

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "PASSION IS CATCHING": EMOTIONAL
CONTAGION AND AFFECTIVE ACTION IN
SELECT WORKS BY SHAKESPEARE

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Growing out of recent scholarship on humoral theory and emotions in early modern literary texts, this dissertation explores the idea that Shakespearean emotions are contagious. Tears, rage, compassion, fear, affection, horror, and laughter travel invisible pathways from character to character in his texts, reinforcing an implicit scheme of emotional transmission harkening back to Plato and Aristotle. Whether generated internally or imposed from the outside, these passions have the ability to wreak havoc on individuals, communities, and even countries, because passions can, and often do, lead to action. This work examines three of Shakespeare's tragic works, the poem *Rape of Lucrece* and two plays: *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*.

In the chapter on *Rape of Lucrece*, beauty is the root of the violent, contagious action driving the tale. Tarquin himself is ravished by Lucrece's beauty. Overwhelmed by a "rage of lust," the prince must exorcise his excess humors through rape to regain equilibrium. Lucrece is infected with his "load of lust" during the rape and then kills herself, passing on Tarquin's beauty-inspired violence to Collatine and the nobles in a

mutated form—the lust for vengeance. Through her act of self-violence, Lucrece transforms the original contagion into a force which purges Rome of the Tarquins' rule.

For *Julius Caesar*, I trace Shakespeare's descriptions of environmental events in Julian Rome and how these correspond to the emotional complexion of the agents in the play. I identify fear as the main emotional vector in this play and illustrate how the imagination takes on a crucial role in the misregulation of the humors, a situation that, in turn, creates the ideal environment for violent action.

The chapter dedicated to *Othello* examines the false transmission of emotion perpetrated by Iago to destroy Othello. Iago develops false emotional paradigms, reframing his hatred for the general with trappings of love; successfully communicating the degree of his passion without the content, Iago is able to fool Othello into believing Desdemona is false. Despite his demand for "ocular proof," the Moor becomes overwhelmed by the force of Iago's emotions and becomes an instrument of "honest" Iago's virulent hate.

**“PASSION IS CATCHING”: EMOTIONAL CONTAGION AND AFFECTIVE
ACTION
IN SELECT WORKS BY SHAKESPEARE**

By

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In Memoriam

Marshall Grossman

Dedication

There are many people that I wish to thank for their help and support during the writing of this dissertation. First, Kent Cartwright and Maynard Mack, both of whom went above and beyond, provided me with insightful feedback, constructive criticism, and the encouragement I desperately needed to finally bring this project to completion. I also wish to thank Gerard Passannante, Mary Ann Hoffman, and Sangeeta Ray, the other dedicated members of my final committee. And, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the stellar support given to me by the University of Maryland Libraries' Interlibrary Loan staff—through all the twists, turns, and changes in my research, this amazing team always provided me with the resources I needed.

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My wonderful parents—Willard and Sharon Wheelock—taught me to explore the world with a sense of wonder and curiosity and to never back down in the face of adversity. I cannot thank them enough for always believing in me and showing me love when I needed it most. And my sister, Susannah Wheelock, who has suffered amiably the highs and lows of living with me while I was going through the dissertation process, deserves a lot of credit for her unwavering belief that I could—and would—finish what I started. During those times that I doubted myself, my friends and family provided an amazing support system that nourished me and helped to re-energize my scholarship. Thank you, one and all.

Last, and ultimately, I dedicate this volume to my husband, Leonard Kilburn. Without his belief in me, and occasional demonstrations of “tough love,” I never could have finished what sometimes seemed to be an interminable project with insurmountable problems. Lenny, thank you for not letting me throw in the towel. $\infty + 1$.

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“Perturbations of the Mind”: Affects in the Early Modern Period

In Henry Crosse’s 1603 treatise *Virtues Common-wealth*, the author exhorts his audience to use temperance to “keep desire under the yoke of reason.” One of many early modern pamphlets warning against the dangers of unbridled passions, Crosse’s identifies the source of these endangering passions as external:

Of the lineaments of [Temperance’s] perfection, the whole world doth subsist and abide, even from the lowest to the highest, without whom our lusts would overthrow our understanding, and the body rebel against all good order, and the habit of reason wholly suppressed: for she tempereth and keepeth in frame the whole body of man, without whose aid many enemies would creep in, and infect our best parts, and utterly ruinate and cast down the bulwark of reason, and walls of understanding ...¹

Likening them to transmitters of common disease, Crosse characterizes destructive lusts as “enemies” which overcome the weak human body, undermining the “good order” normally maintained by reason. These enemy lusts “creep in” to the “body” of man, implying they are not necessarily already present in the mind and body of the sufferer. By linking inordinate emotion with external sources, Crosse builds on the rich tradition of Galenic humoral theory, the most commonly held medical theory of his time, which stresses that the human body is essentially porous and open to the influence of outside forces including the elements, meteorological phenomena, and the humors of other people.

This porosity is the cornerstone of my argument: Shakespearean emotions are contagious. Tears, rage, compassion, fear, affection, horror, and laughter travel invisible

pathways from character to character in his texts, reinforcing an implicit scheme of emotional transmission harkening back to Plato and Aristotle. Whether generated internally or imposed from the outside, these passions have the ability to wreak havoc on individuals, communities, and even countries, because passion can, and often does, lead to action. In this context, the dangers of inordinate passion explicated by Crosse and others make sense: emotions produce motive for action, even when the actions are not supported by reason. Compounded with the fact that passions can invade an individual from the outside, the danger takes on an element of horror—if an individual cannot control his emotions, and it is his emotions that spur him to act, then what, or who, controls his actions?² The Christian equation of emotions with the seven deadly sins during the Middle Ages—sins thought to originate with the Devil, an outside source—and the Neo-Stoic doctrine of emotional suppression that follows in the Renaissance can be traced straight to this dilemma.³

For this study, I have selected Shakespearean texts that well illustrate the mechanisms of emotional contagion and subsequent affective action: *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Othello*. Although each of these works ends in tragedy and contains similar violent acts including murder, assassination, rape, and suicide, each text proffers a unique window into how Shakespeare and his contemporaries conceptualized the transmission of affect and its consequences. By showing the literality of humoral and corporal language permeating these works, I will trace the eruptions of emotions from the moment of infection through to the last action clearly linked to the original emotion or emotions.

Emotions in the Shakespearean Age

For there are not so manie sortes of windes, whirlwindes, or tempestes in the Sea, as there is varietie of motions that come from the affections in our heartes. ~ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The Second Part of the French Academie* (1594)

The first difficulty scholars of early modern emotions encounter is the word *emotion* itself. For the purposes of this study, I use *emotion*, *passion*, and *affect* interchangeably; however, I want to clarify that the early modern usage of these terms does not exactly correspond to the meanings we have for them today.⁴ Although *emotion* entered the English language in 1579, it initially meant “a political or social agitation.” Later, in 1603, it was used to mean “a moving out, migration, transference from one place to another.” It is not until 1660—a half century after Shakespeare wrote the works under consideration here—that emotion came to have the meaning we recognize today: an “agitation or disturbance of mind, feeling, passion” (*OED*). Instead, Shakespeare and his contemporaries use the terms *passion* and *affection* to describe the phenomena that we now refer to as *emotions*. To further complicate matters, *passion* has a much wider meaning in early modern texts that it does today. Louise Bishop links the diffuse nature of the word with the medieval and early modern humoral theory of the physical universe:

[B]ecause the universe is matter-ful, *passion* can refer to food properties of eggs, to qualities of the air such as storms, to external agency or force—suffering inflicted from the outside—and to an internal state of mind. It is also used to refer to illness The word’s [early modern] meaning is far removed from its modern usage as “uncontrollable and immediate emotion.”⁵

Bishop points out that medieval and early modern “emotions *are* matter” (emphasis added) and subject to the laws of the physical universe in ways that the more recent Cartesian model of emotion denies.⁶ These material passions can arise internally in an

individual, or can be imposed on man from the outside since he, too, is a physical being composed of the same elements and humors as the rest of the universe.⁷

But Shakespearean passions are not solely physical manifestations. Dyan Elliott explains that the early modern passions take on a hybridity that their classical counterparts lacked. Philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages began to view the Aristotelian “perturbations” of the soul as complicated by overlapping mental and physical states; psychology, physiology, and spirituality all had a place in the complexity of human emotional experience.⁸ Carol Thomas Neely, using the example of the passion melancholy, offers an excellent example of both the challenges and rewards inherent in the multivalent emotional discourse of Shakespeare’s time:

Because the term [melancholy] refers to a material fluid, an emotional state, and a temperament, it acquires a host of meanings beyond its medical ones, ranging from depression to brilliance, and generates productive thinking about the constituents of the human.⁹

In the Renaissance, this general consensus that mind, body, and spirit are all interdependent identifies emotions as a mechanism for the balance—or imbalance—of these three key aspects of the human condition. This early modern identification of passions as catalysts for human weal or woe is one explanation for the veritable explosion of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts dedicated to debating every aspect of emotional experience: where they come from, what they do, how they should be categorized, should they be controlled, how they can be controlled, and the dangers of uncontrolled passions.¹⁰

This increased attention to the role and control of passions in early modern texts stems mainly from the notion that all disease—mental, physical, and even spiritual—can trace its roots back to body. Yvette Marie Marchand emphasizes that a holistic view of health needs to be considered by scholars working with early modern texts because descriptions of physical ailments often take on a corresponding mental and spiritual context. She cites evidence that many early moderns consulted both medical practitioners and spiritual healers when they contracted corporal diseases. Ill individuals would therefore

be examined and analysed only as a complex physical, emotional and spiritual whole in which any physical disorder would denote a relative spiritual disorder—or at least a spiritual cause—no physical disorder could be healed except through a spiritual cure, and all spiritual disorders could not but have a physical, visible impact on the body.¹¹

Consequently, both mental illness and physical infirmity became a stigma of spiritual corruption.¹² And the mechanism of corruption was often identified as emotional.

Early modern theories of the passions contain several key ideas: passions straddle several categories of being (sensual/rational/spiritual), they alter the composition and/or balance of the bodily humors, they promote good or bad actions, and they can be generated internally or imposed by external sources. In *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1603), the English Jesuit Thomas Wright explores the first three of these core beliefs. First, he explains that early modern passions, as emanations of the soul, fulfill important functions in both the inner and outer human realms:

Three sorts of actions proceed from men's souls: there are internal and immaterial, as the acts of our wits and wills; others be more external and material, as the acts of our senses (seeing, hearing, moving, etc.); others stand betwixt these two extremes and border upon them both. . . . Those actions then . . . we call Passions and Affections, or perturbations, of the mind. . . .¹³

Wright's emphasis on the ability of emotions to bridge the gap between the internal and external realms of human consciousness anticipates recent findings in the fields of neuroscience and human behavior.¹⁴ Passions can act as agents of communication within the body; for example, an individual experiences feelings of happiness and contentment, letting him know that his plans are going well. Externally, emotions convey meaning to other people through physical manifestations, or, as emphasized in this paper, by contaminating them with the emotions themselves.

Another cornerstone of Renaissance emotional doctrine, and subsequently my theory of early modern emotional contagion, is the understanding that passions can modify the humors of the body, in turn altering the body itself. Wright makes this relationship between the emotions, the mind, and the body explicit:

[W]hen these affections are stirring in our minds they alter the humours of our bodies, causing some passion or alteration in them.¹⁵

This distillation of early modern emotional theory asserts that the "affection," or emotion, induces an agitated state of mind, a condition that, in turn, transforms the humors. Then this change in the humors results in corresponding modifications of the body itself. And, because all of the systems are interconnected, the original agitation can provoke a series of alterations in the mind, body, and soul of the affected individual, a series only halted

or reversed if corrective humoral regulation is implemented. To complicate matters further, passions themselves are not always seen as the root cause of a “perturbation”—many Renaissance theories blame poor diet, bad air, and even demons for the ultimate cause of humoral imbalance and the resulting bodily disease. All possible corrupting factors must be considered when dealing with early modern descriptions of physical or psychological imbalance.

In many early modern texts, emotions are depicted as corrupting judgment, motivating sin, and undermining reason. Wright addresses this issue in his *Passions of the Mind*:

They are called perturbations for that (as afterward shall be declared) they trouble wonderfully the soul, corrupting the judgement and seducing the will, inducing, for the most part, to vice, and commonly withdrawing from virtue; and therefore some call them maladies or sores of the soul.¹⁶

In the guise of “sores of the soul,” emotions gain a particularly poor reputation among philosophers and preachers of a Neo-stoical bent.¹⁷ The link between sin and excessive emotion first promoted in the medieval period still has a voice in the Renaissance.

Whether a passion is labeled sinful or destructive is often based on degree and result; “perturbations” only exist where they do damage to the body or soul through the actions they provoke. Thomas Elyot, in his *Castell of Health* (1595), supports this idea by linking the “immoderate” “passions of the mind” with forces that “annoy the body and shorten the life.” Elyot’s look at inordinate emotion focuses on results: passions have the ability to ruin a man’s “estimation” and provoke God’s “displeasure.”¹⁸

On the other hand, Renaissance humanist texts, in recognition of how positive emotions like compassion, loyalty, and charity can elevate the human condition, draw attention to the ways affections lead people towards virtue. In *The Passions of the Soul* (1538), referred to as the “the richest anthology of common places on emotions ever published in the Renaissance,”¹⁹ author Juan Luis Vives illustrates why God created emotions:

God, our admirable Creator, provided all animals with affections as incentives to move souls destined to inhabit bodies, to prevent these souls from being downcast and oppressed under the burden of the body like a lazy donkey, forever languid and asleep, oblivious of their real good, negligent in doing what was required for their welfare. Emotions are spurs to move the soul this or that way, reins to restrain it from running into the harmful.²⁰

Four hundred years later, Antonio R. Damasio’s scientific exploration of the biology of emotions has yielded analogous conclusions about the usefulness of emotions. In his studies, the ability of emotions to communicate internally within an organism—what Vives refers to as “incentives to move souls”—is a major part of their purpose:

All emotions have some kind of regulatory role to play, leading in one way or another to the creation of circumstances advantageous to the organism exhibiting the phenomenon; emotions are about the life of the organism, its body to be precise, and their role is to assist the organism in maintaining life.²¹

Similarly, early modern passions in their beneficial guise aid their subjects in making sound decisions. Wright identifies these positive emotions as “affections” because “the soul by them either affecteth some good or, for the affection of some good, detesteth

some ill.”²² How the love of God helps good Christians avoid sin is one of the most common examples from the period.

