, albeit in the *Weibermacht* tradition, Lady Macbeth asserts a masculine persona by telling her husband, "Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear" (1.3.26) — in early modern usage, spirits may also mean semen.[183]

[183] Take, for example, Sonnet 129: "Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action" (lines 1–2). Originating in the Medieval era, the *Weibermacht* tradition entailed "the representational practice of bringing together at least two, but usually more, well-known figures from the Bible, ancient history, or romance to exemplify a cluster of interrelated themes that include the wiles of women, the power of love, and the trials of marriage" (S. Smith 2). Susan L. Smith observes that the topos is "just one among many manifestations of the medieval preoccupation with women who seize the upper hand in their relations with men" (2); "[w]hat distinguishes the Power of Women topos […] is that it singles out the most celebrated

Equally suggestive of her aspiration to masculinity, she exclaims "unsex me here" and "take my milk for gall" (41; 48). The power Lady Macbeth and Claudius exert is fundamentally androgynous, contributing to an impression of (pre-modern day) disturbing ambiguity. Although the *Weibermacht* and *femme fatale* traditions share a patriarchal fear of female agency and sexuality, only the former includes a masculine anxiety surrounding the female arrogation of masculine power; this is achieved by speech, for which *femmes fatales* are not generally known — with the exception of Circe casting spells.

Fig. 84. Fuseli. *Hamlet, King of Denmark, poisoned by his brother Claudius while sleeping in the garden.* 1771, Graphische Sammlung der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, Zürich.

Claudius fits into the *Weibermacht* tradition because he exerts power through speaking rather than physical, masculine, aggression. He speaks adroitly and extensively in the opening scene, attempts to communicate to the English king that he wants Hamlet executed and, as mentioned, persuades Laertes to kill Hamlet. Given that the Ghost describes Gertrude's and Claudius' behaviour towards him as treacherous and feminine, and that, newly married in a patriarchal society, Claudius legally subsumes the Queen's identity, it can also be interpreted that the pair represent a combined *femme fatale*.

Austen's imagery discretely points to Claudius' *femme fatale* tendencies or simply Hamlet's perception of them. In the "Mousetrap" image, due to the proximity of the sirens to Claudius, and because he is the only character shown in the image, the presence of these creatures seems partly to imply a parallel with the King. Causing them to cluster together in the composition, the axe head, portraying female monsters, is positioned directly in front of

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men of the past to prove the power of women" (2). However, this theme is not merely a "straightforward manifestation of medieval antifeminism"; rather, it is "a site of contest through which conflicting ideas about gender roles could be expressed" (845). The archetype of the *femme fatale* occupies a similar paradigm, but is specifically an enigmatic, seductive, often supernatural woman who ensnares and endangers men, sometimes fatally.

the throne on which Claudius sits, itself depicting similar imagery, while the tip of the sword handle bearing a siren passes by Claudius' shoulder, merging with the *femme fatale* imagery behind. This conglomeration of supernatural creatures amplifies their eerie presence. Evoking Claudius' royal status, flames or rays of sunlight radiate outwards from the disc.

Paired with the fact that they inundate Claudius' throne, the serpentine tails surrounding the sirens recall Claudius' similarity to a snake, underscoring his resemblance to a *femme fatale*. Serpents are associated with femininity, for example the serpent Error in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is specifically female.[184] The Ghost describes Claudius as the "serpent that did sting thy father's life" (1.5.39). The King's speech in Act 1.2 is full of sibilants, as if hissing.[185] Claudius persuades Laertes to side with him — poisoning him through the ear, as it were — and Laertes becomes his equally snake-like agent. Evoking a snake's fangs, Laertes poisons his foil ("anoint[ing]" it with "an unction of a mountebank" (4.7.139–40)). Claudius' resemblance to a snake also comprises part of *Hamlet*'s Edenic theme.

Austen's drawings reflect the play's Edenic imagery and storyline, portraying Claudius as having a corrupting, potentially Satanic, influence over *Hamlet*'s female characters. In the edition's preface image ("Seated Hamlet"; p. 8/224), the hilt of Nemesis' sword portrays a beaked creature with a long, scaled body. Either a leviathan or a mythical snake, it twists tightly around a naked woman. Despite her lips parting as if in horror, the woman's posture is highly sexualised: clasping the back of her head with one arm, she arches her back as if profoundly relaxed, causing her breasts to project outwards. Her nude

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[184] And looked in: his glistring armor made
A litle glooming light, much like a shade,
By which he saw the vgly monster plaine,
Halfe like a serpent horribly displaide,
But th'other halfe did womans shape retaine,
Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.

(1.1.14.4–9)

[185] But you mu**s**t know your father lo**s**t a father,
That father lo**s**t, lo**s**t hi**s**—and the **s**urvivor bound
In filial obliga**t**ion for **s**ome term
To do ob**s**equiou**s** **s**orrow. But to per**s**evere
In ob**s**tinate condolement i**s** a cour**s**e
Of impiou**s** **s**tubbornne**ss**, '**tis** unmanly grief,
It **sh**ows a will mo**s**t incorrect to heaven

(1.1.89–95; my emphasis)

pose resembles that of Austen's Ophelias in the "drowning" illustration (p. 141/234). Intertwined with the woman's body as if it were a tree, the snake alludes to the Garden of Eden, reflecting the play's symbolism and plot (as numerous scholars have observed; also, see Moore). In conjunction with the nude woman, this calls to mind Claudius, the "serpent [who] stung [the Ghost]" and seduced Gertrude with "witchcraft of his wit" (1.5.36; 43). It is also interpretable that the snake represents a leviathan, recalling Ophelia's being "Pull'd [...] / To muddy death" by her clothing (4.7.181–82). This suggests that Claudius' pernicious influence contributes to Ophelia's demise. The same can be said of Hamlet, who Austen likewise portrays as having snake-like qualities.

This 'snake' topos in the text, as it pertains to Hamlet, possibly accounts for the prince's feminine, Medusa-like appearance in the "Prayer Scene" illustration (p. 103/232). This image contributes to the edition's negative representation of Hamlet, influenced by his behaviour in the play. Further, by implying that Hamlet as well as Claudius possesses dangerous, feminine qualities, Austen's drawings assert the pervasiveness of the feminine in the play, such that it exists within characters regardless of gender. The artist prioritises that which is typically sidelined by a traditional, masculine reading of the play, which focusses on Hamlet's inability to perform a heroic, warrior-like role.

In some ways, as argued in the 'Dark Prince' chapter, the prince is stereotypically feminine, mysterious and threatening: as he tells Laertes, "have I in me something dangerous, / Which let thy wiseness fear" (5.1.255–56). The Ghost demands that Hamlet "stir in" his desire for vengeance (1.5.34), as if desiring that the prince be snake-like and scheming in his efforts to obtain justice. Claudius' treachery is likewise "serpent[ine]" (1.5.36), suggesting a parallel between himself and Hamlet. To 'stir' has phallic connotations, especially when considered alongside the Ghost's demand in the closet scene that Hamlet "whet / Thy almost blunted purpose" (3.4.111), suggestive of a sword — a phallic object. Confusingly, despite the Ghost's comparing obtaining vengeance to behaving like a (feminine) snake, it insinuates that Hamlet's inaction would be feminine, whereas decisive, bloody vengeance would be masculine and thus admirable.

The "Mousetrap" illustration also underscores Claudius' dangerous, even 'monstrous,' femininity by referencing Classical myth. The play's text encourages such

a reading. In conjunction with the sirens and the disembodied female heads, the scaled tails on the throne behind Claudius call to mind Scylla, the monster Odysseus encounters after the sirens in *The Odyssey*.[186] She may signify Hamlet's perception of Claudius, the abundant heads denoting the king's sycophants and spies. Given his stereotypical femininity, especially relative to Old Hamlet, Claudius' gender does not preclude him from being analogised to Scylla. The play indirectly characterises Claudius in terms resembling dangerous mythical creatures. Marcellus intuits that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.90) which we soon take to mean Claudius' corrupting influence; the prince imagines that his mother's marriage to his uncle demonstrates that "things rank and gross in nature" have come to "Possess" the "world" (1.2.134; 136–37). The adjectives 'rank' and 'rotten' reflect stereotypical descriptions of the smell that emanates from monsters.

The sphinxes in the illustration can also be analogised to Claudius. After listening to the Ghost's injunction, Hamlet decides that murdering the Grendel-like monster Claudius will not only mean obtaining justice but will also liberate Denmark from his corrosive toxicity. This mirrors the trajectory of Western mythical traditions, such as Beowulf, whereby a hero must expel a monster from the kingdom it has invaded. The Classical myth of *Oedipus* provides the same topos, likely accounting for the sphinxes which decorate the sentinel's axe and the hilt of Claudius's sword.

The sphinxes' Oedipal origins are also significant in that Austen illustrated the edition approximately two decades after Freud detected an 'Oedipal complex' in Hamlet in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). Freud's Oedipal theory may have influenced Austen's drawings, as well as Symbolist art's evocation of 'the uncanny,' likewise inspired by Freud. Claudius can be likened to the sphinx in *Oedipus* as well as in Austen's drawings more generally, rendering him a form of monstrous *femme fatale*. The visual parallel suggests Hamlet's perspective: the prince has been supplanted by a "mighty opposite" (5.2.62), whose wiles present a major challenge.

[186] Incidentally, the word sirene was once used as a term for snakes (although this is now obsolete) (*OED* 1a): "[t]his sense is derived from glossarial explanations of Latin *sirenes* in the Vulgate text of *Isaiah* xiii. 22, where the Wycliffite versions have 'wengid edderes' and 'fliynge serpentis'."

Oedipus and *Hamlet* have comparable narratives, putting aside Hamlet's supposed unconscious desire for Gertrude: in the former, the sphinx "infest[s] Thebes until the riddle it propound[s i]s solved by Oedipus" (*OED* 1a). Likewise, both include disinherited princes — although Oedipus is unaware that he is an heir — who intend to liberate their kingdoms from monsters. In *Hamlet,* the monster is represented by the "satyr" Claudius. Likewise, with "the body of a lion" (symbolising kingship) and "head of a woman" (*OED* 1a), sphinxes call to mind Hamlet's feminine uncle.

Artistic influences may also have inspired Austen's inclusion of sphinxes. These as well as sirens appear frequently in Symbolist art, such as in the works of Moreau and Redon. Beardsley illustrated sphinx/harpy-like figures, such as in his drawing from Book I of *Le Morte D'Arthur*, titled 'Feathered Flying Figure' (1892; fig. 85). Prior to performing as Ophelia (1886) and Hamlet (1899) respectively, in 1880, Bernhardt created a sculptured bronze self-portrait in the guise of a sphinx, presented at the Salon in the same year (fig. 86).[187] In Austen's drawing, a naked winged woman embellishes the sword's handle — a recurrent motif in these illustrations. Given her wings and association with a sword, she probably represents not just a sphinx but Nemesis. Indeed, each figure in the drawing (Scylla excluded) is winged or somehow avian, calling to mind Nemesis.

Fig. 85. Beardsley. *Feathered Flying Figure*. 1892, Library of Congress, Washington; also in *Le Morte D'arthur*.

[187] See 'Ophelia: A New Autonomy' chapter for discussion.

Fig. 86. Bernhardt. *Self-Portrait as a Sphinx*. 1880, Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

Summarising Remarks

This chapter has examined how Austen magnifies, complicates and develops an unprecedented reading of the feminine in *Hamlet,* while drawing on themes suggesting the influence of Symbolism and Decadence. Announcing a powerful female presence, Nemesis plays a prominent role in the edition's images. Likewise, *femme fatale* figures routinely appear, evoking the way in which male, not just female, characters are described in the text. The artist's imagery implies that Claudius and even Hamlet possess *femme fatale* qualities, suggesting that dangerous, feminine characteristics are not sex specific. The illustrations' also linking Gertrude and Ophelia to *femmes fatales* reflects that Hamlet describes the women in this way, demonstrating his belief in feminine sexual duplicity and the inherent dangerousness of female sexuality and agency. Equally suggestive of his misogyny, and likewise alluded to in the drawings, Hamlet casts nature's supposed corruption in terms pertaining to fecundity.

Meanwhile, Austen depicts Ophelia in the process of her death as a mermaid or nymph. On the one hand, this may signify that her drowning represents her unsuccessful transformation into a naiad, thwarted by Claudius and Hamlet's figurative poisoning of Mother Nature. Austen's depictions of Ophelia's madness insinuate that it stems from a tainted sexuality and mind, attributable to Claudius, and the prince's, infection of Denmark. On the other hand, Ophelia's death could also signify her empowering convergence with

nature, liberating her from the patriarchal reach of men: based on this reading, the artist invests her with supernatural feminine power and thus agency.

Austen also portrays Ophelia as a prostitute, suggesting (since Hamlet is the only character to endorse this idea) the prince's ingrained misogyny. While these characters' implied sexual availability points to female disempowerment, the illustrations link prostitution to *femmes fatales,* suggesting the opposite. Austen's imagery also grants Ophelia the role of sacrificial muse, reflecting her Victorian persona. Equally apparent in descriptions of famous Victorian actresses, the illustrations also cast Ophelia as a sorceress, another strain of *femme fatale*. While Austen's nude portrayal of her in "drowning" and "drowned" images is, at first glance, objectifying, it seems more intended to signify her vulnerability and suggest her increasingly alien physicality as she morphs into a supernatural being. Thus, in a multitude of ways, Austen's edition amplifies and radically reimagines the feminine component of *Hamlet*, partially anticipating Ophelia's more empowered onstage persona in the decades which followed.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to demonstrate, through a detailed examination of John Austen's illustrations of *Hamlet*, that illustrated editions can provide intricate, thought-provoking readings of a complex text which merit intellectual debate. Austen's images represent an innovative contribution to the critical debate, anticipating later critical and performative interpretations of the play. His illustrations encourage the viewer to question both their assumptions regarding the moral status of each character, and their habits of reading though a simplifying patriarchal lens — finding complexity in Hamlet but overlooking it in Ophelia. These illustrations ask the viewer to actively participate in investigating *Hamlet*'s omissions, inconsistencies and ambiguity.

I have shown that Austen's artistic ingenuity and artistic foresight foreshadowed future trends in Hamlet and Ophelia's onstage and filmic portrayals, and scholarly criticism, while highlighting the critical value of interpreting artistic renderings of Shakespeare's characters as a form of literary critique. The recent republication of Austen's *Hamlet* by Dover Publications in 2010 signals a renewed appreciation for illustrated editions of Shakespeare. Holding appeal for a twenty-first-century sensibility, Austen's illustrations foreground the dark prince perceptible in the play's text (typically invisible to his contemporaries and almost unprecedented in visual art), a psychologically complicated and autonomous Ophelia, a demonic Ghost, and an array of symbolic *femmes fatales*. Women are no longer confined to the margins in his *Hamlet*, as in so many onstage, visual artistic and filmic adaptations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; instead, their implied interiorities are a primary focus, while Nemesis poses as their fierce, relentless champion. Symbolism plays a prominent role in Austen's aesthetic, most likely due to its focus on interiority and rich, emblematic visuals.