Early modern passions are also, as George L. Dillon reminds us, often depicted as “virtually autonomous forces to which a person may become subject or may suffer.”²³ When a person fails to command his emotions, passion can even be seen as “a tragic or fatal force” with the ability to alter the actions of that individual and anyone under his influence.²⁴ Dillon is referring to the most extreme examples of emotional stimulation—the same extremes this dissertation examines in Shakespeare’s writing—but the Renaissance philosophical debates on the subject did acknowledge that the true difference between helpful and harmful emotions was one of degree. Juan Luis Vives describes this emotional spectrum:

The disturbances of the soul are like those of the sea. Some are soft as a breeze, some are more intense, others finally are as violent as the gusty squalls that churn up the depths of the oceans whirling together sand and fish. Emotions can be as light as the onset of a rising wave; others are stronger, while others are powerful enough to shake up the soul and dethrone it from the seat of rational judgment by rendering it truly disturbed and impotent, deprived of self-control, subject to strange powers and totally blind, unable to see anything.²⁵

It is this last idea Vives describes, that of a human being enthralled to forces beyond his control, which drives much of the early modern uneasiness regarding emotions. If a passion has the ability to overtake the senses, rendering people incapable of rational action, then they are constantly vulnerable to attack from disease, sin, and additional passions. To make matters worse, these “disturbances of the soul” are not exclusively

internal. Michael G. Schoenfeldt describes the early modern affections as “physiological double agents,” operating on both the inner and outer realms of the self, perpetuating a “continual cold war” where a person must guard against being “overrun” by unrestrained passion.²⁶

Humoral Theory and the Emotions

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. *King James Bible*, “Genesis,” 3:19

It is not the purpose of this study to survey the abundance of classical and medieval influences on early modern humoral theory, but I believe it is necessary to touch on the major ideas that served as the backbone of Renaissance conceptions of the passions. According to E. Ann Matter, the widespread appeal of Galenic medical theory in medieval and early modern England is its inclusiveness: “human existence [is] linked to an enormous, cosmic series of interrelated phenomena: the stars, the cardinal directions, the essential elements of all creation, and the essential humors of the human body.”²⁷ Galen’s practical approach to curing all ills coupled with the emphasis on the interconnectivity of microcosm and macrocosm, won humoral theory more influential supporters than detractors until well into the late seventeenth century.²⁸ Yet, even among its supporters, the specifics of humoral theory still met with contention. As Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson caution, “Renaissance medical discourse forms a messy heteroglossia that cannot be oversimplified.”²⁹

Despite the plethora of conflicting medical theories in circulation during the Renaissance, we can scan the most influential texts of the period and come up with a list of commonly held ideas about the humors. Within what Caroline Bynum calls a “cacophony of discourses,”³⁰ where no universal agreement exists on how the humors

operate or how passions are generated, certain tenets of humoral theory are still generally agreed upon in the majority of philosophical, medical, and literary works that have survived the centuries:

- Four humors exist in the human body: Blood, Phlegm, Melancholy (black bile), and Cholera (red and yellow bile).
- The humors are intrinsically linked to the elements; Bartholomew calls them the “children of the elements.”³¹
- The human body’s health is directly dependent on humoral balance.
- A disruption or imbalance of the humors not only provokes physical disease—psychological and spiritual disorders can also be attributed to the overabundance of certain humors.
- Emotions can change the humoral makeup of the body even as emotions are represented as humors themselves.

These five characteristics of Galenic humoral theory are the foundation of not only the early modern physician’s understanding of physic, but also the philosopher’s approach to human behavior and the cleric’s method for examining spiritual distemper. The mental, spiritual, and physical realms are all intertwined in Galen’s theory and are not torn asunder until Descartes.

For a modern reader, this implied interaction between the external world and our internal milieu may seem strange. Even though we still retain leftover phrases such as “under the weather,” “feeling melancholy,” or “in an ill humor,” the Western mechanistic view that rules our current medical and scientific discourses tends to dismiss the interconnectedness of emotion, environment, and the body. For early moderns, who

thrive on recognizing correspondences in seemingly unrelated things, the universality offered by humoral theory reinforces understanding of the human condition. I believe Louise M. Bishop explains Galenism's inclusiveness best:

In its fullest understanding, Galenism—a theory shared between learned and lay, a powerful and eminently satisfying representational system—links character with health, body with thought, material temperament with material cosmos, reader with text. Emotions—joy, sorrow, fear, and wrath—rely on, affect, and even are the humors, and thus are not understood as something separate from bodily composition. Rather, humoral theory ties together the emotions and the body, including its senses, in the same way it ties together body and cosmos: all, even the emotions, participate in the material nature of health.³²

Figure 1 illustrates several of the ways that this “eminently satisfying representational system” conveyed relationships between emotional states, the seasons, the senses, and even the constellations. The fact that this system was available to both “learned and lay” only reinforced its popularity during the early modern period.

For modern readers, the correspondence between humoral fluids like phlegm and actual mucus may seem to be a given. But we must remember that Renaissance readers would not see it as a one to one correspondence. The humors themselves, though related to the visible fluids that circulate through the biological body, are, in Galenic medicine, fundamentally *invisible*. Noha Arikha explains:

These humours were not themselves visible, although they were based on visible substances. Everyone had seen blood; phlegm was apparent in the form of a runny nose, or tears, say; yellow bile appeared in wounds as what we

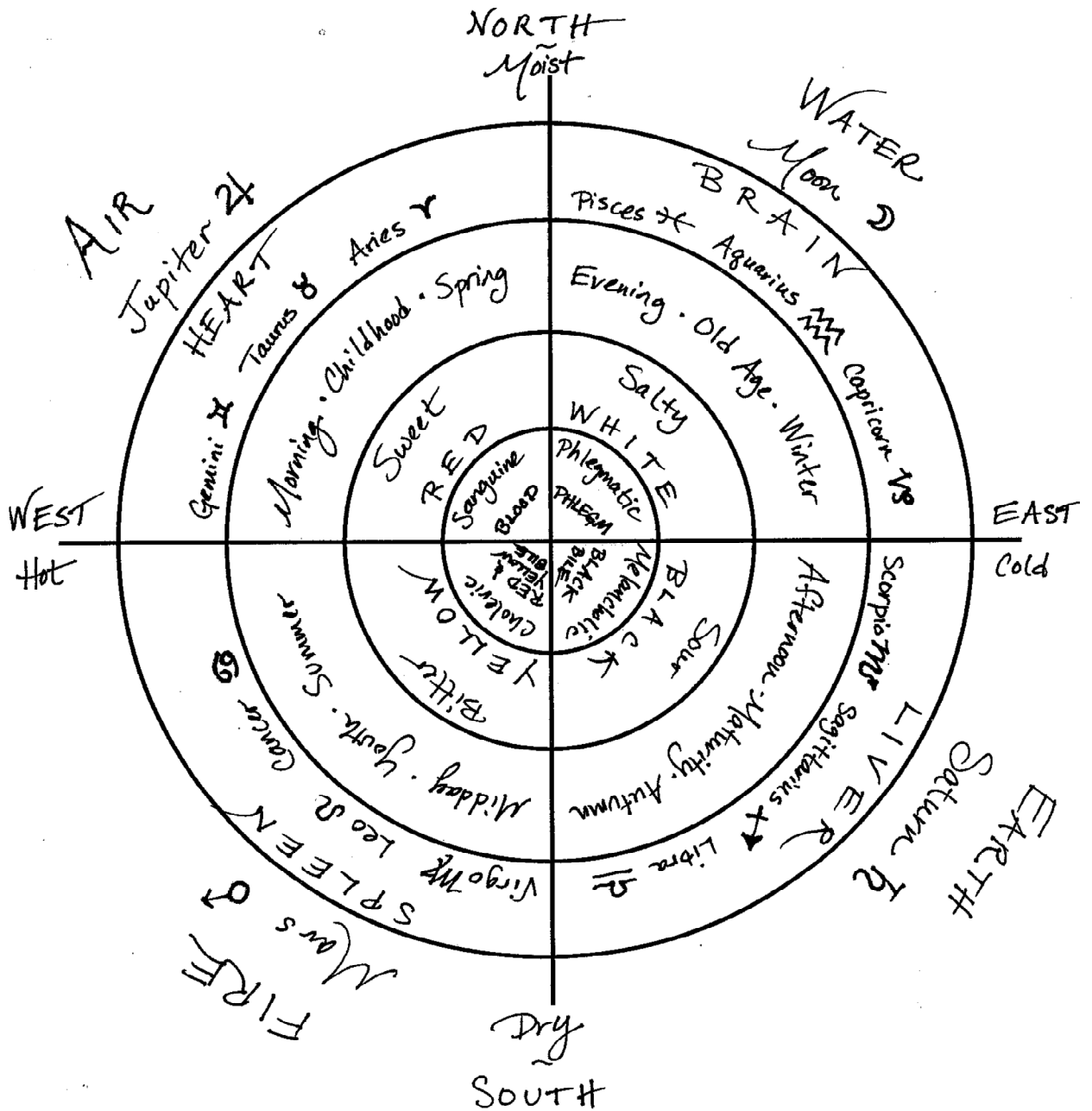


Figure 1 – The Humors and Their Relationships with other Early Modern Categories³³

understand to be pus, or within vomit. As for black bile, it might have been inferred from the observation of clotted blood, excrement, and dark vomit [. . .] [N]one of the humours needed to be visible to exert their hold on the

imagination, and to provide a credible, at times effective physiological account of the unseen operations within the body.³⁴

In early modern medicine, it was necessary to observe and analyze all the symptoms of the body, mind, and spirit to truly understand the diseased condition of the patient.

Certain visible humoral signs could be taken into account, but the physician, knowing that humoral imbalance did not always manifest itself in corporal ways, would need to assess the patient's behavior, emotions, and even actions to determine the root cause of his distemper.

Early Modern Emotional Contagion

By giving emotions the ability to impose themselves on individuals from the outside,³⁵ the early modern theory of passions does two surprising things: first, it postulates a unity of the individual with his environment that countermands the popular modern idea of autonomous selfhood, and second, it complicates the relationship between free will and a brand of environmental pre-determinism. The former, as Katharine Craik points out, is more of a problem for present day scholars than it is for the early moderns themselves:

Scholars have until recently tended to regard early modern bodies and selves as internally regulated and essentially separate from the world they inhabited. The body in particular has often appeared as an enclosed container, more readily defined by its internal fluctuations of temperature, density and viscosity than by the environment outside. We are now starting to understand the ways in which the world shaped and directed the psychophysical self, however, and to appreciate

that the early modern subject was not only comprised of hidden, inward phenomena but also formed in relation to its surroundings.³⁶

Inhabiting a pre-Cartesian world, Shakespeare and his contemporaries were not indoctrinated into the mechanistic view of the world that pervades our own discourses. Instead, magic and science, spirituality and physicality existed side by side, and, in some cases, overlapped with impunity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the mobile, invisible, multivalent emotions represented in early modern texts, emotions that are given a concrete basis even as they simultaneously exert influence on the spiritual and mental planes.

The basic concept that the physical world in the form of emotions can invade an individual and cause a change in his behavior, health, or personality is not necessarily what disturbed Renaissance thinkers; rather many were repelled by the potential spiritual consequences of this activity. In *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, Nancy G. Siraisi cites this as the prevalent criticism of Galen's humoral theory:

Christian, Muslim, and Jewish critics all took Galen to task for psychological materialism; they believed that the theory [...] implied that material causes (the elements) determined the nature of the human soul and moral qualities, and they objected on philosophical or religious grounds.³⁷

Writing in the second century, Galen himself would not have agreed with these objections because he synthesized his humoral system from the philosophical writings of Plato, Aristotle and Hippocrates, and did not assign spiritual judgment to humoral imbalances in his patients. Instead, he took the stance that through diet, medicine, and rational control one could overcome physical and mental disease by regulating the

physical influences acting upon the body.³⁸ Subsequent defenders of his theory utilize this regulatory aspect of humoral medicine to demonstrate that human beings have the ability through free will to control their passions and hence the aspects of health that depend on those passions. Lisa Perfetti claims that the Christian emphasis on free will helped critics of Galen's humoral theory overcome the materialistic objections by stressing that "although the bodily passions [come] from outer forces, they were not [...] fixed, predetermined, or beyond control."³⁹ The humors may pressure and even invade man from the outside, but he has the God-given ability to resist and expel contaminating humors by following medical prescriptions for diet, exercise, and purgation.

The idea of passion as a communicable disease, capable of moving from person to person without the receiver's permission, is implicit in early modern conduct manuals which almost unanimously warn their readers to avoid the company of immoral men and women, or those prone to excesses of all types, because of the danger of unconsciously acquiring the same ill traits.⁴⁰ For example, Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* makes explicit this link between disease, passion, and contagion:

For truly vertue purchased and gotten by practise, is of no lesse power against all contagion of wickednes, than preseruatiues well compounded are of force in a plague time to preserue in good helth the inhabitants of a countrie, and as heeretofore that famous physicion Hippocrates preserued his citie of Coos from a mortalitie that was ge|nerall throughout all Grecia, by counselling his countrymen to kindle many fires in all publike places, to the end thereby to purifie the aire: euen so whosoeuer hath his soule possessed, and his hart well armed with the

brightnes and power of vertue, he shal escape the dangers of corruption, and eschew all contagion of euill maners.⁴¹

For Castiglione, the courtier “well armed” with “virtue” can bolster his “hart” and “soule”—the Renaissance equivalent of fortifying one’s immune system—and thereby resist this passionate contagion embodied in “euill manners.” Thomas Walkington, in his *Optick Glass of the Humours* (1621), likens the exposure to others’ bad humors to bathing in “the muddy streame of their luxury.” And, since the bathers inhabit a porous body, the contagious consequences of participating in this “riot” are dire: habitation of “the very suburbs of death!”⁴²

Yet early modern writers did not always see these communicable passions in a negative light; certain emotions were viewed favorably and even cultivated by writers of conduct manuals and theologians committed to the betterment of human kind. Donald R. Wehrs further explains that Renaissance humanism bases its defense of the passions on a “moral physiology” where “reason and emotion presuppose and enrich one another,” “habitual practices modify states of being,” and “moral deliberation hinges upon cultivated, continuous interplay of right feeling and right thinking, an interplay that depends upon concrete images or patterns of excellence, prototypes, that impress and reinforce themselves upon us through experience” (68). On the one hand, emotions can motivate people to contribute to the greater good and, in turn, their examples of bravery and compassion can inspire others to commit similar admirable acts. Conversely, the human being exposed to bad habits, false images of appropriate behavior, and/or immoral experiences is vulnerable to those passions that work to destroy human happiness.

In Shakespeare's day, emotional enquiry was a vital source of material for philosophers, physicians and fiction writers alike. Pre-modern and early modern thinkers, operating within a paradigm of the physical world very different from our own, accepted emotional contagion as a fact. The porous, humoral body of the early moderns was open to outside influences like winds, flowing water, as well as affective states; if one could become melancholy due to a change in wind direction, why couldn't a person become choleric when exposed to another person suffering from the same "disease"? Evidence from period writings suggests early modern individuals perceived themselves as physically integrated with nature as well as all mankind. For example, Donne's point in *Meditation XVII* may be to unite all Christians by emphasizing their interconnectedness through the Church, but his words also suggest that humanity is intimately linked through shared physical and biological elements:

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. . .⁴³

The physical elements creating both "every man" and the "main" are the four elements of Galenic medical theory, elements shared by all animate and inanimate features of planet Earth.

According to humoral theory, then, the world and environment can invade a person, corrupting his humors and changing his emotional makeup. Anglicus Bartholomaeus, an early English author known for compiling facts and anecdotes about a variety of natural phenomenon, stresses the porosity of the human body and the influence

of outside forces, especially winds, on the humoral composition and balance of those subject to their effects; for example, in *Of winde orientall, and Subsolane*, he lists the Southern wind as particularly noxious:

And this Southerne winde is hot and moyst and maketh lightning and grose aire and thick, and norisheth myst with heate, & be openeth pores, and multiplieth and bringeth forth much raine with his moisture, as Isid. saith•• he bréedeth tempest in ye sea. for he bloweth vpwarde, as Beda saith. Also he openeth the pores of bodyes, and letteth vertue of feelyng, and maketh heuinesse of bodie, as Ipocras sayth. Southerne windes (he saith) gréeue the hearing, & be dim, and they greeue heads, & be slow, and also vnbinding. For Southerne winds vnbind humours, & moue them out of the inner parts outwarde, & they cause heuinesse of wits & of feeling: they corrupt and destroye, they heat, and maketh men fall into sicknesse. And they bréed the gout, the falling euill, itch, and the ague.⁴⁴

According to Bartholomaeus, these winds not only affect the natural environment as a whole—rain and tempests—but also influence the human inhabitants in its wake. For my argument, the idea that these winds can “unbind the humours” and move them around in the body leads to the notion that the natural world can, in fact, produce a measurable, bodily change that then may lead to emotional change. The fluidity of the humors and their ability to bridge all aspects of the human condition—mental, physical, and spiritual—logically leads us to believe that what influences the humors, also influences the whole of human experience.

The most common external influence, however, is the input from a person's own senses. Bruce Smith, in his explorations of early modern hearing, links the process of

sensory perception to both reason and emotion. He demonstrates that although "Galenic medicine made thinking absolutely dependent on seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling," reason itself has a hard time controlling emotions because the passions themselves are also directly influenced by these senses.⁴⁵ The eyes and ears are the most common sites of emotional contagion, being subject to sensory input of an invasive nature. Whereas a person has virtually complete control over what he or she touches, tastes, and smells, noxious sights and sounds impinge on a person's senses without direct invitation.

Context and Procedure

My work on emotional contagion in Shakespeare has grown out of relatively recent scholarship on humoral theory and emotions in early modern literary texts as well as extant scientific findings in the fields of psychology and neurology. The four books that provided the most abiding influence on this project are Gail Kern Paster's groundbreaking volume *The Body Embarrassed* (1993) and its successor *Humoring the Body* (2004), Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (1999), and Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect* (2004). Paster's work, with its insights into early modern psychophysiology, has inspired a surge of interest among literary historians for what she calls "the lived practices of early modern cosmology."⁴⁶ Like Paster, I argue that effective analysis of early modern representations of emotions have to take into account the "intellectual dominance of Renaissance psychological materialism."⁴⁷ However, where she builds a new approach to Galenic theory through the lens of philosophers like Bakhtin, Deleuze, and Guattari, my secondary inspiration comes from modern scientific studies of emotional transmission. And, although Paster

bases much of her first book on the idea of humoral leakage, she does not explore the idea that humors, and hence passions, can be contagious.

Michael Schoenfeldt's *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*, though indebted to Paster's spotlight on the individual's humoral experience in Renaissance literary texts, diverges from her work in significant ways. Schoenfeldt sees the humoral paradigm as a source of empowerment for the early moderns rather than one of necessary embarrassment. Looking at early modern medical prescriptions, he analyzes humoral fluctuations in terms of self-control and self-improvement, concluding that "the Galenic body achieves health not by shutting itself off from the world around it but by carefully monitoring and manipulating the inevitable and literal influences of the outside world, primarily through therapies of ingestion and excretion."⁴⁸ I, too, explore methods of regulation and balance in the humors, but I am also focused on the humoral influence an individual can exert on the external world. My interest lies in the ebb and flow of humors in *and out* of the early modern body and its surroundings.

Teresa Brennan's *The Transmission of Affect*, an eclectic exploration of how emotions travel from one person to another, triggered my interest in how the early moderns perceived emotions. Brennan's book, although not a comprehensive discussion of what sociologists are now commonly referring to as "emotional contagion," is an important starting point for current scholars working in emotional theory. Blending accounts from history, psychoanalysis, philosophy, and literature, Brennan's work identifies Cartesian dualism as the reason the transmission of affect is not a widely recognized process today. She claims that the transmission of affect was once "common knowledge" and that "preindustrial cultures assume that the person is *not* affectively

contained,”⁴⁹ ideas that my work on humoral theory and emotional contagion support. Although Brennan does not address the early modern period or Galenic theory in particular, the early modern humoral system, with its emphasis on the porosity of the body and potential invasive nature of passions, reflects all of the key components of her transmission theory. I build on her ideas that emotions can be either generated internally by an individual or subsumed into the body from an external source and that the transmission of affect is “a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect.”⁵⁰

While the attention in this book is firmly on literature, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the inspiration and insight I have gleaned from reports outside of the humanities. Although the transmission of emotion seems to occur almost instantaneously through mechanisms which still elude modern science, recent work in biology, psychology, and sociology has begun the fascinating process of deciphering how people feel others’ emotions. In fact, neurologists such as Antonio R. Damasio⁵¹, clinical therapists like Elaine Hatfield, John T. Cacioppo, and Richard L. Rapson⁵², and sociology researchers from MIT & Harvard⁵³ all are coming to the startling conclusion that the early modern emphasis on soul/mind/body integration may have been correct all along. Plus, the role of emotions—especially the communication of emotions—appears to be key to understanding just how these three aspects of the human condition work in tandem. Donald R. Wehrs, in his exploration of what he calls early modern moral physiology, asserts that “Shakespeare allows us to see the remarkable degree to which pre-Cartesian notions of embodied subjectivity are consistent with neuroscience’s dismantling of Cartesian dualism.”⁵⁴ So reading Shakespearean texts with an eye and ear

for emotional manifestations and communications helps the modern scholar to not only understand Renaissance theories of personhood, but can actually offer insight on modern states of being as well.

In my next chapter, “‘Greedy Eyeballs’ and ‘Thievish Ears’: Beauty’s Sensual Assault in Shakespeare’s *Rape of Lucrece*,” I argue that beauty is the root of the violent, contagious action driving the tale. Tarquin himself is ravished by Lucrece’s beauty, first aurally when her husband Collatine “publishes” her perfection to Tarquin, and then visually when he sees her in person. His senses are overwhelmed by a “rage of lust,” a condition he finds impossible to rationally control. In early modern humoral theory, Tarquin’s “inflamed” condition can be described as a surfeit of blood created by an overheated brain due to his exposure to Lucrece’s “peerless” beauty; in order for him to regain humoral equilibrium, the prince must exorcise his excess blood. Unfortunately for Lucrece, Tarquin’s choice of purgation is rape. When Tarquin leaves his “load of lust” in her body, Lucrece is infected with the beauty-induced poison that drove the prince to violence and her eyes and ears are opened to a world of corruption. Determined to transform her story of shame into one of honor, Lucrece plans her own blood-letting. Gathering her husband and his “knights,” she passes Tarquin’s beauty-inspired violence on to them in a mutated form—the lust for vengeance. Using both aural (her story) and visual (the spectacle of her suicide) persuasion, the “true wife” reveals her humoral contamination even as she proves the purity of her mind. Through her act of self-violence, Lucrece transforms the original contagion into a force which purges Rome of the Tarquins’ rule.

In "'Transformed With Their Fear': Dread, Contagion, and Violence

in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," I trace Shakespeare's descriptions of environmental events in Julian Rome and how these correspond to the emotional complexion of the agents in the play. Building on Antony's claim that "passion is catching" (3.1.283), this chapter goes beyond the aural and visual modes of contagion to include the other senses in an experiential whole. Unlike the blatant exchange of bodily fluids in *Lucrece*, the humoral contagion in *Julius Caesar* is more subtle and diffuse. I argue that the violent actions in the play result from multiple humoral influences, both microcosmic—"Brutus, with himself at war" (1.2.46)—and macrocosmic—"The heavens themselves blaze forth the deaths of princes" (2.2.31). I identify fear as the main emotional vector in this play and illustrate how the imagination takes on a crucial role in the misregulation of the humors, a situation that, in turn, creates the ideal environment for violent action.

My fourth chapter, "'Eaten Up with Passion': Deliberate Contagion and the Failure of Reason in *Othello*," examines the false transmission of emotion perpetrated by Iago to destroy Othello. Though we have seen characters like Cassius use an emotion for their own ends, here Iago actually develops false emotional paradigms, reframing his hatred for the general with trappings of love; successfully communicating the degree of his passion without the content, Iago is able to fool Othello into believing Desdemona is false. Building on Thomas Wright's warnings against trusting a false friend—for example, a person who "such divers things they will relate, by their own malice invented . . . forged to catch the seely simple soul"⁵⁵—I explore how Iago uses Othello's powerful imagination against him by poisoning his ears with false information. Despite his demand for "ocular proof," the Moor becomes overwhelmed by the force of Iago's emotions and becomes an instrument of "honest" Iago's virulent hate.

Each of these selected works offers a window into early modern Galenic theory and the transference of its unique species of passion. Building on modern literary criticism grounded in humoral bodies, a range of current psychological and philosophical works about emotions, and early modern primary sources dealing with the same, I hope to open a virtually unexplored avenue in affect theory. The basic principles of humoral emotional transmission explored here can then be applied to other authors and texts so we can develop a comprehensive understanding of emotional contagion in the Renaissance world.

¹ I have normalized this passage from the transcription of Henry Crosse's 1603 *Vertues common-vvealth* found on *Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership*; any errors in transcription are solely mine. Here is the entire passage in its original language:

Now lastly followeth Temperance, as a sad and sober Matron, a prouident guide and wise Nurse, awaiting that voluptuousnesse haue no preheminece in the soule of man, the most glorious Vertue in any kinde of estate, she ordereth the affections with continencie, an enemie to lust, and a mediocritic in the pleasures of the body, whose office is to cou•t nothing that may bee repented of afterwarde, nor to excede the boundes of modestie, but to keepe desire vnder the yoake of reason. Of the lyneaments of her perfection, the whole world doth subsist and abide, euen from the lowest to the highest, without whom our lusts would ouerthrowe our vnderstanding, and the body rebell against all good order, and the habit of reason wholly suppressed: for shee tempereth and keepeth in frame the whole body of man, without whose aide many enenies would creepe in, and infect our best parts, and vtterly ruinate and cast downe the bulwarke of reason, and walles of vnderstanding: but hee that doth sacrifice his endeouours to so diuine an essence, swimmeth safe betweene two Riuers deuoyd of daunger. Ex/treames are euer hurtfull; for if a man eate too much or too little, doth it not hurt the body? so is it of too im/moderate labour, or too much idlenesse, of too much boldnesse, and too much cowardnesse: these extremities are vicious and euill, but the meane doth temper them both.

² See Grant Williams' "The Transmateriality of Memory in Early Modern Psychophysiological Discourse." Williams believes that the early moderns existed in a state of perpetual paranoia as a result of their inability to regulate their bodies' responses to the myriad forces – external and internal – that could potentially take away their control:

The early modern subject holds a hyper-paranoid stance toward otherness. Whereas the classic paranoiac regards an external other as a persecutor, the early modern subject exhibits a paranoia of interiority in which the world is not the only threat. The sensitive soul with all its attendant organs cannot be trusted, for it is capable of conspiring with the world against the self. Hyper-paranoia may result in a bewildering series of self-alienations: the body seeks to contaminate the soul with carnal knowledge, passions rebel against the dictates of reason, phantasy seeks to steep the mind in sensuality, and Satan attacks the individual from inside, penetrating one's cavities and organs. Every part of corporeality is a dormant traitor awaiting activation. (325)

³ See Morton W. Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins: An Introduction to the History of a Religious Concept* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1952).

⁴ For a look at the anachronistic aspect of the word *emotion* in medieval and early modern studies, see Louise M. Bishop, *Words, Stones, & Herbs: The Healing Word in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2007), 37.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁷ Certainly the Christian philosophers would not argue against this point since the *Bible* explicitly links man to the earth and the air: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7) and “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19).

⁸ Dyan Elliott, “The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality,” *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, (Rochester, NY: York Medieval Press, 1997. 141-73).

⁹ Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004), 4.

¹⁰ For example, Timothy Bright’s *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), Robert Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Thomas Elyot’s *Castel of Helth* (1542), Levinus Lemnius’ *The Touchstone of Complexions* (1581), Thomas Walkington’s *The Optick Glass of Humours* (1631), and Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604).

¹¹ Yvette Marie Marchand, “Towards a Psychosomatic View of Human Nature,” in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, England: Brewer, 1999) 125-6.

¹² See Philip Ball’s “Demons of the Mind,” *The Devil’s Doctor: Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006) 296-320, for a discussion of the relationship between humoral imbalance and the Renaissance perception of spiritual ill.

¹³ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, William Webster Newbold, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 94.

¹⁴ In the realm of modern psychology, Keith Oatley reached similar conclusions in *Best Laid Schemes: The Psychology of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992.) He explains his components of emotion at length:

We can think of functions of emotions, then, in three different ways. Basic emotion signals communicate directly to ourselves and tend to constrain our actions, thus managing happy continuations of existing plans or dysphoric transitions to new ones. They also communicate to others, tending to induce in them states similar to or complimentary to our own, and thus prompting continuations or transitions in those with whom we interact. Finally, we communicate semantically by talking about emotions to ourselves and to others. What we say in such dialogues also has effects, ranging from the building of models of our self to influencing others in the way they think and act. (68)

¹⁵ Wright, 94.

¹⁶ Wright, 94.

¹⁷ Ricardo Quintana explains the Neo-Stoic stance: “Neo-Stoicism was a Renaissance phenomenon, which reached its height at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. The essence of the neo-Stoical doctrine is this: the passions are utterly reprehensible; reason must and can govern; the life

which is proper to man is a life of unimpassioned reason.” *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift* (New York: Oxford UP, 1953) 59.

¹⁸ Thomas Elyot, *The castell of health, corrected, and in some places augmented by the first author thereof, Sir Thomas Elyot Knight*, 1595. EEBO. Full passage from “Of effectes of the mind” (CAP. 10):

The last of thinges called not naturall, is not the least part to be considered, the which is of affects and passions of the mind. For if they bee immoderate, they doe not only annoy the body and shorte~ the life, but also they doe appayre, and sometime loose vtterly a mans estimation. And that much more is, they bring a man fro~ the vse of reason, and sometime in the displeasure of Almightye God. Wherefore they doe not onely require the helpe of Phisicke corporall, but also the connsaile of a man wise and well learned in morall Philosophie.

¹⁹ Carlos G. Noreña, “Foreward,” Juan Luis Vives, *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of De Anima et Vita*, (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) vi.

²⁰ Juan Luis Vives, *The Passions of the Soul: The Third Book of De Anima et Vita*, Carlos G. Noreña, trans., ed. (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990) 4.

²¹ Antonio R. Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997) 51.

²² Wright, 94.

²³ George L. Dillon, “The Seventeenth-Century Shift in the Theory and Language of Passion” (*Language and Style: An International Journal* 4 (1971): 131-143) 131.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁵ Vives, 4-5.

²⁶ Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1999) 49.

²⁷ E. Ann Matter, “Theories of the Passions and the Ecstasies of Late Medieval Religious Women,” *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2005, 23-42) 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215-23.

²⁹ Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson, “Introduction,” *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*. (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004) xv.

³⁰ Caroline Bynum, “Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective” (*Critical Inquiry* 22.1 (1995): 1-33) 7.

³¹ Anglicus Bartholomaeus, *Batman vppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended: with such additions as are requisite, vnto euery seuerall booke: taken foorth of the most approued authors, the like heretofore not translated in English. Profitable for all estates, as well for the benefite of the mind as the bodie*, (Imprinted by Thomas East, dwelling by Paules wharfe, 1582), “Of humours, and of the generation, effect and working of them. Cap. 6.” He describes the humors thus:

the humours be called the children of the Elementes. For euerye of the hu|mours commeth of the qualytye of the Elementes. And ther be foure humours, Bloud, Fleame, Cholar, and Melan|choly:

and are called simple in comparison to the members, though in respect of the Elements, whose children they be, they be composed. These foure humors in quantitie and qualytie, obseruing euennesse, with due proportion, make perfect and keepe in due state of health, all bodyes hauing blood: lyke as contrariwise, by their vnequalnesse or infection they ingender and cause sicknesse.

³² Bishop, 41.

³³This illustration is derived in part from the following sources: E. Ann Matter, "Theories of the Passions and the Ecstasies of Late Medieval Religious Women" (*The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2005) 25; Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) 11; and Alexander Roob, *The Hermetic Museum: Alchemy & Mysticism* (Cologne, Germany: Taschen Press, 1997) 638, 640, 643, and 645.

³⁴ Noga Arikha, *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007) 8-9.

³⁵ See Lisa Perfetti, "Introduction," *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*. (Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2005): "Both medieval and modern views of emotion . . . include an idea of the force of movement, a kind of passion exerting its force on the body. But . . . in the Middle Ages, before the development of modern psychology, these forces were seen as coming from the outside rather than from within" (6).

³⁶ Katharine A. Craik, *Reading Sensations in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 3.

³⁷ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 106.

³⁸ Arikha, 37-41.

³⁹ Perfetti, 6.

⁴⁰ Susan James in *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth Century Philosophy* makes the connection between "advice books" of the seventeenth century and the "broader preoccupation in early-modern European culture with the relations between knowledge and control, whether of self or others" (2). Often addressed to a ruler or nobleman, the books aimed to instruct the reader on ways to "control his own passions so that he does not . . . forfeit his subjects' loyalty by doing something unjust while he is in a rage" and to "be able to read and manipulate the passions of those around him, to detect and play on the ambition, envy, fear, or esteem of courtiers, counselors, and citizens" (3).