Neoclassical, Romantic and Victorian critics had tended towards describing Hamlet favourably; the Romantics saw in him their own idealised self-image: that of the emotionally delicate intellectual. Similarly, the Victorians considered him a 'gentle prince.' However, prioritising the dark facets of his character, Irving's and Mounet-Sully's late nineteenth-century stage Hamlets represented a subtle turning point in the public consciousness. Critics such as Mallarmé, D.H. Lawrence and Wilson Knight were critical of Hamlet, denouncing his "poison[ous]" and "repulsive" qualities. Early to mid-twentieth-century stage Hamlets delivered a darker rendition than their eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antecedents; the

second half of the century saw this disturbing stage Hamlet darken still further. Reviews at this time were mixed: Nicol Williamson's 1969 Hamlet was "born sneering; excessively ill-tempered," while Alan Howard's contemporaneous one was a "glittering, sardonic concealer of his genuine feelings."

Although the text does not unequivocally present a mad, cruel prince, there is certainly room for a reading which leans heavily in this direction, as some twentieth-century actors, directors and critics have observed. There is a long tradition of viewing Hamlet as a quintessentially decent victim of circumstance, due to the ongoing influence of the Romantic belief in his emotional sensitivity, perpetuated by the Victorians. By turning back to read the more complicated *fin-de-siècle* Hamlet visible in Austen's depictions, we can learn to look beyond the frequently one-sided treatment of Hamlet's character in contemporary productions and criticism, and to reconsider the text, and its wayward protagonist, for ourselves.

The Hamlet Austen presents us with is partly a subversion of the delicately feminine version born in the Romantic era, transforming it into a quasi *femme fatale*. Further, the artist splits Hamlet's personality into two: at first, he is unwilling to perform the Ghost's injunction; subsequently, he delights in trying to enact it, verbally and physically assaulting other characters, as if "purging" Denmark is a by-product of seeking vengeance. The images imply that Hamlet is vindictive and at times diabolical, and that insanity and thwarted ambition are causal factors. Austen's imagination offers a precedent not only for the direction in which Hamlet develops in theatre, film and criticism, but also for the shifting trajectory in depictions of Ophelia's character.

Although overlooked in patriarchal readings of the play, Ophelia's psychological independence in the text is undeniably present, such as when she responds to Hamlet's cruelty in the nunnery scene with "I was the more deceived" (3.1.120), accusing him of greater deception than (we assume) herself. Similarly, as mentioned, she tells Hamlet in the mousetrap scene that "You are naught [bad, wicked], you are naught" (3.2.143). "Naught" also suggests 'nothing,' and that she is diminishing him. Her madness and suicide are also interpretable as demonstrations of psychological autonomy, as she communicates unwelcome truths — openly insinuating (for example) that Hamlet perpetrates sexual betrayal — and,

arguably, takes her fate into her own hands through suicide in what Cleopatra calls the "high Roman fashion" (*A & C*, 4.15.87).

However, nineteenth-century representations of Ophelia tended towards the sentimentalized and sexually objectified, with very few exceptions. The New Woman movement of the late nineteenth century prompted a major transformation in the depiction of her character, producing a number of assertive stage Ophelias. Another important ingredient facilitating change was that actors and directors were less disposed to draw on a bowdlerized text, enabling Ophelia's sexual awareness and genuinely disturbing demonstration of insanity to gain prominence onstage. Artists were also influenced by this shift: a select few late nineteenth-century female artists (Madeline Lemaire and Henrietta Rae) portrayed Ophelia with unprecedented agency. However, Austen exceeds these, instilling his Ophelia with even greater agency and complexity. Film Ophelias were less fortunate than their recent stage predecessors and contemporaries, retaining an overwhelmingly childish, naïve quality, while being overtly sexualised. In Olivier's 1948 film, Jean Simmons cries shrilly while on the floor, the camera focusing on her exposed thigh. Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century stage Ophelias are more autonomous and convincingly insane than their predecessors (and filmic successors), instilling greater pathos.

However, Claire McCarthy's 2019 film titled *Ophelia* (mentioned previously) is a rare exception to this — a welcome contribution in light of Ophelia's typically reduced part and infantilized powerlessness in modern-day film. Ophelia's inner strength and complexity is the film's focal point, reflecting the priorities of Austen's *Hamlet*. Starring Daisy Ridley in the lead role, it tells *Hamlet*'s story from Ophelia's perspective, building on and developing the more subtle characterisation provided in the text, in part by imagining a backstory for its protagonist. Austen's Ophelia goes further than any of these stage or film productions, however. Her madness is cast as sinister and threatening, while she consistently embodies psychological autonomy. The artist subverts the child-like portrayal of her character by empowering her. Ophelia might initially seem to be a voyeuristic object in Austen's illustrations, but her dignified self-containment, human suffering and implied agency undermine this impression.

Austen also revises the prevailing perception of his contemporaries, of Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship. As previously discussed, before the mid-twentieth century, critics

deemed Ophelia a weak, innocent girl, or an indifferent traitor to Hamlet. In both cases, she was regarded as a two-dimensional character. While her complexity and Hamlet's mistreatment of her gained increasing prominence on stage, film and in criticism, the existence of a genuine, heartfelt affection on his part has, only sparingly — despite its complete absence from the text — been called into question. We see this in some mid to late twentieth-century stage performances presenting 'dark' Hamlets. However, Austen emphasises Hamlet's appalling treatment of Ophelia, as well as his consistent, genuine disregard for her. One way in which the artist does this is to position Hamlet in scenes (both invented and actual) in which Ophelia is suffering, drawing our attention to Hamlet's lack of grief and unrepentant attitude. Ophelia, meanwhile, is shown seeking justice from Nemesis and condemning Hamlet — in short, reclaiming her agency.

Austen's *Hamlet* demonstrates the inherent value both of illustrated editions as objects, and of closely perusing the visuals they present. The publication of Nicholas Rowe's edition of 1709 signalled the introduction of illustrated editions of Shakespeare, while the Victorian era saw them become immensely popular. Early twentieth-century publishers kept this popularity alive with the introduction of colour editions, although these were generally intended for children and families rather than exclusively adult readers. The subsequent release of editions such as the Cranach Press *Hamlet* (1927) signalled a shift back towards an adult audience, of which Austen's *Hamlet* is also symptomatic.

At present, graphic novels represent a prominent strain of Shakespearean illustration. Where they tend to depart from illustrated editions is in their extremely abridged texts. This suggests that the imagery in graphic novels offers a more generalised commentary on the text than found in illustrated editions, and is thus less concerned with the play's psychological components. The application of adaptation theory to illustrated editions also assists in demonstrating their inherent value as participants in the discourse of interpretation surrounding Shakespeare's plays. As I have shown, Austen's richly imaginative illustrated edition confirms the importance of illustrated editions in general, as capable of offering an implicit but no less profound commentary on the text. Indeed, illustration offers a broader scope for imaginative commentary, being less constrained by the practicalities of staged and filmed representation. Further, the interdisciplinary approach offered in this thesis is an ideal way to achieve an understanding of how Shakespeare's characters figure and transform in the popular imagination over time.