⁴¹ Taken from the *EEBO* version of the 1586 edition of Peter de la Primaudaye's *The French Academie*. This quote is found on the 5th page of the section entitled "The First Daies Vvorke Of This Academie, With The Cause Of Their Assembly. Accessed January 17, 2011.

⁴² Thomas Walkington, *The optick glasse of humors. Or The touchstone of a golden temperature, or the Philosophers stone to make a golden temper wherein the foure complections sanguine, cholericke, phlegmaticke, melancholicke are succinctly painted forth, and their externall intimates laide open to the purblind eye of ignorance it selfe, by which euery one may iudge of what complection he is, and answerably learne what is most suitable to his nature. Lately pend by T.W. Master of Artes. London : Imprinted by Iohn Windet for Martin Clerke, and are to be sold at his shop without Aldersgate, 1607*. The full passage reads:

So then the most exact selfe-knower of [...]ll, if he doe not containe himselfe within the territories and praecincts of reasonable appetite, the *Cynosura* of the wiser dietest, if consorting with misdieters, he bath him selfe in the muddy streame of their luxury and riot, he is in the very next suburbs of death it selfe . . .

⁴³ John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Death's Duel*, (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007) 108-9.

⁴⁴ Bartholomaeus, 159+.

⁴⁵ Bruce Smith, "Hearing Green" (*Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, Eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 147-168) 149-50.

⁴⁶ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotion and the Shakespearean Stage*, (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2004) 20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁸ Schoenfeldt, 22.

⁴⁹ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004) 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁵¹ See Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1994) and *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making Of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999). His main contentions are that "the presumed opposition between emotion and reason" is being challenged by contemporary science and that "emotion is integral to the process of reason and decision making"; the Cartesian mind-body split approach is being replaced by the "notion of an integrated organism" (*Feeling* 40-1).

⁵² See these authors' book entitled *Emotional Contagion* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Hatfield *et al*, in this groundbreaking work, coined the term *emotional contagion*, identifying three propositions related to this type of emotional transmission: "(1) that people tend to mimic others; (2) that emotional experience is affected by such feedback; and (3) that people therefore tend to 'catch' others' emotions" (47).

⁵³ Alison L Hill, David G. Rand, Martin A. Nowak and Nicholas A. Christakis' article "Emotions as infectious diseases in a large social network: the SISa model" (*Proceedings of the Royal Society B* (2010) 277, 3827-3835) "provide[s] formal evidence that positive and negative emotional states behave like infectious diseases spreading across social networks" (3827).

⁵⁴ Donald R. Wehrs, "Moral Physiology, Ethical Prototypes, and the Denaturing of Sense in Shakespearean Tragedy," (*College Literature* 33.1 (2006): 67-92.) 68.

⁵⁵ Wright, 177.

**“Greedy Eyeballs” and “Thievish Ears”:
Beauty’s Sensual Assault
in Shakespeare’s *Rape of Lucrece***

Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece* thoroughly demonstrates the destructive and mutative powers of the transmission of affect; violent passions travel from rapist to victim to revengers, morphing into different strains of emotion and leaving a trail of blood and broken lives (*Figure 1*). The main sites of contagion in this poem are the eyes and ears, sensual organs traditionally seen as vulnerable to corrupting influences during the Renaissance. Passionate fluid – both visible and invisible in the humoral scheme – transmits the *degree* of imbalance to the recipient, not necessarily a duplicate imbalance. Kelly Oliver explains:

Unwanted affects are not so much projected onto another person but transferred onto or injected into another person such that the recipient’s own affects are transformed.¹

To restore humoral balance, each recipient of passion must rid himself or herself of the foreign affects.

Tarquin – Patient Zero in this humoral drama – is himself ravished by Lucrece’s beauty, first aurally when her husband Collatine “publishes” (33) her perfection to Tarquin, and then visually when the prince sees her in person. His senses are overwhelmed by a “rage of lust” (424), a condition he finds impossible to rationally control. In early modern humoral theory, Tarquin’s “inflamed” (“Argument” 17) condition can be described as a surfeit of blood created by an overheated brain when exposed to first the idea of Lucrece’s wifely perfection and then her “peerless” (21) beauty. The metonymy here reflects what the Dutch physician Johan van Beverwijck

(1594 – 1647) wrote about the harmful retention of semen and the necessity to "eject" it if it reaches a plethoric state:

As, when it is in abundance in its vessels, it is necessary to discharge it regularly, or otherwise it will decompose and take on a venomous nature, even in those who are healthy and fresh of body, warm and moist of complexion, if they have an abundance of blood, which is the humour of semen. In those who do not eject the semen regularly, many awkward and deadly accidentes will come forth[.]²

In order for him to regain humoral equilibrium, the prince must exorcise his excess blood. Unfortunately for Lucrece, Tarquin's choice of purgation is rape.

Lucrece, victimized by her own beauty and her husband's wayward tongue, does not have the means to protect herself from her guest's insidious attack. Her "fair face" (72) unknowingly incites Tarquin's "brainsick" (175) desires which lead to her rape, an act that pollutes her physically and emotionally, ultimately driving her to suicide. Prior to the rape, Lucrece's chaste eyes and ears are "weakly fortified" (28) against danger; she cannot recognize the prince's foul intent, "for unstained thoughts do seldom dream on evil" (87). Tarquin forces his "load of lust" (734) into her body, infecting Lucrece with the beauty-induced poison that drove him to brutality, opening her eyes and ears to a world of violence and corruption.

Guilt, rather than lust, plagues Lucrece in the aftermath of the rape. Determined to transform her story of shame into one of honor, Lucrece plans her own blood-letting. Gathering her husband and his "knights" (1694) she passes Tarquin's beauty-inspired passion on to them in a mutated form – the lust for vengeance. Using both aural (her story) and visual (the spectacle of her suicide) persuasion, the "true wife" (1841) reveals

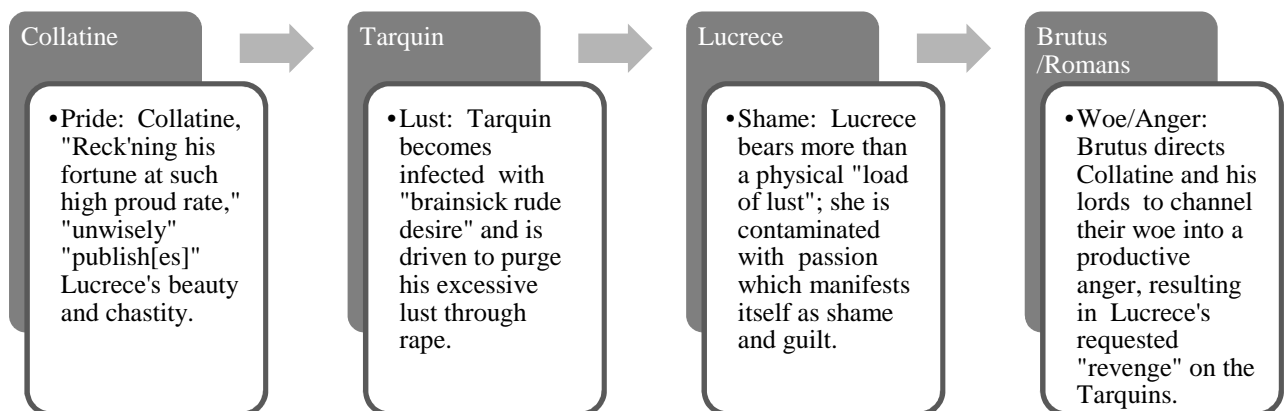
her humoral contamination even as she proves the purity of her mind. Through her act of self-violence, Lucrece transforms the original contagion into a force which purges Rome of the Tarquins' rule.

Tarquin's "Rage of Lust"

The senses of our body are so deceivable, that they beguile many times also the judgment of the mind.
 ~ Castiglione *Second Book of the Courtier*

One of the difficulties that plagues modern readers of Shakespeare's *Lucrece* is the seeming lack of motive for Tarquin's assault. When looking at the circumstances

Figure 2 – Mutating Affects during Transmission in *The Rape of Lucrece*



through a lens of rationality, the effort the prince has to make to obtain his "froth of fleeting joy" (212) coupled with the long term costs of his transitory pleasure makes the whole premise of the rape seem completely unbelievable. Even the text disingenuously suggests several possible motives for Tarquin's assault of Collatine's wife: Lucrece's "sov'reignty" (36), "envy" (39), or some "untimely thought" (43) are all offered as possibilities. Tarquin himself concludes that he has no rational reason to rape Lucrece:

'Had Collatinus killed my son or sire,

Or lain in ambush to betray my life,
Or were he not my dear friend, this desire
Might have excuse to work upon his wife,
As in revenge or quittal of such strife;
But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend,
The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end. (232-8)

In other words, Collatine has done nothing to inspire enmity in Tarquin; he does not deserve the dishonor of a raped wife. There is neither "excuse" nor "end" in the form of a *reason* for Tarquin to commit rape on the wife of "his dear friend"; neither will there be an "excuse," as in *pardon*, for the shameful deed, nor will Tarquin's shame have a terminal point ("end") once he commits this grievous fault. Both the narrator and Lucrece argue the same point in subsequent stages of the poem.³

Rather than being a flaw, this lack of rational justification is the heart of what Shakespeare conveys in all of his texts – human beings are provoked into action by their emotions. And Tarquin is a textbook study of a man overcome by his passions. Robert Burton's description of humanity in a state of imbalance brings Tarquin to mind:

Lust harrows us on the one side; envy, anger, ambition on the other. We are torn in pieces by our passions, as so many wild horses, one in disposition, another in habit.⁴

Here Burton draws attention to the two components of Tarquin's – and in many ways, every man's – struggle with emotions: the natural disposition of an individual (referred to as *complexion* during the early modern period) and the individual's usual way of doing things. In Tarquin's case, his reputation as a member of a tyrannical family suggests a

choleric nature, a complexion reinforced throughout the poem.⁵ For habit, we only have the circumstances inscribed in the poem itself, but the condensed series of mental advances and retreats prior to the actual assault suggests a man regularly “tossed between desire and dread” (171). Unlike Brutus in *Julius Caesar* who does not hesitate in his course of action once he is committed, Tarquin wars with himself until the very moment of irrevocable action. So, by nature and by habit, Tarquin is a man unable to exercise strong control over his emotions, making him extremely susceptible to the humoral pollution that ultimately destroys both himself and Lucrece.

Shakespeare, utilizing the paradigms of Galenic medical belief, justifies the assault on Lucrece as a result of humoral imbalance. In fact, he identifies this motive in the very first stanza of the poem: “Tarquin . . . bears the lightless fire” (3-4). Later referred to as the “coal which in his liver glows” (47), this black burning is an entwined mass of anger and lust, anger against Collatine for having something that he himself desires and lust as the manifestation of that specific desire.⁶ According to Robert Burton, “In hot choleric bodies, nothing so soon causeth madness, as this passion of anger.”⁷ Shakespeare’s intended audience, familiar with both humoral theory and choleric literary stereotypes, likely would have recognized Tarquin’s disorder quickly: he is literally in the grips of a “rage of lust” (424), a madness induced by a superabundance of choler which can only be overcome if the excess is purged.⁸ Stephen Pender, in his discussion of Thomas Elyot’s *Castel of Helth* (1541), outlines how anger was thought to induce this state as well as its symptoms:

If the patient’s complexion is predominantly hot, the parts and members are overheated [when exposed to the additional heat of anger.] This perturbation

occasions fever and apoplexy, frenzy and palsy, indigestion and insomnia, [sweating] and blasphemy, the loss of obedience, duty, charity, and friendship.⁹

Tarquin, “madly tossed” (171) in a state of “hot burning will” (247) and showing signs of the majority of the symptoms above, loses all control over his rational self as he succumbs to this emotional disease.

Tarquin's very essence is captured in terms of the physical manifestation of emotion; the “[l]ust-breathèd” (3) Roman prince harbors a “keen appetite” (9), “ador[ing]” (85) Lucrece even as he “pine[s]” (98) for lustful gratification. Governed by passion, Tarquin resembles a “rough beast” (545) without reason.¹⁰ As the Italian humanist Thommaso Buoni asserts, human reason is dependent on the input from the corporal senses, intimately linking both rationality and sensuality in a fixed union:

[B]ecause the reasonable soule, for the time is tyed, and united to the body, dependeth upon it, as upon her organe, or instrument to exercise her natural powers: for the inward discerning faculties, in their operations, depend upon the outward discerning powers, which do carry the sensible kindes to the inward senses: whereby it cometh to passe, that the body being martyred, and consequently the senses altered, which in that masse of the body are conteyned, they present those corporall kindes or species very imperfectly to the inward powers: and therefore remaine likewise confused, and impotent, whereby followeth that grieffe, and heavinesse of heart, and affection of the minde, which every man findeth in himself by the passions, and sufferings of the body. (227-8)

Because reason is housed in a corporal body, bodily dysfunction necessarily impacts the rational faculties. Imperfect sensory input equals imperfect rational output. In Tarquin’s

case, base desire overwhelms his ability to "command [his] rebel will" (625) – emotion rules his intellect. Tarquin claims that "affection is [his] captain" (271); nothing, not even "respect and reason" (275), can dissuade him from his course of action.

“Affection,” defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “a powerful or controlling emotion, as passion, lust,” results from Tarquin’s surfeit of humor. The “lightless fire” (4) completely possesses him.

In "Burdens of Guilty Minds: Rape and Suicide in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," Andrew Weiner goes so far as to suggest that Tarquin is as much a victim as Lucrece. The Prince bears full knowledge of the consequences of his actions, yet finds himself unable to resist passion. Weiner sees this as Tarquin’s lack of “free will” which culminates in his pseudo-suicide, a foreshadowing of Lucrece’s self-purgation at the end of the poem.¹¹ In terms of Galenic medical theory, the prince’s problem is not so much a lack of free will as an inability to overcome an overabundance of passion through rational means. The conduct books and sermons of the early modern period emphasize that extremities of passion can be controlled through will power and habit, a fact that undermines the basis for Weiner's lack of free will argument. Books like Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Mind in General* instructed that by understanding one's complexion, a person was able to remove himself from potentially inflaming situations and to develop methods of venting ill passions before they could damage the his physical and mental health, social standing, and/or spiritual life.¹² Lucrece calls on Tarquin's dormant rational faculties as she tries to prevent her rape:

"Hast thou command? By him that gave it thee,

From a pure heart command thy rebel will. (624-5)

Tarquin's want of "command" is a product of the overabundance of humors coursing through his system as well as his lack of preparation for dealing with such plethora.¹³ Even though Lucrece hopes that Tarquin can "prison false desire" (642) with his "majesty" (640) □ or reason, so labeled for its location in the head as well as its position as sovereign over the rest of the body's faculties □ the prince's rational mind has been "exiled" (640) by lust. Despite having no purpose, or "end," to commit the brutal act of rape, and knowing full well that the result will be "shame" without "end" (in the sense of termination), the "lustful lord" (169) lets his will have its way.