This thesis aims to complement and extend the various works already available on the subject of illustrated editions of Shakespeare. Critics such as Sillars, Young and Rhodes have paved the way for future research in the field of Shakespeare and visual art. This line of enquiry has not been restricted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century artistic visual depictions, as scholars investigating the reception of *Hamlet* in contemporary visual culture — such as Peterson and Williams in their book *The Afterlife of Ophelia* — have shown. The value of these interdisciplinary approaches and my own can be simply explained. Interdisciplinarity, appropriately practised with respect to the disciplines engaged, has shown itself to be a powerful hermeneutic tool. It facilitates new insights and interpretations, by drawing upon previously overlooked forms of knowledge and analysis.

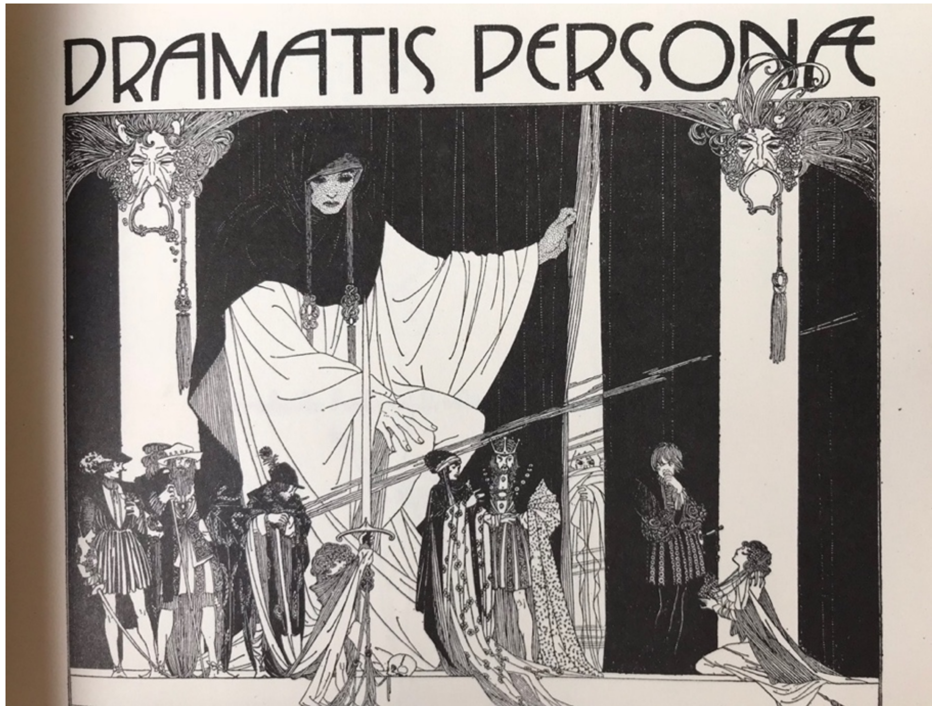
Studies that offer a specifically practical approach to analysing the representation of implied character psychology through painterly technique are relatively rare, however, and my thesis *Textual Critique through the Artist's Eye: John Austen's Illustrated* Hamlet is designed to fill this gap. This thesis provides detailed strategies and examples of what to look for when comparing visual artistic portrayals with the texts that inspire them. My critical methodology has predominantly entailed literary character study and the investigation of representations of gender and status, and the (related) examination of formal artistic elements such as symbolism, gesture and kinesthesis. Sillars' 'The Artist as Critic' approach, employed, although not explicitly named, by some like-minded scholars (mentioned above), has greatly informed my method. This thesis also represents the continuation of the approach adopted in my article "Textual Critique through the Artist's Eye: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Hamlet and Ophelia," published in 2018.

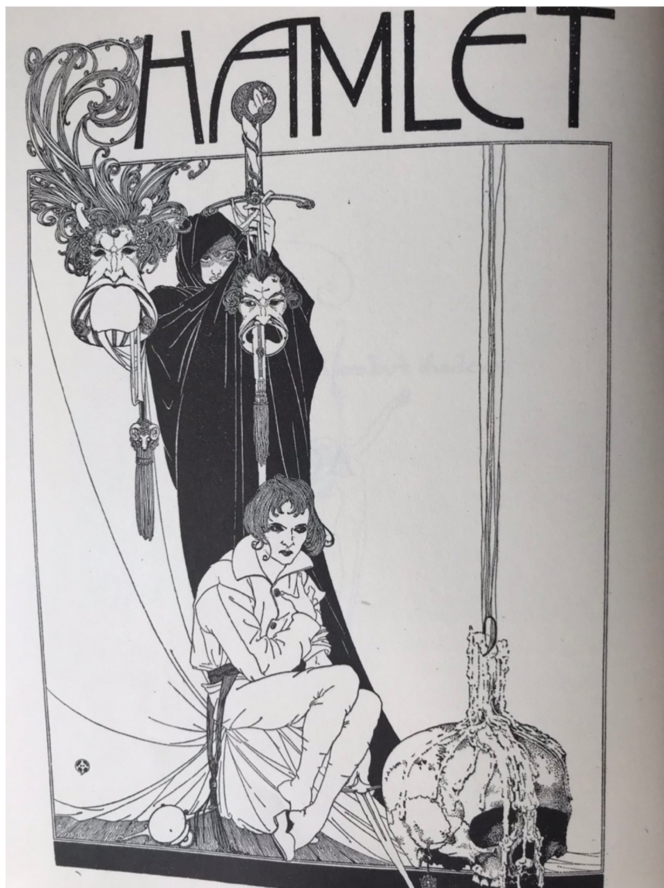
Representations of Hamlet and Ophelia will always carry an impression of the social climate in which their characters are performed or depicted, and their portrayal in Austen's illustrated edition is no exception to this. However, this tendency does not rule out subversive interpretations, and indeed, such readings (as I have argued we should call them) contribute to the fabric of scholarly criticism and intellectual thought in general. In the case of Austen, Austen's images demonstrate that the particular intersection between literature and art found in illustrated editions is a rewarding site of investigation, offering up invigorating and even provocative re-interpretations of literary narratives. It is to be hoped that scholars will continue to breathe new life into Shakespearean illustrated editions by revisiting them with a critical eye. An intellectually stimulating, progressive and largely original work, Austen's

Hamlet represents the acme of early twentieth-century pictorial editions. In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate the edition's imaginative daring, and to persuade the reader of the merit to be found in investigating an artist's reading of a text.

Finis.

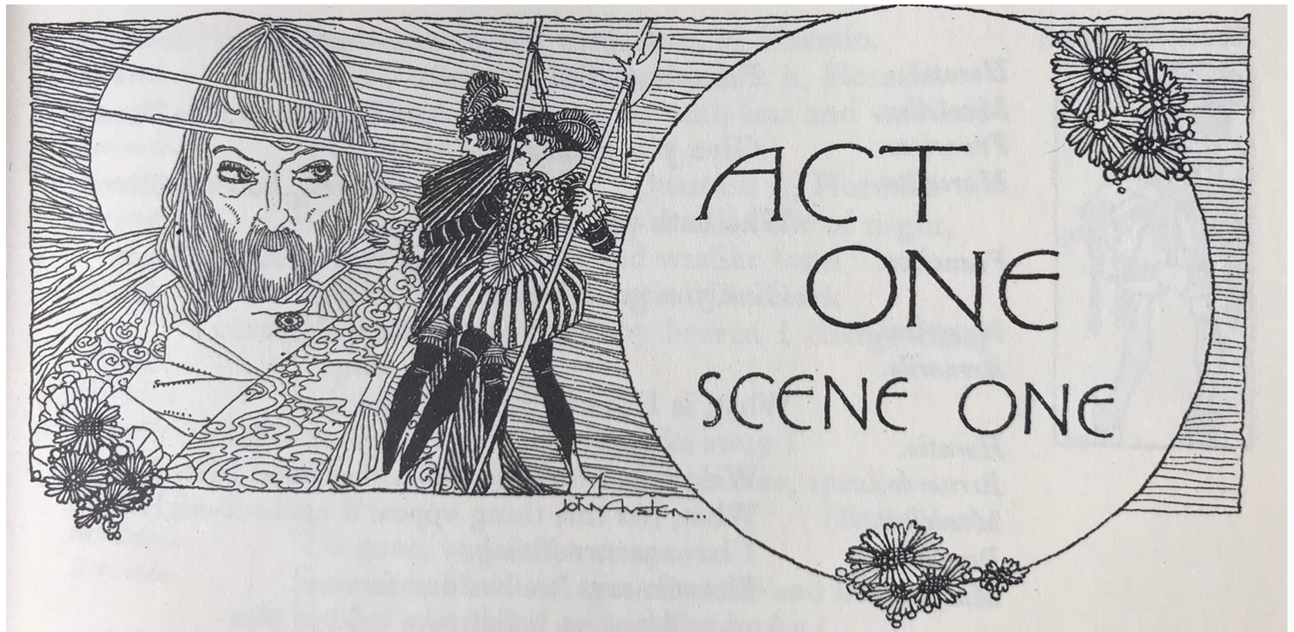
Appendix: Images





"Dramatis Personae" ("DP"), p. 5

"Seated Hamlet," p. 8

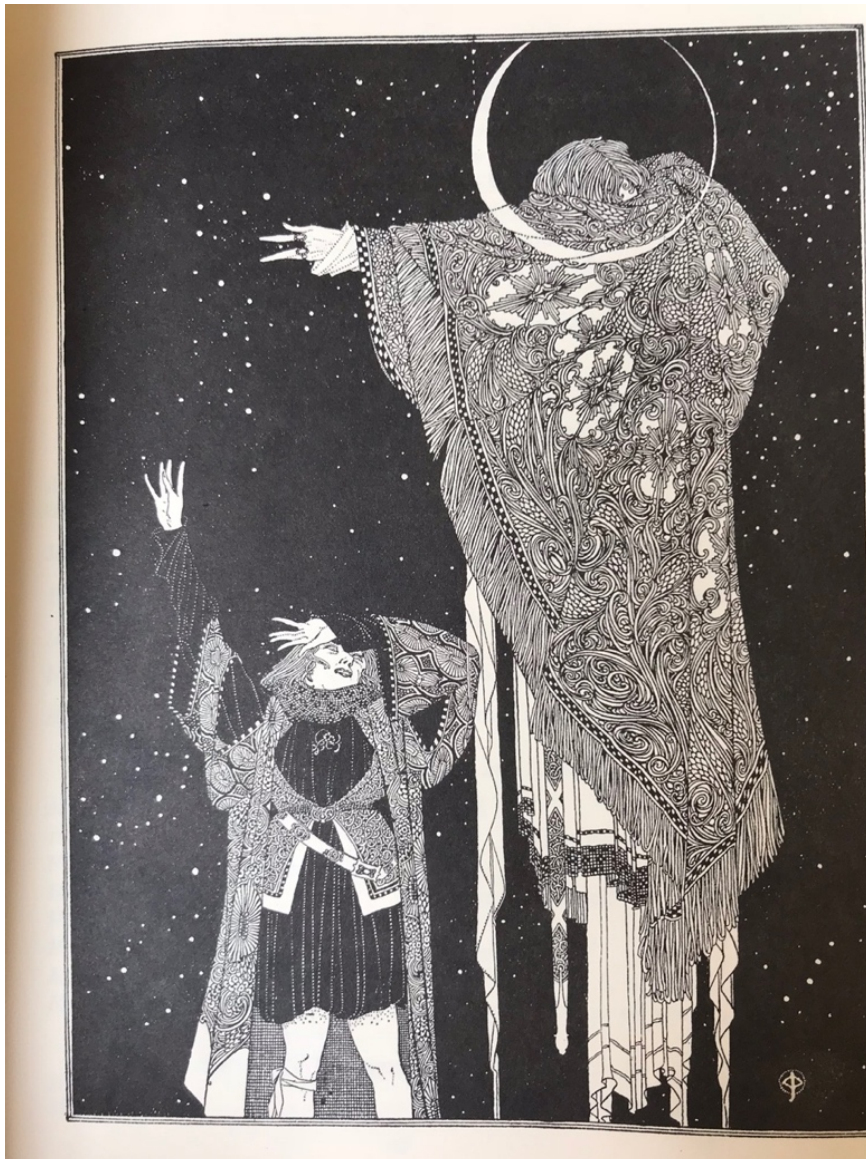


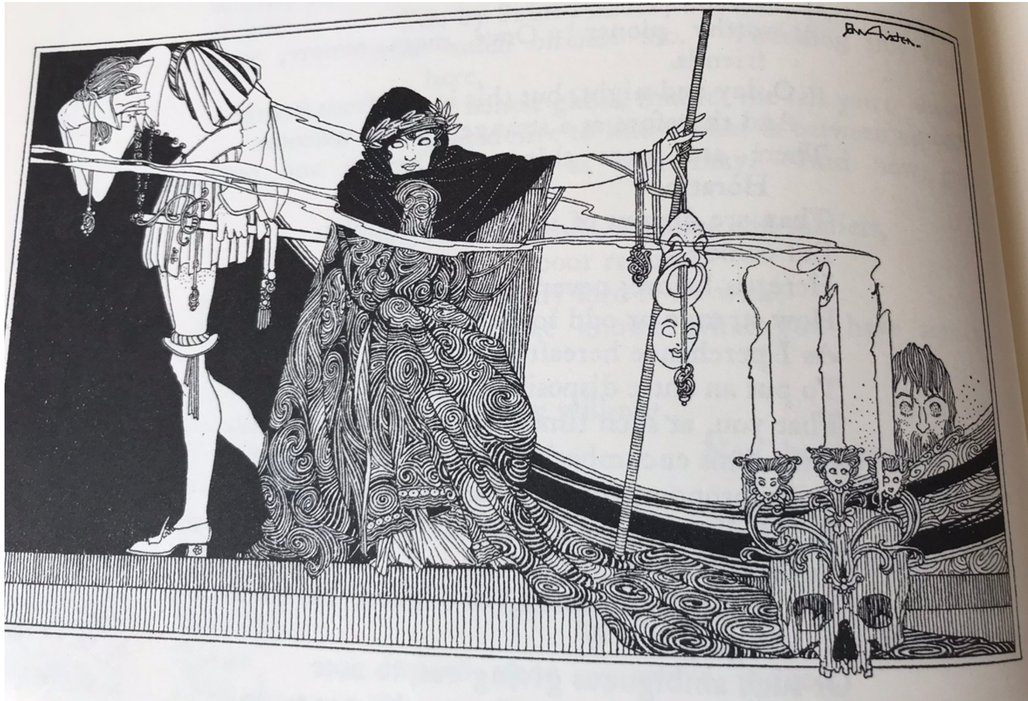
"The Ghost and the Guardsmen," p. 9

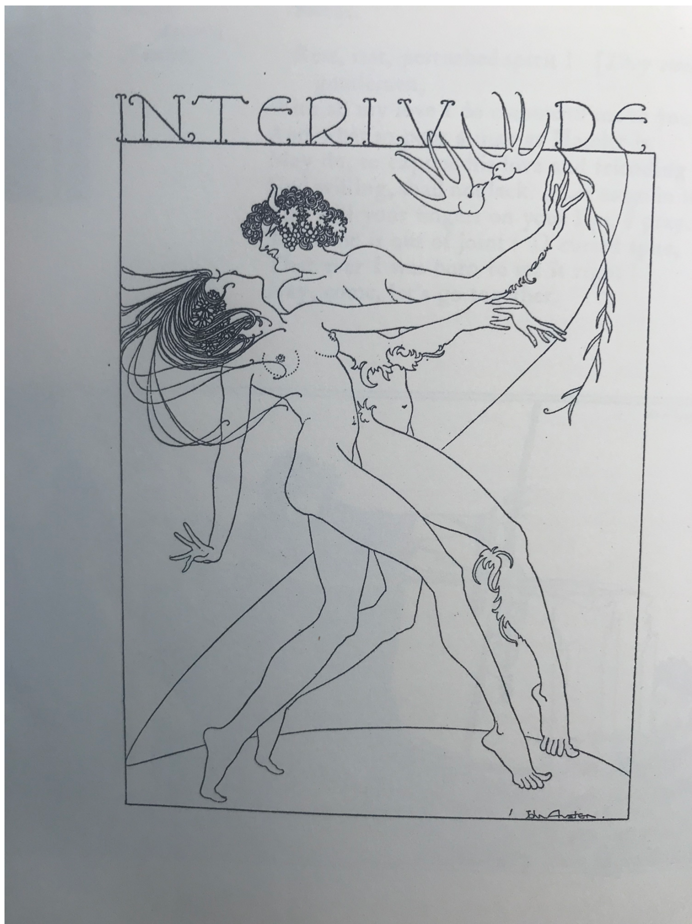
Ophelia's "Sane Portrait," p. 29

“Hamlet Possessed by Death,” p. 36