Significantly, Tarquin's lust is not purely a product of his internal weaknesses. Although both his complexion and disposition show a tendency towards unregulated emotion, the catalyst for his "brainsick rude desire" (175) is external. The prince first experiences humoral trauma in the poem when Collatine "unwisely" (10) tells stories of his wife's incomparable beauty and chastity. Both of these extremities of perfection drive Tarquin to lustful distraction: the idea of the unobtainable chaste object of desire torments his ears even before the visual evidence of Lucrece's beauty ravishes his eyes. As Shakespeare's narrator asserts, "by our ears our hearts oft tainted be" (38), reflecting at once the Renaissance commonplace that what is spoken can be distorted through rhetoric, the ever-present awareness of the dangers of rumor, and the humoral vulnerability of the heart to outside influences.¹⁴ Because Galenic medicine predicates that rational and emotional equilibrium depends on the quality of the sensory input entering the body, any inflaming sights or sounds have the potential to affect change in a person's faculties of reason, imagination, and feeling, which ultimately leads to humoral

changes.¹⁵ In Tarquin's case, his ears are the site of the initial assault on his humoral equilibrium.¹⁶

The disclosure of Lucrece's "sov'reignty" (36) occurs in Tarquin's tent as he hosts Collatine and other nobles during their siege of Ardea:

For he the night before, in Tarquin's tent,
Unlocked the treasure of his happy state:
What priceless wealth the heavens had him lent
In the possession of his beauteous mate;
Reck'ning his fortune at such proud rate
That kings might be espoused to more fame,
But king nor peer to such a peerless dame. (15-21)

This revelation during this Roman boasting contest is explicitly linked to the events that follow by the poem's narrator: the "treasure" and "wealth" that Collatine exposes to "thievish ears" (35) can only provoke "envy of so rich a thing" (39) in someone of Tarquin's ilk. As a "proud" (37) prince, Tarquin finds Collatine's flaunting of his "rich jewel" (34) intolerable. Envy, explained in the humoral system as a species of melancholy, insidiously takes over Tarquin's grip on rationality and opens his vulnerable heart to what Robert Burton calls the "saws of the soul" – jealousy, malice, hatred, and revenge.¹⁷

Nancy Vickers, in her thorough study of the rhetorical use of blazon in *Lucrece*, cites the problematic "publish[ing]" of Lucrece's beauty and virtue by her husband as the motivational force behind the whole poem.¹⁸ Although Tarquin claims that Collatine's "shallow tongue" (78) is unable to convey the essence of Lucrece's true beauty, the

“boast” (36) provokes the prince’s desire nonetheless. Vickers explains that “any indulgence in false or proud comparison in the presence of a third person dangerously flirts with the theft; it is a foolish miscalculation.” Moreover, such publication of the beloved’s attributes “converts [the beloved] into an object, albeit precious, of exchange.”¹⁹ It is this exchange that Tarquin embraces, even though it is secretive and illegitimate. Lucrece’s chaste status, her unattainability, provokes covetousness and greed in Tarquin. He knows that he cannot win her love through seduction since Lucrece “is not her own,” (241) but essentially a belonging, a “rich jewel” (34) only meant to be displayed for Collantine.²⁰ Envy, not love as he later claims, sends the Prince posting from Ardea with possession on his mind.

Tarquin obviously desires Lucrece physically – his “hot burning will” (247) will attest to that – but the fact that she is forbidden to him spurs him on.²¹ For example, when Tarquin first gazes upon Lucrece slumbering unaware in her bed, her bare breasts are described as “maiden worlds” (408) who have known no touch save that of her husband, and their very purity compounds Tarquin’s lust:

These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,

Who like a foul usurper went about

From this fair throne to heave the owner out. (411-13)

He wants to possess “[t]hat golden hap” (42) that Collantine enjoys, and will be just as satisfied to destroy it at the same time. Ultimately, rational justifications do not enter into Tarquin's motivation for raping Lucrece; his judgment is completely compromised by the overpowering affections that have destroyed his humoral equilibrium. As Robert Burton points out:

[T]he understanding is so tied to and captivated by his inferior senses, that without their help he cannot exercise his functions, and the will, being weakened, hath but a small power to restrain those outward parts, but suffers herself to be overruled by them; that I must needs conclude with Lemnius, *spiritus et humores maximum nocumentum obtinent*, spirits and humours do most harm in troubling the soul. How should a man choose but be choleric and angry, that hath his body so clogged with abundance of gross humours? or melancholy, that is so inwardly disposed?²²

Neither honor nor reason can subdue Tarquin's unruly "rage of lust" (424) because his "understanding" is captivated by the seductive input of both ear and eye.

Tarquin's Uncontrollable Gaze

Those other senses, hearing, touching, may much penetrate and affect, but none so much, none so forcible as sight. ~ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy, The Third Partition*

When Tarquin arrives at Collatium, he finds that Lucrece's beauty "inflame[s]" him even further.²³ Lust to obtain the unobtainable becomes conflated with physical, carnal desire. Tarquin's aural contamination through Collatine's unwise boasts becomes fused to the overwhelming visual excitement he is subjected to in her presence. The narrator's description of Lucrece as she first greets the prince foregrounds the crucial point that Lucrece embodies *both* beauty and chastity:

Well was he welcomed by the Roman dame,
Within whose face Beauty and Virtue strived
Which of them both should underprop her fame.
When Virtue bragged, Beauty would blush for shame;
When Beauty boasted blushes, in despite

Virtue would stain that o'er with silver white. (51-56)

Lucrece's chastity, the fame of which first pricked Tarquin's interest, is melded with a dazzling beauty that ignites his carnal lust. Throughout his internal debate prior to ravishing her, he returns to the overwhelming nature of her attractiveness repeatedly. Attempting to rationalize the crime he is about to commit, Tarquin adheres to the idea that "[b]eauty itself doth of itself persuade" (29), laying blame for his uncontrollable passion on Lucrece's physical attractiveness. For the prince, Lucrece's overwhelming physical perfection inspires "Affection" to become his "captain" (271) and "Desire" to be his "pilot" (279). Her beauty needs no justification or advertisement to inspire him; it is sufficient in itself. In Renaissance humoral terms, this would have been a valid argument. Lee A. Ritscher, in *The Semiotics of Rape in Renaissance English Literature*, states that the early modern "epistemology of desire considers the sight of a beautiful woman to be one that causes a separation of a man's libido from his rational self."²⁴ Tarquin, already humorally imbalanced, does not stand a chance of regaining rational control over his choleric lust when faced with the vision of Lucrece's physical perfection.

Shakespeare emphasizes the prince's roving "eye" five times in the first thirty-two lines (73-105) of his initial meeting with Lucrece; Tarquin simply cannot stop staring at her. The prince's ocular incontinence, exhibited in the "too much wonder of his eye" (95), also has a basis in a humoral imbalance caused by outside forces, namely Lucrece's beauty. Robert Burton, in his exploration of beauty as a cause of what he terms "Love-Melancholy," cites a Renaissance commonplace about the destructive power of beauty through the eyes:

[The eyes] as two sluices let in the influence of that divine, powerful, soul-ravishing, and captivating beauty, which, as [Achilles Tatius] saith, "is sharper than any dart or needle, wounds deeper into the heart; and opens a gap through our ears to that lovely wound, that pierceth the soul itself."²⁵

Tarquin's "eager eyes" (254), "once corrupted" (294) by the beauty Lucrece chastely wielded, declare all rational arguments against the rape "dumb when beauty pleadeth" (268). As a "captive" of her beauty, Tarquin's obsessive "doting" (105) is evidence for this soul "wound" that he believes can only be healed by sexually possessing Collatine's perfect wife.

Faye Tudor, providing a segue from Thommaso Buoni's assertion that reason is dependent on the sensual faculties to operate, and expanding on the notion that sight takes precedence over all the other senses,²⁶ outlines the relationship between faulty sight and failed reason:

Reason takes precedence over all other faculties and it is most affected by the sins of the individual. Reason, given the sense of sight, finds its vision darkened by sin and it becomes damaged and weakened, subject to the dangers of the passions.²⁷

For Shakespeare's audience, humoral imbalance could, and often did, start with something a person experienced with his or her eyes.²⁸ With a direct line to the soul and a partnership with the will, the eyes Tarquin employs to experience the world are already corrupted by that sin of "covet"ness (134), making it impossible for his rational self to break free from his lustful obsession with Lucrece. He himself recognizes the problem:

Will is deaf, and hears no heedful friends;

Only he hath an eye to gaze on beauty,

And dotes on what he looks, 'gainst law or duty. (495-7)

The prince's will is corrupted and reason can no longer hear, or see, the truth of the depravity he is about to commit.²⁹ His heart and eye are in league³⁰ and his will follows his heart, *ergo*, his physical desire to possess Lucrece cannot be dissuaded by fear, remorse, respect, or reason (269-75). His "will," with all of the implied meanings, is skewed by humoral imbalance.³¹

To understand clearly the way Tarquin is humorally altered by the sight of Lucrece, let us look more closely at the two prevalent early modern doctrines of vision to explain how ocular contamination was believed to affect the humors; both theories involve ocular rays – invisible substances that travel from object to viewer, or from viewer to object.³² The theory of intramission, whose roots can be traced back to Aristotle, serves as the basis for our modern understanding of passive vision: the eye receives light and forms an image which is converted to electrical impulses and then ferried to the brain for analysis. The contending Platonic view of vision – labeled the extramission theory of vision – claims that the eye emits ocular rays that move out into the world, transforming the invisible air into an “extension of the eye.”³³ In *Timaeus*, Plato champions the idea that the act of viewing affects both the object viewed as well as the viewer, similar to the way the sense of touch can affect both the item touched and the person doing the touching:

And the whole stream of vision, being similarly affected in virtue of similarity, diffuses the motions of what it touches or what touches it over the whole body, until they reach the soul, causing the perception which we call sight.³⁴

Under this theory, Tarquin's gaze leaves his eyes and touches Lucrece's beauty, a beauty that then "affects" (or we could say, infects) his stream of vision so that when the "stream" returns to him, even his soul is affected by what he "touches" with his eyes. Contamination is literal and only a look away.³⁵

The visual contamination does not travel in a singular direction, however. The narrator describes, in great detail, Tarquin's act of pulling aside the bed clothes and perusing Lucrece's nakedness with "lewd unhallowed eyes" (370-392). Shakespeare endows Tarquin's eyes with startling power:

And holy-thoughted Lucrece to their sight
Must sell her joy, her life, her world's delight. (384-5)

The physical culmination of the prince's attack may provide Lucrece with a more concrete humoral poison, but these lines strongly suggest that Lucrece's exposure to Tarquin's lascivious gaze has already contaminated her. Thijs Weststeijn, explaining the basics of humoral transfer during the act of seeing, reinforces this idea when he explains that because "ocular 'spirits' stem directly from the viewer's mind, looking at someone may 'infect' that other person with one's own passions."³⁶ One of Weststeijn's main historic sources is Gregorio Comanini's *Il Figino* (1591). Comanini, an ardent supporter of the Platonic extramission theory of vision, reports that the ocular rays are not alone when they travel out into the world:

[A] spiritual vapour issues with these rays, and that blood issues with this vapour
[. . .] [T]his bloody vapour [. . .] issuing from the heart of the beloved and passing
through the heart of the lover as if in its own residence and dwelling, wounds the
heart and, finally coming to rest in the hardest part of it, returns to blood. This

blood, because it is in some ways foreign to the place, contaminates all the rest with its poison.³⁷

In Comanini's view, even under the auspices of love, the fluid that emanates from the eyes during active gazing acts upon the recipient of the gaze as a pollutant.

Weststeijn's work stresses that eyes are not only the agent of these rays but, as one of the more vulnerable parts of the human body, also the receptacle of rays from other eyes:

Just like the spirit leaves the body through the eyes, so spirits from outside find an easy entrance through this most 'transparent' part of man. (151)

In response to this notion, some early modern philosophers merge the two theories of vision into one where ocular rays can travel outward from one person's eyes and then enter the recipient of his gaze through his or her eyes. Baldasare Castiglione, John Donne, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Shakespeare himself all invoke a blended version of ocular theory by reconciling extramission and intramission.³⁸ Donne, for example, sees reciprocity in gazes, recording a mutual influence rather than a singular line of travel.³⁹ Castiglione seems to have also embraced this view in his *Book of the Courtier*:

as soone as he is at hande, the eyes shoote, and like sorcerers, beewitch, and especiallie whan by a right line they sende their glisteringe beames into ye eies of the wight beloued at the time whan they do the like, bicause the spirites meete together, and in that sweete encounter the one taketh the others nature and qualitye: as it is seene in a sore eye, that beehoulding steadily a sound one, giueth him his disease.⁴⁰

Here, the female lover sends out flames that enter the eyes of her beloved, altering his heart by mingling her spirit with his not metaphorically, but concretely through an exchange of humors.⁴¹

Although Lucrece's "chastity" prevents her from being the active lover as described by Comanini or Castiglione, Tarquin still appropriates this fused argument to explain away his actions. In his humoral world, his ability to rationally think is subjugated to the vision that she presents to his eye: "That eye which looks on her confounds his wits" (290). Though her sensual assault on the prince is unintentional, Tarquin's argument that Lucrece's beauty has sparked his uncontrollable lust is supported by early modern humoral theory in general and contemporary optical theory in particular. For example, when Lucrece asks Tarquin "[u]nder what colour" (476) he assails her,⁴² the prince uses a version of the extramission theory of vision to shift the blame to her beauty:

"The colour in thy face,
That even for anger makes the lily pale
And the red rose blush at her own disgrace,
Shall plead for me and tell my loving tale.
Under that colour am I come to scale
Thy never-conquered fort. *The fault is thine,*
For those thine eyes betray thee unto mine. (477-83)⁴³

Shirking any moral responsibility for what he is about to do, Tarquin reinforces the idea that both of them are victims of her beauty. Like Donne's idea of mutual visual exchange, Tarquin's explanation of Lucrece's downfall revolves around her eyes

“betray[ing]” her to his eyes. Originally protected by her inability to read Tarquin’s “parling looks” (100), her eyes are literally opened to the possibility of lewdness by the advent of the prince in her bed chamber. The humoral exchange takes place regardless of Lucrece’s conscious participation or her willingness.

In this speech, Tarquin also usurps the metaphor of the “silent war of lilies and of roses” (71) originally used to illustrate Lucrece’s status as a paragon of both beauty and chastity. He asserts that these two virtues will unite to explain his “loving tale” and provide justification for his assault, using the immediate example of how her present anger colors her face with beauty (the red) even in the midst of his attack. This fulfills the prediction in the original explication of Lucrece’s facial heraldry which states that “[w]hen shame assailed, the red should fence the white” (63), where “fence” means “a protective barrier,” not “swordplay.” Unfortunately, it is beauty itself that leads to the circumstances of shame and its efforts to protect her chastity only serve to spur the prince ever towards his goal. Tarquin, unmoved by her pleas to “wipe the dim mist from [his] doting eyne” (643) so he can see both her and himself truly, resolves to finish what he started.

In Tarquin’s world view, beauty implies wantonness, even if its possessor does not deliberately instigate unchaste behavior; beauty itself is the provocateur. Lee A. Ritscher cites the narrator’s reinforcement of this idea:

The display of Lucrece’s body in the blazon, in a manner similar to Collatine’s publication of Lucrece’s chastity, serves to sell the reader, presumably male, on the idea that because of Lucrece’s beauty the rape is inevitable.⁴⁴

As foreign and distasteful as this idea may be for a modern audience, actually early modern medical tracts could be used to support Tarquin's claim that Lucrece's rape is her own fault – her "beauty hath ensnared [her]" (485). Similarly, Burton writes that, "without doubt, there is some secret loadstone in a beautiful woman, a magnetic power, a natural inbred affection, which moves [men's] concupiscence."⁴⁵ We need to look no further than the modern aphorism – "She asked for it!" – to know that this misogynistic blaming of the victim is not unique to this poem, nor an unusual way to label the rapist as much a victim as the woman herself. "Affection" (271) and "Desire" (279) are represented as autonomous forces driving Tarquin's will and both are motivated by Lucrece's "heavenly image" (288). Believing his "heart" – and therefore his will – "shall never countermand [his] eye" (276), the prince refutes all of Lucrece's rational pleas to be spared: nothing can sway his "will" "by [her] bright beauty [. . .] newly bred" (490).