“Hamlet Encounters the Ghost,” p. 37





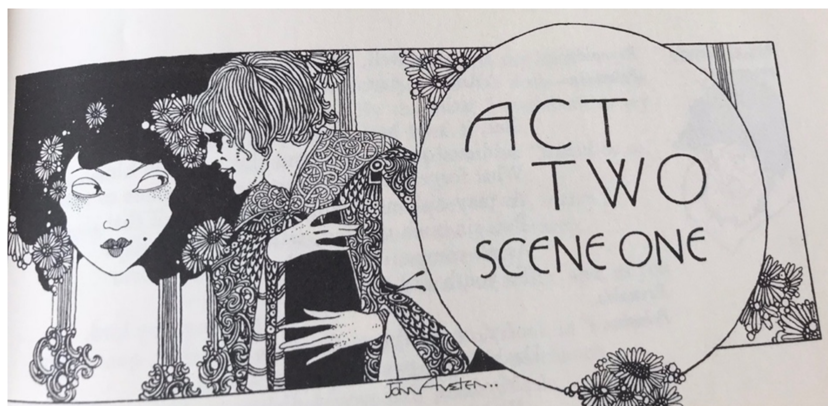


“Hamlet Leaves the Ghost,” p. 42

“Two Doves,” p. 44

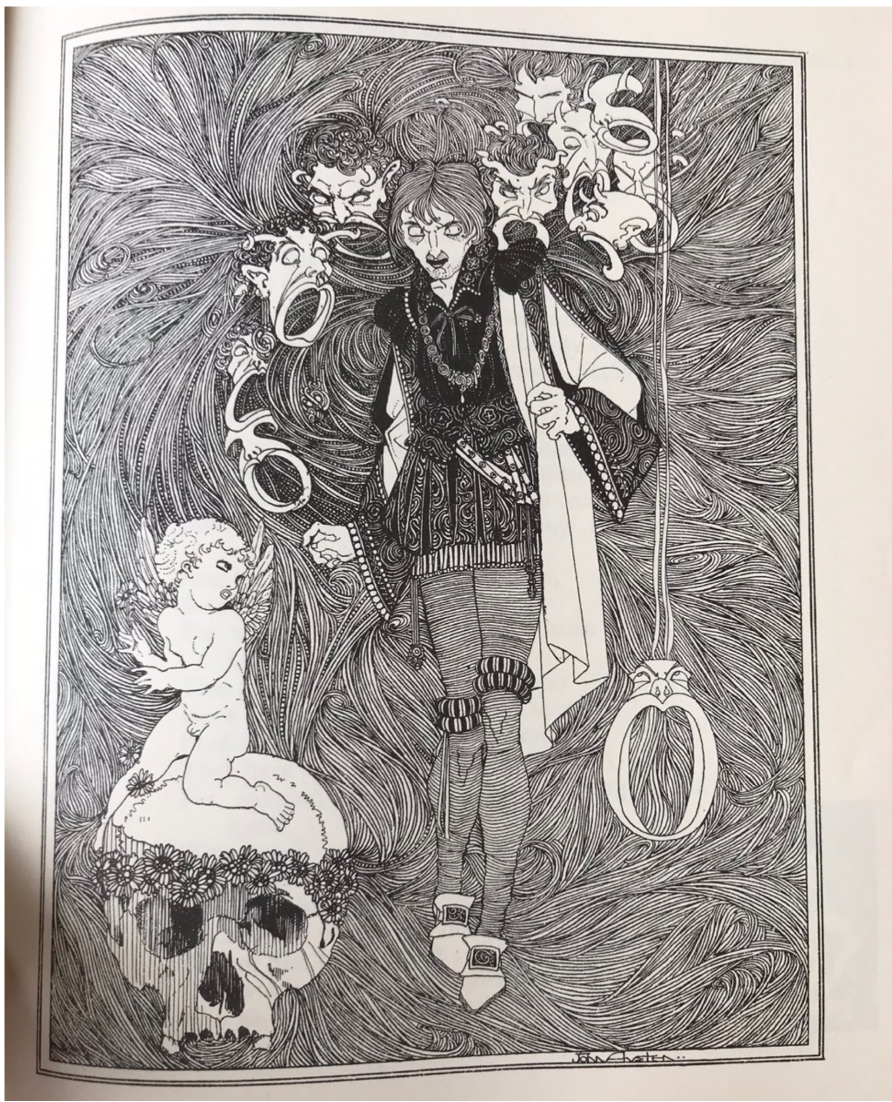
“Hamlet Possessed by the Ghost,” p. 46

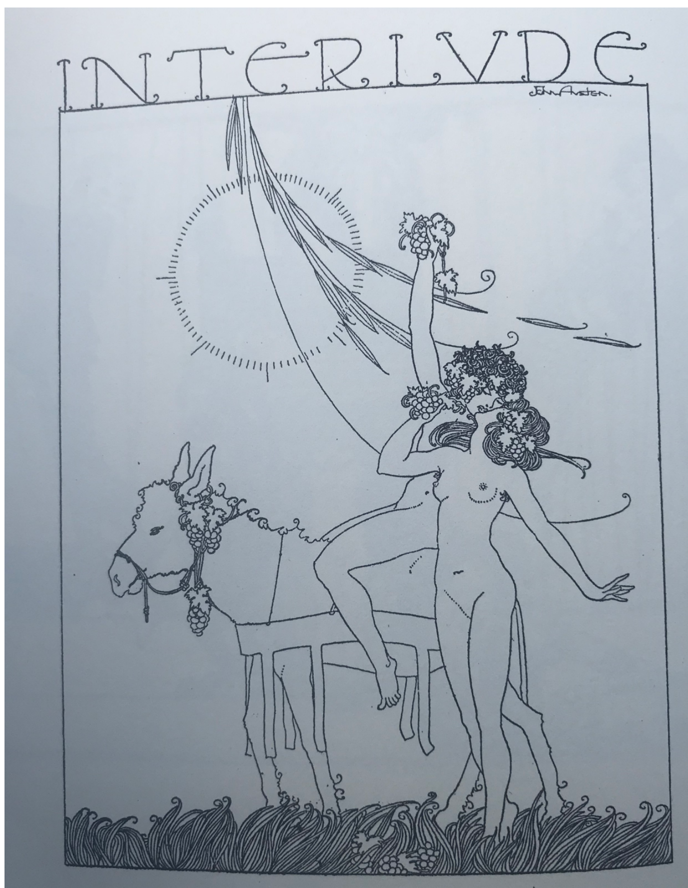
“Hamlet Knocking,” p. 47



“Hamlet Possessed by a Hooded Figure,” p. 51

“Play upon this Pipe,” p. 71



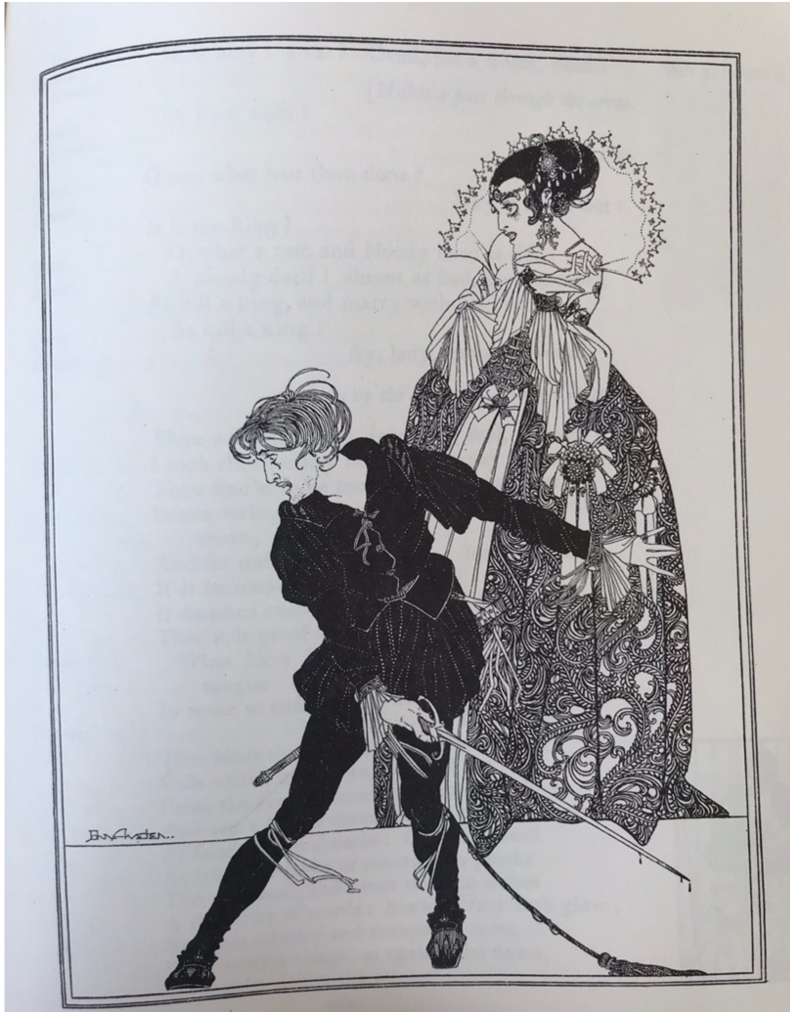


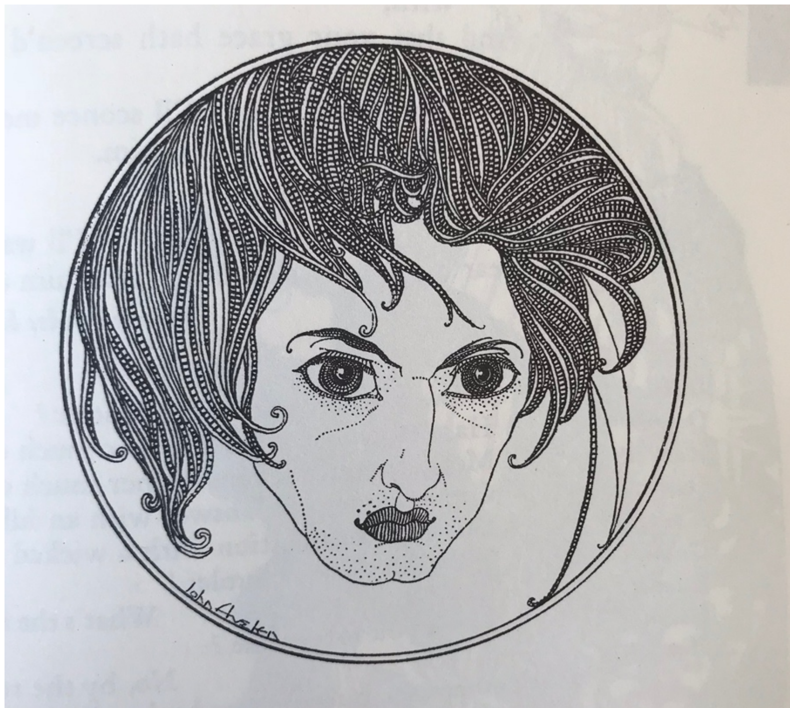
"Ophelia's Closet," p. 74

"A Pastoral," p. 76

"Puppeteer Death," p. 78

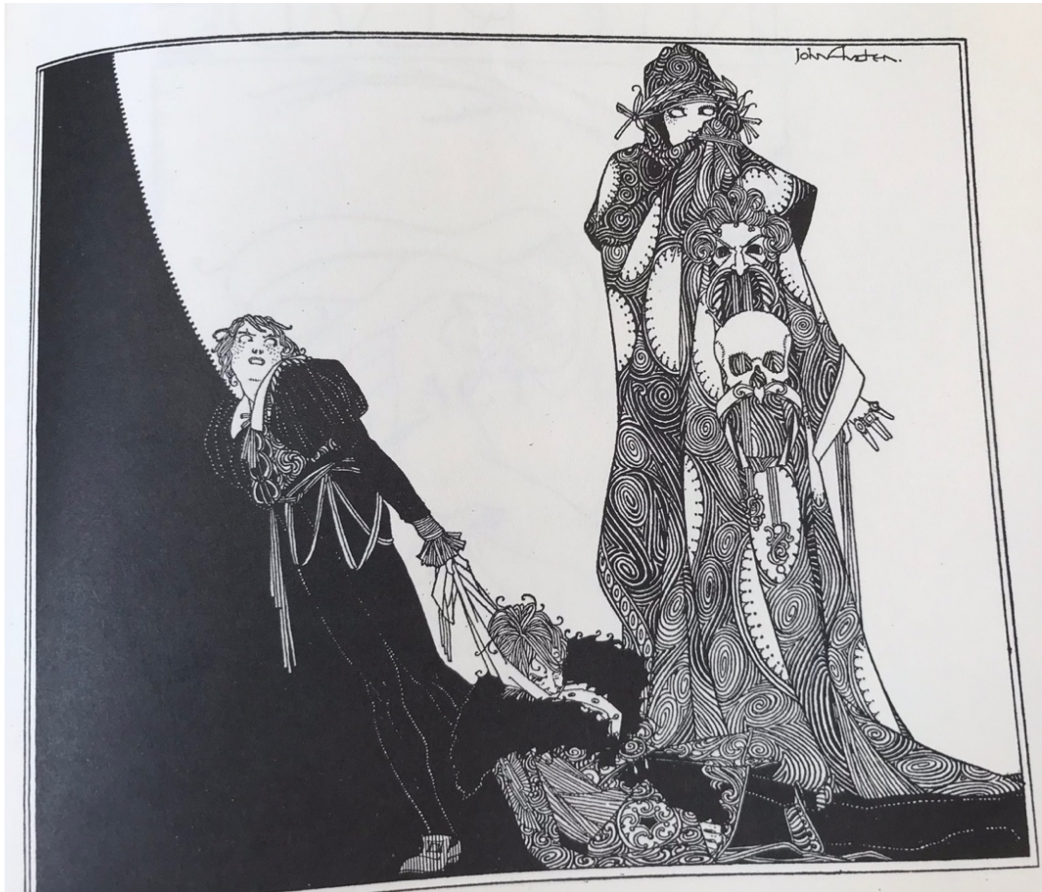
The "Mousetrap," p. 95





“The Prayer Scene” or “Medusa portrait,” p. 103

“Gertrude’s Closet,” p. 105

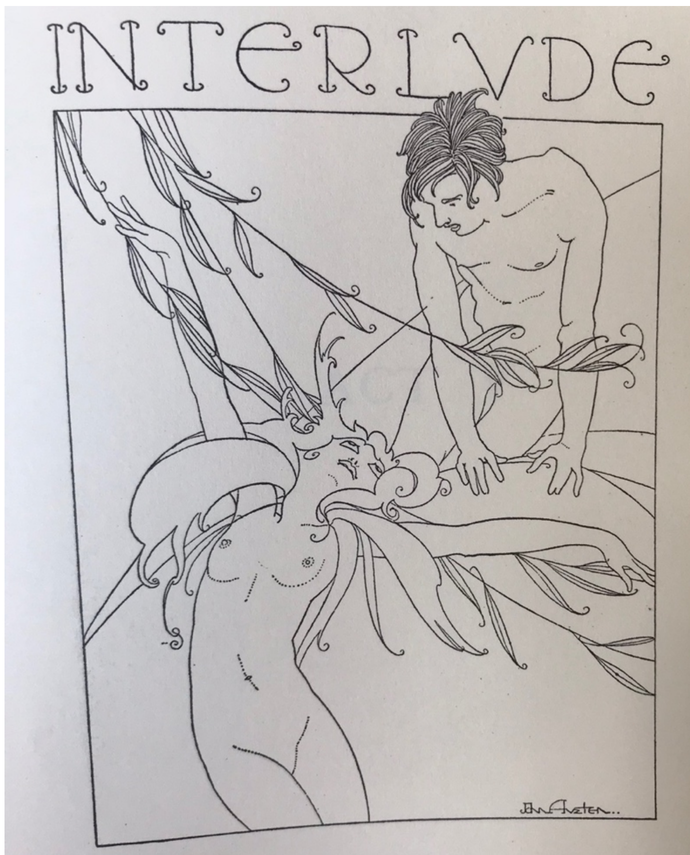


“Hamlet Drags Polonius’ Corpse,” p. 113