The prince's "rage of lust" (424) eclipses all other considerations in Tarquin's obsessed state:

[W]ith swift intent he goes
To quench the coal which in his liver glows.
O rash false heat, wrapped in repentant cold (46-8)

These three lines connect the physical and emotional motivations for Tarquin's villainy, emphasize the idea of contagion and its transmission from rapist to victim, and initiate the metaphor of blackness that carries through the rest of the poem. Shakespeare's poetic license allows the narrator to conflate two seemingly separate imbalances – excess of "cold" choler, or anger, and excess of hot blood, or lust – in these lines, a convention his audience would recognize.⁴⁶ This overabundance of embodied essences is characterized

as both physical (the humor) and mental (the corresponding emotion). The “coal” burns blackly – the color of the “deed” (226) the prince undertakes, the shade of sin, and the hue of Lucrece’s “stained” (1743) blood. Even in early modern times the liver is associated with the production and purification of blood. Lucrece revisits this medical imagery when she claims the only “remedy” for her condition is to “let forth [her] foul defilèd blood” (1028-9). The ebony spot burning Tarquin’s liver and inciting him to rape travels from rapist to victim, appearing again when Lucrece clears her “pollution” (1157) through self-murder, letting her “black blood” (1745) flow out for all to see. Both Tarquin’s choleric anger and resentment of Collantine’s superior “wealth” (17) as well as the sexual desire prompted by Lucrece’s extraordinary beauty incite him to carry out “so black a deed” (226), a “black payment” (576) for her hospitality.

Rape and Emotional Contagion

*And in a swough she lay and wex so deed,
Men mighte smyten of her arm or heed;
She feleth no-thing, neither foul ne fair.* ~ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

Collatine’s wife – exposed by her husband’s “unwise” (10) boast – cannot protect herself from Tarquin’s emotional contagion. “Weakly fortified from a world of harms” (28), Lucrece is physically and emotionally vulnerable. Prior to the rape, she dwells in a state of innocence that prevents her from recognizing the malice that Tarquin represents; she cannot sense the “baits” or “hooks” (103) that he might employ to batter away her chastity. Lucrece’s state of chastity goes far beyond physical purity. In addition to her body, her mind is artless, open, and “guiltless” (89). Regrettably, the innocence and lack of suspicion exhibited by Lucrece preceding her ravishment can be directly linked to her downfall. Fulfilling the idiom that it takes a thief to catch a thief, Lucrece’s lack of experience is a liability in her dealings with the prince.

To return to Robert Burton's idea that a person's passions are made up by both nature and habit, Lucrece, by habit, is all that a modest, model wife should be. She is "So guiltless she *securely* gives good cheer / And reverend welcome to her princely guest" (89-90).⁴⁷ Her security seems to stem from her knowledge of etiquette and household governance. Her world's parameters have sheltered her to the extent that she cannot distinguish the presence of evil intention in her midst and she is totally unprepared to survive "in a wilderness where are no laws" (544). Because "unstained thoughts do seldom dream on evil" (87), Lucrece is unable to recognize the emotions that do make it through the "bold stern looks" (1252) covering Tarquin's intentions. Her more worldly "princely guest" (90) actively tries to conceal his emotions, and mostly succeeds, so that his "inward ill no outward harm expressed" (91). Additionally, the potential warning signs that do show through – the "too much wonder of his eye" (95) and "subtle shining secrecies / Writ in the glassy margents" (100-1)⁴⁸ – cannot be read by Lucrece since she has no prior experience with such dishonorable passions.

As a model Roman wife, Lucrece is competent with her domestic tasks, such as "spinning amongst her maids" ("Argument" 14), but she has no means with which to fortify herself or her chastity beyond her own constraints of modesty. Her habits, however, do not include the ability to guard herself or the household against invaders – that falls to Collatine, who fails his domestic duty by advertising what "treasure" (16) he has stored in his home and then not being present to protect it. In her post-rape imaginary musings with her husband, Lucrece eloquently illustrates this problem with the domestic image of a bee hive:

In thy weak hive a wand'ring wasp hath crept,

And sucked the honey which thy chaste bee kept. (839-40)

The hive is “weak,” completely at the mercy of the much stronger and larger “wasp” that infiltrates the home and steals the “honey,” the treasure being tended to by virtuous, but slight, bee. Descriptions like “heartless” (470), “harmless” (510), “like to a new killed bird” (457), “a white hind” (543), and “weak mouse” (555) all reinforce the image of a meek woman, unable to protect herself from a “rough beast that knows no gentle right / Nor aught obeys but his foul appetite” (545). All of the qualities that Lucrece has been praised for – beauty, virtue, chastity, modesty – are the very qualities that lead to her destruction and make her ill-prepared to defend herself, physically or emotionally.

When we look at the other aspect of her passionate composition – complexion – Lucrece does not project an inherent coldness or austerity, two characteristics often associated with chastity; instead, warmth and beauty radiate from this “earthly saint” (85).⁴⁹ Tarquin himself points to her wide emotional spectrum when he recalls how she reacts to his arrival:

'She took me kindly by the hand,
And gazed for tidings in my eager eyes,
Fearing some hard news from the warlike band,
Where her belovèd Collatinus lies.
O how her fear did make her colour rise!
First red as roses that on lawn we lay,
Then white as lawn, the roses took away.
'And how her hand, in my hand being locked
Forced it to tremble with her loyal fear!

Which struck her sad, and then it faster rocked,

Until her husband's welfare she did hear;

Whereat she smiled with so sweet a cheer (253-64)

Kindness, fear, sadness, and cheerfulness all rush across Lucrece's humoral boundaries in the matter of minutes, affecting both her actions (trembling, a "heaved-up hand" (111)) and coloring her physical complexion. This latter evidence is recounted elsewhere in the "silent war of lilies and roses" (71), where we observe in her cheeks the humoral turmoil just below the surface. Although beauty and chastity are both positive qualities, the civil war located on Lucrece's face shows the inherent incompatibility of the two characteristics. As E. L. Ridsen notes, Shakespeare stresses "battle imagery" when he writes of the two iconic colors, showing "the war between the factions they represent creates violence ultimately self-destructive, even deadly."⁵⁰ Both qualities may inspire admiration, but in different veins. The violence implied under Lucrece's skin is a precursor to the actual violence she experiences at the hands of Tarquin – beauty begets hot lust and the destruction of chastity; cold chastity requires nothing short of the sacrifice of blood and life itself.

Regardless of the internal conflict between her two prized attributes, Lucrece inhabits a realm of controlled reason before the rape, where sensual input has been carefully regulated and controlled. Her "locked-up eyes" (446), which cannot read Tarquin's "wanton sight" (104) at the beginning of the story, are forcibly opened and then violated as he storms her chamber. When the prince rudely grabs her breast, awakening Lucrece from deep sleep, her newly opened eyes are "by his flaming torch dimmed and controlled" (448). This literally means she is temporarily blinded by the

light Tarquin has carried to her bed chamber, but it also points to the link between Tarquin's "hot burning will" (247) and the flames of the torch, a connection made explicit by Shakespeare:

The wind wars with his torch to make him stay,
And blows the smoke of it into his face,
Extinguishing his conduct in this case;
But his hot heart, which fond desire doth scorch,
Puffs forth another wind that fires the torch (311-5)

Just as the prince becomes enthralled through his eyes to her beauty, Lucrece is stunned into initial compliance by the sight of Tarquin's "grim aspect" (452) and the twin blinding lights of his torch and lust.⁵¹ Finding herself "dreadfully beset" (444), she attempts to block out the sight before her by "winking" (458) her eyes closed again, consequently rejecting the assault and retaining her chaste vision while imagining that the whole incident is a bad dream, an imaginary vision of "some ghostly sprite," a "dreadful fancy" (450-1). This stubborn denial of the reality of the attack only enrages the prince, spurring his assault on Lucrece further.⁵²

Lucrece finds that she cannot remain inactive while "his hand [. . .] remains upon her breast" (462). Using the only weapon she can think of, Lucrece tries to reason with Tarquin, begging him to explain why he is molesting her. Initially he refuses to respond to her prayers and questions, adopting a "dumb demeanor" (474) and continuing to paw at her. Her "modest eloquence" (563), as she attempts to dissuade Tarquin from his foul course of action, has the opposite of her desired effect: the prince, further incensed by her rhetorical attempts at barricading his action, warns Lucrece that his "uncontrolled tide /

Turns not, but swells the higher by this let” (645-6).⁵³ Lucrece’s approximate hundred lines of pleading for mercy (563-644, 652-667) make it into the prince’s ears, but they only “harden” his lust (558-560). She does not comprehend that Tarquin has already debated with himself all of the points she raises.⁵⁴ She recognizes that the prince is consumed with passion, but believes he can still “wipe the dim mist from [his] dotting eyne” (643). Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Rational argument cannot sway the prince since the impetus for the rape rests solely on the power of his appetite—it is “Affection” (271) that compells Tarquin to commit rape, not Tarquin himself. He and Lucrece are both victims of Love: “nothing” can halt the motivating desire or direction of “Affection,” including pleas from either of “his” victims. Lucrece, still possessing mental control despite her terror, recognizes the “rashness” (48, 706) of his “loving tale” (480), but fails to convince Tarquin of his “false desire” (642) or to move him to a spirit of true love—charity and compassion—because his humoral imbalance is so extreme, his capacity for rational thought has been compromised. His “inflamed” brain cannot “countermand” (276) his wanton sight.

Lucrece's status as victim, defined by Tarquin's actions as well as her own seeming inaction, crystallizes in the eleven lines leading up to "prone lust" staining the "chaste [. . .] bed":

[H]e sets his foot upon the light,
For light and lust are deadly enemies;
Shame folded up in blind concealing night,
When most unseen, then most doth tyrannise.
The wolf hath seized his prey, the poor lamb cries,

Till with her own white fleece her voice controlled
Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold.
For with her nightly linen that she wears
He pens her piteous clamours in her head,
Cooling his hot face in the chastest tears
That ever modest eyes with sorrow shed. (673-83)

For all intents and purposes, the prince blinds, binds, and silences Lucrece, leaving her with only the ability to weep. Like Othello who must extinguish the lantern before he extinguishes his wife, Tarquin has two reasons to stamp out the light: so that he cannot recognize his own shame while committing the deed, and to "tyrannise" his victim all the more thoroughly. Like a lamb in a wolf's ravening jaws, Lucrece is "seize[d]" with no hope of escape. Arguably the most poignant lines in the entire poem, the description of the silencing of Lucrece's "piteous clamours" – her only possibility for protest – is constructed as a surrogate rape: Tarquin stuffs her mouth full of her own night clothes, filling her above as he fills her below. Shakespeare reinforces this image by presenting it twice, once as the image of a lamb being choked by its own "white fleece" which "Entombs her outcry in her lips' sweet fold" (678-9), and then with the picture of Lucrece's cries stifled with her bed linen. Tarquin's method for subduing Lucrece only adds insult to her injury, reinforcing the idea that her own attributes are the cause and accomplice to her downfall. The beauty that ravishes his senses and incites his humors to riot leads to her pollution.

Shakespeare pens only one line to describe the actual moment of physical penetration: "O that prone lust should stain so pure a bed!" (684). The two agents

involved are eclipsed by the emotional forces prompting the violation. Neither party is identified by name – Tarquin becomes "prone lust" and Lucrece the "pure [. . .] bed," their two essences distilled into symbols of transcendental violation. Shakespeare's use of metonymy at once distances the persons involved in the rape from their individual identities and simultaneously distills them into their core essences. Tarquin, controlled by his carnal desires, becomes lust incarnate; Lucrece, the epitome of wifely chastity, becomes Collatine's marriage bed. By transforming Lucrece into the domestic symbol of marital fidelity, the narrator ensures Collatine's vicarious participation in his wife's ravishment. Tarquin, the "foul usurper" (412), satisfies his envious lust by symbolically "heav[ing] the owner out" (413) of his own bed. The shame and dishonor visited on Lucrece becomes her husband's through the medium of the stained bed.⁵⁵ When Tarquin rapes Lucrece, he violates not only her body but also her marital unity with Collatine; by polluting her, he corrupts her husband on a symbolic level. However, Lucrece's contamination is grossly literal: Tarquin's seed enters her body and transforms her blood into a stained humoral record of the rape. The humoral exchange of semen and blood takes place regardless of Lucrece's conscious participation or her willingness.⁵⁶ Disease – whether it be humoral, emotional, or biological – does not recognize mental barriers.

During the "forcèd league" (689), the humors, as well as the future fates, of both Lucrece and Tarquin are forcibly entangled.⁵⁷ The vigorous interaction between the victim and the rapist seethes with emotion, creating an environment ripe for the transmission of affect. Teresa Brennan explains the *transmission of affect* as the ability of "the emotions and affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, [to] enter into another" through social interaction and resulting in

both physiological and mental effects.⁵⁸ This schema helps illustrate how, in the aftermath of the rape, Shakespeare stresses the similarity of the experience for both rapist and his victim. Tarquin's soul is figured as a feminized city whose walls have been beaten down by the "foul insurrection" (722) of her own subjects.⁵⁹ This "spotted princess" (721) parallels Lucrece's own characterization as her attacker, though not her subject, enters her home under codes of hospitality and honor. Also, the "will" that wreaks havoc with Tarquin and his soul is the same "will" that perpetrates the attack on Lucrece; "Affection" (271), an external controlling force that has penetrated and destroyed them both, travels humoral paths, wreaking havoc in its wake.⁶⁰ This passionate poison prompts Tarquin to lose his reputation, his means to support himself and his family, and all his power. Graver still, the poem implies that the prince's soul is now condemned "to living death and pain perpetual" (726); he has killed that which was immortal through his "black lust" (654). Tarquin, his soul "disgracèd," "defacèd," and "spotted" (718-21), mirrors his victim in her shame. Lucrece, who has "lost a dearer thing than life" (687), now bears the "load" of this contagion, a diseased humor she must purge to restore her own "good name" (820).

Lucrece's Stain

*But no perfection is so absolute
That some impurity doth not pollute.* ~ Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece* (853-4)

Lucrece, "deep drenchèd in a sea of care" (1100), experiences an internal self-division between her former chaste self and the stained woman she becomes as a result of the rape. Lucrece "bears" more than the physical "load of lust" (734) Tarquin foists on her; the contagion is both a humoral, and subsequently, an emotional one. She wavers between sorrow and anger at the way her hospitality has been abused and "Holds

disputation with each thing she views, / And to herself all sorrow doth compare" (1101-2). The formerly chaste and pure matron begins to adopt murderous thoughts and a despairing self-contention similar in scale to Tarquin's when his ultimately weak power of reason attempts to dissuade him from the attack (127-294). Lucrece is irrevocably transformed at the moment of her rape, her entire emotional self rewritten through violence. The change is as abrupt and as complete as "one in dead of night / From forth dull sleep by dreadful fancy waking" (449-50). Although the description refers to Lucrece's actual awakening from sleep to find herself attacked, it is also a metaphor for her state of self: before the rape, Lucrece lives in a "dull sleep" of an existence, "secure" (89) in her sheltered place as Collatine's wife, chastely "spinning amongst her maids" ("Argument" 14). She who "touched no unknown baits, nor feared no hooks" (103) seems "fortressed from a world of harms" (28) and lives accordingly until her "dreadful [. . .] waking" (450) at the rapacious hands of Tarquin. Her state of chastity is transformed not into a mirror of Tarquin's evil, but into a tortuous divided sense of self: guilt for what she has become wars with her image of her previous perfection.

Lucrece's importance to this point in the poem has been as the stylized victim, the object of Tarquin's desire, and a symbol of chastity, purity, and modesty. Until the rape, Lucrece operates as a target for Tarquin's destructive lust and as an idealized version of Roman womanhood. The real transformation in Lucrece occurs when she ceases to be just Collatine's "treasure" (16) and Tarquin's "spoil" (733), and instead begins to have dialogue with herself. She comes to see herself not only as a construction of the patriarchal ideals forced upon her, but also as a split entity, both chaste and unchaste, traitor and true, right and wrong. She feels severed from her original self both

psychologically and physically; the rape's pollution puts her at odds with herself as much as with the prince. Just as Tarquin "for himself himself he must forsake" (157), so must Lucrece let go of her former incarnation to become a new Lucrece. The emotional contagion introduced into her humoral system serves as the catalyst for this metamorphosis. The "helpless shame" (756) she feels – twin to Tarquin's after-rape burden – transforms Lucrece from a chaste subject to an avenging agent.

The prince not only plants his seed in Lucrece's physical body, his "burden of a guilty mind" (735) leaks through her porous psyche to lodge firmly in her own rational faculties. Initially, she tries to assuage her guilt by presenting the circumstance of the rape in terms of the domestic habits she has been so familiar with; addressing the imaginary image of her husband, she explains:

'Yet am I guilty of thy honour's wrack;
Yet for thy honour did I entertain him;
Coming from thee, I could not put him back,
For it had been dishonour to disdain him:
Besides, of weariness he did complain him,
And talk'd of virtue: O unlook'd-for evil,
When virtue is profaned in such a devil! (841-7)

Under the auspices of being a good hostess, and bringing honor to husband through her excellent performance of those household duties, she inadvertently lets "the worm intrude the maiden bud" (848). She sees herself as "defilèd" (1029), "shame[d]" (1031), "defame[d]" (1033), and "rifled" (1050), all adjectives that imply victimization. Yet Lucrece also embraces complicity with Tarquin, seeing herself through judgmental eyes,

essentially becoming her own judge, jury, and ultimately, executioner. Lucrece, though she accepts this burden of guilt for her “loathsome trespass” (812), she also places blame on others for her fall, chiefly Tarquin, the instrument of her destruction.⁶¹ In her initial spasms of woe, she spins her complex rhetorical complaint against Opportunity, Time, and Night, but none of these rants mitigate what she sees as her own complicity. This “helpless smoke of words” (1027) does nothing to ease her guilt or her pain, nor does it give her a way to purge the humoral pathogen lodged in her “poisoned closet” (1659).

Coppelia Kahn believes that in order to understand Lucrece’s self-condemnation, we have to look at first look at Lucrece’s understanding of herself as the guardian of Collatine’s domestic honor. Regardless of her “senseless reputation” (820), glossed by John Roe as “being without sensual (or lustful) inclination,” Lucrece still bears the stain of sexual intercourse outside marriage.⁶² Kahn elaborates:

[Lucrece has a] conception of herself as a woman in a patriarchal society, a conception which renders irrelevant for her the questions of moral responsibility and guilt in rape. Though Lucrece uses moral terms such as sin and guilt, she actually condemns herself according to primitive, non-moral standards of pollution and uncleanness, in which only the material circumstances of an act determine its goodness or evil.⁶³

The material pollution – Tarquin’s seed – cannot be ignored or simply washed away. Her “attaint” (825) is literal and pervasive, staining even her blood. Catherine Belling asserts that *The Rape of Lucrece* “actually traces the clinical stages of disease as it spreads: Lucrece’s blood is contaminated by Tarquin’s, whose body carries the swollen pride of Rome’s pathogenic ruling family, and her infection is the crisis that provokes drastic

measures, at once murderous and curative.”⁶⁴ Although Belling's concentration is on the analogy between social disease and rape and the role of purgation in both the health of the individual and the political state, she acknowledges that early modern humoral theory allows these correspondences to be read literally. When considering Lucrece's insistence that she has been the victim of moral contagion, Kahn agrees with Belling that “the extreme literalism of Lucrece's moral self analysis seemed quite plausible to Shakespeare's audience, to whom magic and medicine were hardly distinct.”⁶⁵ The “stain” (1655) lamented by Lucrece is not just a figurative one; it is an infection, “a material and medically pathologized moral stain” that she can only get rid of through purgation.⁶⁶

Secondary Emotional Contagion

Dwelling on her newly fallen status, Lucrece realizes that there will be no easy way to relieve herself of the "load" Tarquin has left behind. Although Lucrece describes her stain as an "unseen shame," an "invisible disgrace," an "unfelt sore," and a "private scar" (827-8), her greatest fear is that her "blemish" (536) will be published for all to see:

[. . .] my true eyes have never practised how
To cloak offences with a cunning brow.
They think not but that every eye can see
The same disgrace which they themselves behold;
And therefore would they still in darkness be,
To have their unseen sin remain untold;
For they their guilt with weeping will unfold,
And grave, like water that doth eat in steel,

Upon my cheeks what helpless shame I feel.' (748-56)

The emotion of "guilt" – the foundation for this outward display – transforms Lucrece in the same way lust alters Tarquin. Now that her eyes as well as her body have been opened to the humoral taint of Tarquin's unbalanced self, she is aware of how easily others are affected by what they see. She has no experience hiding her thoughts and emotions from people, so she believes that her "sin" will be marked clearly in her face for all to read. As Shakespeare's Lancelot says, the "truth will out," and Lucrece needs to find a way to transform the truth into a story she can accept.⁶⁷

As illustrated by the "war of lilies and roses" (71), Lucrece's interior is promulgated to the world through the medium of her face, where the tools of emotion carve out meaning for others to read. The narrator genders this ability as feminine where "men can cover crimes with bold stern looks, / [p]oor women's faces are their own fault books" (1252-3). After her ravishment, Lucrece laments this characteristic and, in her distressed state, she has the paranoid feeling that everyone "will quote [her] loathsome trespass in [her] looks" (812). The abused lady may not be far from the mark – the narrator describes her face as "that map which deep impression bears / Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears" (1712-3). Guilt may not be specifically what her observers read in her visage, but certainly they can recognize violent negative emotions such as "sorrow" (1221), "discontent" (1601), and "grief" (1603).

Sorrow wars with guilt for the upper hand in Lucrece's humoral-emotional makeup after the attack. Her woe is published for others *to see*, a point emphasized by Shakespeare no less than five times in twelve lines (1218-30), and *to feel*, as we read the maid's reaction to her mistress' "cheeks over-washed with woe" (1225). Here, emotion

transmits affect from one person to another by means of empathy, needing “No cause but company” (1236). This is not a modern psychological interpretation of what occurs, but Shakespeare’s representation of how emotion elicits similar feelings in persons sympathetic to the original emotional subject:

Even so the maid with swelling drops ‘gan wet
Her circled eyne, enforced by sympathy
Of those fair suns set in her mistress’ sky (1228-30)

Lucrece’s maid has no inkling of what actually occurred to cause her mistress distress, so her reaction is not an emotional response to events. Rather, seeing and feeling the emotions emanating from her lady evoke similar affects in the maid.⁶⁸ The tears expressed are a "conduit" (1234) between the women, carrying, if not the same emotion, then a species of the same "sympathy."

The encounter with the maid augments Lucrece's burgeoning knowledge of emotional contagion. Weighing this incident with the affective burden of guilt and shame from her violent encounter with Tarquin, Lucrece becomes aware of how easily emotion travels, compounding her fear that others will recognize the sorrow and guilt she feels. The interlude with her maid reinforces the permeability of the emotional boundaries between persons, and intensifies her fear that she will be unable to contain the knowledge of her stain. However, as with language, emotional transmission does not guarantee understanding, and contagion, biological and emotional, often mutates: in this humoral drama, Collatine's pride becomes Tarquin's lust, which in turn manifests as shame in Lucrece. And sometimes the emotion that is sparked in these encounters is only one of degree and the ensuing effects on reason and the body are virtually unrelated. For

instance, the “silly groom” (1345) that Lucrece employs to deliver her letter to Collatine blushes when he enters her presence. The narrator stresses that this messenger is an uncultivated, “homely” peasant (1338) who is full of true “respect” (1347), but Lucrece misinterprets his “bashful innocence” (1341) as accusatory looks. She believes that this “vassal” (1360) knows something of her “blemish” (1358) and she flushes in response, prompting a brief duel of blushes between the two, each darker color in the one prompting an even duskier hue in the other (1352-8). Convinced that her "story of sweet chastity's decay" (808) will always be "charactered in [her] brow" (807), Lucrece seizes upon a way to make her telling face an asset in her restorative revenge.

The transmissions of affect she experiences up to this juncture provide Lucrece with a blueprint for redemptive action. After debating the pros and cons of killing herself to expunge her shame, Lucrece concludes that her "blood shall wash the slander of [her] ill" (1207). But rather than rashly killing herself and leaving a suicide note to explain her action, she bides her time and sends for Collatine so she can use the spectacle of her death to convince him of her innocence.⁶⁹ She is taking no chances "Lest he should hold it her own gross abuse, / Ere she with blood had stained her stained excuse" (1315-6). Unlike Tarquin whose rational control fails to overcome his passion, Lucrece uses reason to funnel the emotions of rage and sorrow into the force behind her action of choice:

Besides the life and feeling of her passion
She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her;
When sighs and groans and tears may grace the fashion
Of her disgrace, the better to clear her
From that suspicion which the world might bear her. (1317-21)

Lucrece understands that she must direct her emotions to her audience in a way that gains their empathy so she can, in turn, manipulate the emotions of those capable of carrying out her wishes. She channels her emotions to bring about a personal transformation and redemption.

Bloodletting and the Restoration of Balance

*My tongue shall utter all; mine eyes, like sluices,
As from a mountain-spring that feeds a dale,
Shall gush pure streams to purge my impure tale.*

~ Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece* (1076-8)

When Tarquin becomes inflamed with a surfeit of humoral passion, he seeks to ameliorate his condition by purging his lust through rape. Although early modern medical texts would have supported the biological outcome – removal of excess sperm and blood to restore his system to balance – the fallout from the act itself only creates further problems for the unstable prince as well as his dependents.⁷⁰ Lucrece, however, forms a plan to both restore her system to equilibrium and to create a chain of consequences in her family's best interests. After much deliberation, she reaches the conclusion that to remove the stain polluting both her body and reputation, she must play both physician and executioner:

The remedy indeed to do me good

Is to let forth my foul defilèd blood. (1028-9)

Before the rape, Lucrece feared to die under the slanders Tarquin threatens her with just as much as she may have feared actual physical death.⁷¹ After her ravishment, however, she finds that “that is gone for which [she] sought to live / And now [she] need not fear to die” (1051-2). She adapts a paradoxical view of suicide as a means to resolve her dilemma:

To clear this spot by death, at least I give

A badge of fame to slander's livery,

A dying life to living infamy (1053-5)

Lucrece cannot, will not, keep her disgrace a secret from Collatine as Tarquin suggests in his attempt to gain her willing participation prior to the rape. Her moral code does not allow her to “flatter” her husband with “an infringèd oath” (1061), nor permit the possibility of Tarquin's seed to mature thus “pollut[ing]” Collatine's “stock” (1063). Rather, Lucrece vows that her “tongue shall utter all” (1076) before she purges her contaminated blood. She will have her fame even at the cost of her own life.⁷²

Lucrece's adoption of self-murder as her physic – the cure that kills – does not meet with universal endorsement. For example, Brutus criticizes her suicide as a product of a person with a “weak mind” (1825) who “mistook the matter so / To slay herself, that should have slain her foe” (1126-7). Additionally, from the Christian external audience's standpoint, there is a potential moral flaw in Lucrece's attempt to re-establish her chastity by way of suicide: pride. As Augustine argues in *The City of God*, Andrew Weiner sees Lucrece's desire to regain her reputation for purity as a type of hubris and killing herself to achieve that aim as murder, another sin. Weiner believes she has an alternative:

Lucrece can live only if she is willing to give up her spotless reputation, to become like the rest of humanity, spotted, an emblem now not of chastity but of frailty, not of her own innocence but of Tarquin's guilt.⁷³

Weiner's criticism that Lucrece “refuses to live as a fallen human being in a fallen world”⁷⁴ seems counter-intuitive in light of his earlier argument that Tarquin has no “free will” and is compelled to rape Lucrece.⁷⁵ Each character struggles under the burden of

the passions – physical, mental, and emotional – that dominate his or her life experience. Tarquin needs a way to expel his excess and this motivates the rape. Lucrece struggles to overcome the pestilent humors literally coursing through her blood stream and concludes that the only way she can become healthy again is to purge the bad blood. Both characters should be judged by the same standards set forth by Shakespeare in the poem.

To better understand Lucrece’s insistence on killing herself to exorcise the corruption in her body, we must read Shakespeare’s descriptions of humoral states literally. The connection between the black “coal” (47) in Tarquin’s liver, the “black blood” (1745) contaminating Lucrece, and their individual humoral frameworks is a metonymical one rather than a being metaphorical.⁷⁶ Catherine Belling confirms that:

The red, white, and black of [*The Rape of Lucrece*] may seem like symbolic moral abstractions, but they are rooted in a discourse based on precise clinical observation of living, bleeding bodies. In making a society a macrocosm materially and literally continuous with the microcosm of the human body, humoral theory infused the sociopolitical with a discourse of medical pathology and normalization.⁷⁷

Similarly, Robin L. Bott, in her work on Chaucer’s *Physician’s Tale* and Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, suggests that Lucrece’s desire to prevent her literal “stain” from spreading to Collatine and the rest of her family would have been a recognizable motive for suicide.⁷⁸ Bott believes the early modern association of rape with disease not only promotes, but requires that the rape victim be sacrificed to stem the tide of infection:

[E]nemies attack fathers through their rapable daughters to expose these fathers and their patriarchal society to potential contagion that is abated only by the

destruction of the woman. Such destruction of the female body reveals an attitude towards these raped women analogous to attitudes towards disease or diseased tissue – the damaged body part must be excised in order to prevent further harm to the whole. In this formulation, the female subject is reduced to the status of a mutilated body part or some dangerously contaminated flesh that may infect the father, making the destruction of the raped woman not only permissible, but also highly desirable.⁷⁹

Although Bott's focus is on "fathers" since the women she discusses are unmarried virgins, the same applies for husbands of chaste wives like Lucrece; Tarquin's attack on Lucrece is also a direct assault on Collatine.⁸⁰ In this vein, the key components of Lucrece's pro-suicide argument stem from the belief that her body is a "blemished fort" (1175) which contains her "troubled soul" (1176) and that she will "poison" her family with her "attaint" (1072) if she remains among the living. Restoring herself to a state of purity and protecting her family from contamination requires her to shed her corrupt corporeal form.

Imagining herself as a new Philomel who, in the guise of a nightingale, pricks her breast with a thorn to spur onward her sad song of ravishment, Lucrece procures a "sharp knife" (1138) which will "make some hole / Through which [she] may convey [her] troubled soul" (1175-6). Her plan for restorative revenge requires three things: the purgation of the literal humoral contagion Tarquin foists on her, the erasure of the "stain"ed reputation of herself and her family, and the punishment of Tarquin for his "black payment" (576). Lucrece herself summarizes the strategy thus:

My soul and body to the skies and ground;

My resolution, husband, do thou take;
Mine honour be the knife's that makes my wound;
My shame be his that did my fame confound;
And all my fame that lives disbursèd be
To those that live and think no shame of me (1199-1204)

As if in a metaphysical butcher shop, she slices herself into those parts needing recognition. All the "cuts" she leaves, save one, are positive or neutral attributes. The one exception, her "shame," is declared Tarquin's, a mirror transference of emotion akin to the "load of lust" (734) he bestows on her in the aftermath of the rape. She loathes the essence he has left behind so she will pitch it back to him in death. As a physical manifestation of that shame, her "stainèd blood to Tarquin [she'll] bequeath, / Which by him tainted shall for him be spent" (1181-2); her gift of blood implicitly implicates him in her self-murder.