“Ophelia Hallucinates,” p. 116

"Midnight Ophelia," p. 127

"Ophelia Drowning," p. 141

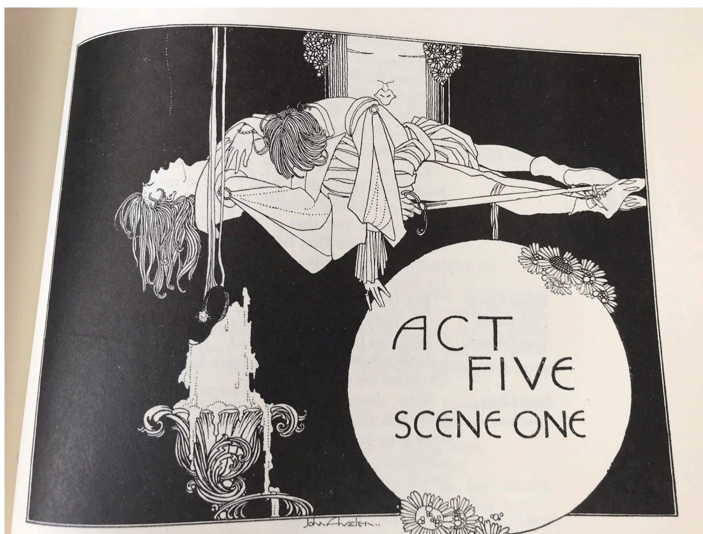


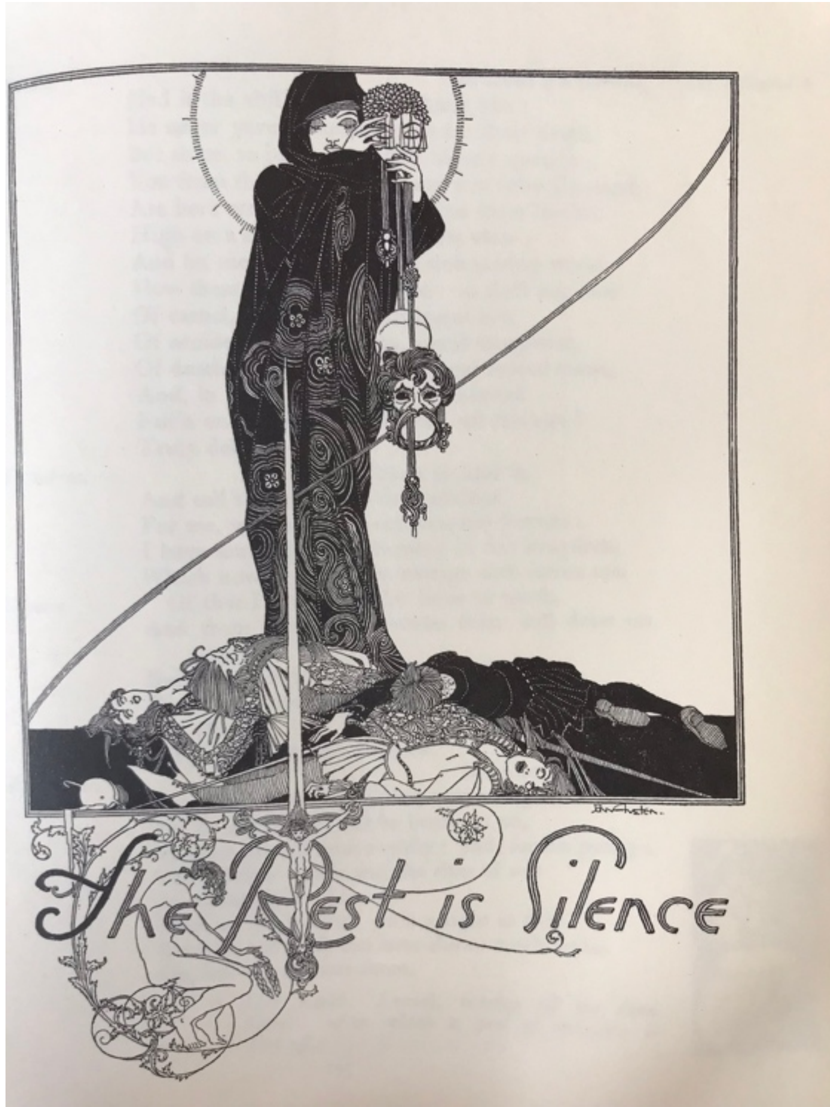
"Ophelia Drowned," p. 144

"Tree-climbing," p. 145

“The Graveyard,” p. 148

“Horatio’s Grief,” p. 149





“The Rest is Silence,” p. 173

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