Lucrece, resplendent in black mourning clothes, sets the stage to move her audience towards her dual goal – revenge and redemption. For a person whose innocence and openness were lauded as her most recognizable features, Collatine's wife quickly learns about manipulation. Fearful of "that suspicion which the world might bear her" (1321), she tells her husband just enough in her letter to summon him home. She decides the details cannot be trusted to ink and "action [will] become them better" (1323). Her own theory of the transmission of affect reinforces the importance of controlling the spectacle in order to elicit the desired response:

To see sad sights moves more than hear them told,
For then the eye interprets the ear

The heavy motion that it doth behold

When every part a part of woe doth bear. (1324-7)

With this in mind, she sets the stage of her demise carefully. When the messenger returns with her husband and his friends, they all find Lucrece "clad in mourning black" (1585) with her "lively colour killed with deadly cares" (1593). Her audience stands "Amazed" (1591) at the sight of her woeful "face, that map which deep impression bears / Of hard misfortune, carved in it with tears" (1712-3). With the consummate skill of a veteran actress, Lucrece increases the curiosity of the men gathered around her by not speaking at first and allowing them to be moved by the "sad sight" (1324) of her "attired in discontent" (1601). When she does try to speak, she sighs three times before she can bring herself to start the horrible story. With each sigh, she increases her witnesses' desire to know the cause of her anguish.

Once she does begin to speak, Lucrece employs three very effective methods of persuasion. First, she gets to the point quickly. Having built the sympathetic emotions of the men to a crescendo, she tells them of the rape with impressive succinctness, using the abruptness of the revelation as a bludgeon to shock and impress them with the violence of what she has suffered. Lucrece's unveiling of her discontent seems to have the desired effect on her husband's companions who "long [. . .] to hear the hateful foe bewrayed" (1698), but Collatine, the "oversee[r]" of her "will" (1205), becomes locked in an unproductive cycle of grief. In fact, her husband is so astounded by her sad revelation that his "shallow tongue" (78) – which opens Lucrece to the rape in the first place – is significantly "stop"ped (1664):

The deep vexation of his inward soul

Hath seemed a dumb arrest upon his tongue (1779-80)

Instead of the furious and vengeful humor she expects to incite in him, she only gets a silent, circulating despair as a response. Seeing his “untimely frenzy” (1675) as a detriment to her plans for redemption and revenge, Lucrece chides her husband for his “speechless woe” (1674):

'Dear lord, thy sorrow to my sorrow lendeth
Another power; no flood by raining slaketh.
My woe too sensible thy passion maketh
More feeling-painful. Let it then suffice
To drown one woe, one pair of weeping eyes. (1676-80)

Telling him to stifle the crying since it only augments her own considerable sorrow, she spells out her expectation for him and his “knights” (1694): revenge.

Lucrece’s second method of persuasion is that she does not excuse herself from guilt – there can be no argument that she “protests too much.” Rather, by heaping the guilt and complicity upon her own head, Lucrece places the men in a position to defend her from herself. She does qualify her guilt to be a result of the humoral contamination thrust upon her by Tarquin, deliberately separating her rational mind from her body to demonstrate that she was never mentally complicit with Tarquin’s demands:

Though my gross blood be stained with this abuse,
Immaculate and spotless is my mind;
That was not forced, that was never inclined
To accessory yieldings, but still pure
Doth in her poisoned closet yet endure.’ (1655-9)

Again, she emphasizes the medical necessity for her annihilation: both her soul and her mind are trapped in a "polluted prison" (1726) and death is the only way out. She knows that she needs to make this rationale for self-murder clear to the audience lest they misconstrue her motive as despair.⁸¹ The "lordly crew" (1731), when she unfolds the details of her ravishment, actually proposes that she has nothing to be ashamed of because "her body's stain her mind untainted clears" (1710). Lucrece's response to their attempts to pacify her clearly denies that it has any sway over her thinking:

'No, no', quoth she, 'no dame hereafter living

By my excuse shall claim excuse's giving.' (1714-5)

By voluntarily executing the harshest possible penalty on herself, Lucrece attempts to establish her fame and her chastity beyond reproach, as well as setting the bar for all wives "hereafter." She emphasizes that her rational mind is "immaculate and spotless" (1656) as well as "pure" (1704), contrasting it with her "stained" (1655) body. By purging that stained part of herself, and consequently killing it, she believes that she can resurrect her reputation as a chaste and dutiful wife. She is convinced that her body cannot be cleansed except through the deadly bloodletting, and equally certain that "the immortal part of [herself]" (*Othello*, 2.3.259-60), her reputation, will be preserved and reinforced by her sacrificial suicide. In the world of the poem, this approach appears to work splendidly, and "Collatine and his consorted lords" (1609) both "promise aid" (1696) in bringing her rapist to justice, eventually using her bloodied body as a talisman to unite all Romans against the Tarquins.

Finally, using her body as a blackboard, she instructs the courtiers in her expectations of retribution. Stabbing herself, she constructs her suicide as a murder in

which Tarquin “guides [her] hand to give [the] wound” (1722). Illustrating the deadly consequences of the prince’s “black [. . .] deed” (226), Lucrece implores the gathered company to “Be suddenly revengèd on [her] foe” (1683).⁸² The spectacle of her suicide provides additional evidence to support Lucrece’s commitment to the separation of body and soul/mind. As her audience stands “Stone-still, astonished with [her] deadly deed” (1730), several visual clues appear reinforcing Lucrece’s assertion that the “remedy” (1028) for her disgrace “Is to let forth [her] foul defilèd blood” (1029). First, as she stabs herself, the narrator describes her soul as being “unsheathed” (1724) from its “polluted prison” (1726). Although it is not clear from the narrator’s words whether the witnesses see “her wingèd sprite” (1728) ascending to the heavens, he states her soul’s movement towards the sky as if it were fact. Next, as Brutus draws the knife from her breast, her blood bubbles out, separating into two distinct streams:

In two slow rivers, that crimson blood
Circles her body in on every side,
Who like a late-sacked island vastly stood
Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood.

Some of her blood still pure and red remained,

And some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained. (1738-43)

Her spirit fled, her body is “unpeopled,” and, picking up the “blemished fort” (1175) image, her corpse appears as a pillaged isle surrounded by gore. The fact that her blood shows clear evidence of pollution – “black” and “stained” – justifies Lucrece’s medical diagnosis of a necessary purge. In death, her body’s humoral balance is ultimately restored.

The first part of Lucrece's goal in committing suicide seems fulfilled before her body is even cold. Her desire for redemption, the need to re-establish her honor, seems complete as Brutus extols the lords to carry out revenge on behalf of Lucrece, that "true wife" (1841); she has regained her name at the cost of her life. Additionally, she has set a precedent for future wives, placing herself in historical and legendary record. Lucrece's second goal – vicarious revenge – is a bit more problematic in the aftermath of her suicide. Although she has the men pledge "With swift pursuit to venge [her] wrong" (1691), thus legally binding them to take action on her behalf, she is well aware that there are several obstacles that must be overcome. Prior to her death, she chastises her husband for his "untimely frenzy" (1675) of grief, for that is not the emotion she is trying to evoke in him. She needs him, and all of his lordly friends, enraged and full of bloody-mindedness, not weeping. So, getting the right pitch of emotion out of her audience is a challenge that she negotiates with limited success. Another problem lies in the identity of her attacker; Tarquin, as prince of the ruling family, demands the respect and loyalty of the men she is relying on to punish him. Cannily, she withholds the name of her rapist until *after* the men swear oaths to her.

Lucrece does her best to funnel the emotions of her audience towards her second goal of revenge and recognizes there may be some slippage along the way, but she could not predict the continuation of her woeful spectacle through the machinations of her husband and father. Her corpse, without her voice to guide the affects of its observers, becomes a totem for her family to fight over. As a precursor to Hamlet's and Laertes' brawl over Ophelia's corpse, Tarquin and Lucrece's father, Lucretius, lose themselves in a maudlin debate about which one of them has more right to mourn:

Then son and father weep with equal strife

Who should weep most, for daughter or for wife. (1791-2)

Just as the derailment of Lucrece's posthumous revenge seems complete, Brutus steps in. Although he does not agree with Lucrece's decision to "slay herself" (1827), he recognizes her sacrifice as an opportunity to incite Romans against the tyrannical Tarquins. He chastises Collatine's and Lucretius' "childish humour" (1825), calling on them instead to vow revenge for "the death of this true wife" (1841). The knife, which Lucrece bequeathed all her honor (1184), becomes a talisman by which Brutus incites not only the witnesses to her death, but all of Rome. Kissing the blade to seal his own vow, he passes it to the others who repeat their oaths to revenge her untimely death. To gain support for their cause, the men bear Lucrece's bloody body through the streets of Rome, publishing both her disgrace and her redemption. Though this exposure was probably not part of Lucrece's original agenda, it helps achieve her ends. Tarquin is banished for his "foul offense" (1852) and Lucrece's legend of chastity grows.

¹ See Kelly Oliver, "Colonial Abjection and Transmission of Affect," *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2004) 48. Oliver's focus is on colonization and the way affect can be used to subjugate native populations, but her explanation for the change in emotional species during transmission makes sense here as well.

² Quoted in Wolter Seuntjens, "Vapours and Fumes, Damps and Qualms: Windy Passions in the Early-Modern Age (1600-1800)" (*English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature* 87.1 (2006): 35-52), 37-8.

³ See especially 568-666.

⁴ Robert Burton, "Democritus to the Reader," *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Ed. Holbrook Jackson. New York: New York Review Books, 2001) 69.

⁵ See A. D. Cousins, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Narrative Poems* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000) 49-50. Cousins claims that Shakespeare adopts his characterization of Tarquin from Ovid and that his intended audience would be well aware of the unsavory reputation of both Tarquin and his ancestors.

⁶ Galen's theory of the humors, which was the widely accepted practicing medical doctrine in the Renaissance and adopted by the literary set of the day, characterizes an imbalance in the liver as associated with both lust and anger. Roe's note asserts that "[c]ontemporary physiology understood the liver to be the

seat of both sexual passion and anger (often described as spleen) (n47). Cf. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), and Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spencer, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999).

⁷ Burton, "Part I, Section 2," 270.

⁸ Motivation for Tarquin resides both in the physical and the mental planes and manifests as desire. His will, both in the sense of emotional longing and as his physical penis, needs to possess Lucrece for the physical pleasure the possession brings as well as to assert his authority over her as a man, proving that he too can have the "treasure" (16) originally reserved for Collantine. The prince's pathology in early modern terms stems from a superabundance of hot blood and cold cholera which overwhelms his liver's ability to purge the excess; the corresponding emotions of lust and anger overcome all his rational arguments against taking Lucrece by force.

⁹ Stephen Pender, "Subventing Disease: Anger, Passions, and the Non-Naturals," (*Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*. Ed. Jennifer C. Vaught. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 193-218) 198.

¹⁰ In the same vein, Shakespeare variously describes him as a "grim lion" (421), "a cockatrice" (540), "a foul night-waking cat" (554), and a "thievish dog" (736).

¹¹ Andrew D. Weiner, "Burdens of Guilty Minds: Rape and Suicide in Shakespeare's Lucrece." (*Graven Images: A Journal of Culture, Law, and the Sacred* 2.(1995): 48-63) 54-5.

¹² See especially Book III, Chapter 2: "Means to mortify Passions." Here Wright outlines the eight basic ways a man may control his passions: 1/ exercise habits that are at the extreme opposite of your natural inclination or complexion, 2/ abstain from both lawful and unlawful forms of the humoral weakness you have identified, 3/ avoid situations that will provoke the excess passion that you incline towards, 4/ embrace the passion to the very point of giving in and then resist with all your soul to overthrow the passion permanently, 5/ resist the passion from the very outset, not allowing it to take any hold, 6/ mortify the flesh, taking the focus away from the corporal passions and placing it back on the mind and reason, 7/ examine your soul daily and be vigilant about allowing any passion to control you, and 8/ ask God for help controlling excess passions. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, Ed. William Webster Newbold (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 150-4.

¹³ Plethora was considered the fundamental cause of disease in the Renaissance. Gail Kern Paster explains plethora as an "internal imbalance of humors" where, regardless of being "variously cause or effect," the humors are too abundant for the person's system to function properly. In the case of blood, "the body could not use up all the blood it had produced in concoction, nor could it perfectly concoct all the food and drink it continued to take in." See *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993) 74.

¹⁴ An idea repeated elsewhere is Shakespeare; for example, by Gratiano after Iago's villainy is unveiled in *Othello* – "all that's spoke is marred" (5.2.355).

¹⁵ For a thorough discussion of the mechanics behind sensory input and humoral fluctuations, see Bruce Smith's "Hearing Green," (*Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, Eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 147-168) 149-50.

¹⁶ Shakespeare uses the idea of aural assault elsewhere, perhaps most notably in *Hamlet* and *Othello*. For example, in *Hamlet*, Gertrude begs her son to cease his verbal assault with, "O, speak to me no more; These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears," and in *Othello*, Iago succeeds in destroying the general by "pour[ing] pestilence into his ear."

¹⁷ Burton, "Part I, Section 2," 266.

¹⁸ Nancy Vickers, "'The blazon of sweet beauty's best': Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 95-115.

¹⁹ Vickers, 97.

²⁰ Lucrece herself recognizes this as a valid reason for her rape when she addresses the image of her husband Collatine following the assault:

Nor shall he smile at thee in secret thought,
Nor laugh with his companions at thy state;
But thou shalt know thy int'rest was not bought
Basely with gold, but stol'n from forth thy gate. (1065-8)

²¹ Shakespeare makes this explicit at the beginning of the poem:

Haply that name of 'chaste' unhapp'ly set
This bateless edge on his keen appetite (8-9)

He cannot give up his quest to possess her because of her virtue; he has to have that which he is forbidden to have.

²² Burton, "Part I, Section 2" 375.

²³ The poem's "Argument" explains that after Collatine's initial boast, he, Tarquin and the other nobles return quickly to Rome to spy on their wives and only Lucrece is found at home, diligently pursuing her wifely duties in Collatine's absence. Being inflamed by her beauty is the main reason for his return in the "Argument," but the poem itself implies he has not actually seen her before he arrives at her home. His emphasis that her husband's praise did not do her beauty justice suggests that Tarquin has not experienced her beauty first hand before. Either way, envy and malice towards Collatine still seems to be the initial impetus for Tarquin's quest to possess Lucrece.

²⁴ Lee A. Ritscher, *The Semiotics of Rape in Renaissance English Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 47.

²⁵ Robert Burton, "Part III, Section 2," 65.

²⁶ Rainer Warning's research points out that, "The hierarchy of the senses [. . .] with sight in the highest position [. . .] goes back to Aristotle." See "Seeing and Hearing in Ancient and Medieval Epiphany" (*Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage/Fascinations/Frames*, Eds. Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008, 102-116) 102. See also Stuart Clark, *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 2009) 9.

²⁷ Faye Tudor, "All in him selfe as in a glass he sees": Mirrors and vision in the Renaissance." (*Renaissance Theories of Vision*, Eds. John Hendrix and Charles H. Carman, Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 171-86) 182.

²⁸ And the humoral imbalance often has negative consequences for the owner of the gaze and the people in his or her circle. For example, Lucrece rails against Paris' unguarded eyes during the Trojan *ekphrasis* in the middle of the poem:

Thy eye kindled the fire that burneth here:
And here in Troy, for trespass of thine eye,
The sire, the son, the dame, and daughter die. (1475-7)

²⁹ Shakespeare renders Tarquin as an obsessive, labeling him "doting" (155) and "brainsick" (175). The prince, with his "greedy eyeballs" (368) and "keen appetite" (9), is wracked by a state of perpetual desire:
Which having all, all could not satisfy;

But, poorly rich, so wanteth in his store,
That cloyed with much, he pineth still for more. (96-8)

³⁰ “My heart shall never countermand my eye.” (276)

³¹The *OED* reports these various meanings for "will" current in the Renaissance: 1/ Desire, wish, longing; liking, inclination, disposition, 2/ An inclination *to do* something, as contrasted with power or opportunity, 3/ Carnal desire or appetite, 4/The action of willing or choosing to do something; the movement or attitude of the mind which is directed with conscious intention to (and, normally, issues immediately in) some action, physical or mental; volition, 5/ Intention, intent, purpose, determination, 6/ The power or capacity of willing; that faculty or function which is directed to conscious and intentional action; power of choice in regard to action. Additionally, the bawdy meaning of phallus is implied.

³² Like early modern medical theory in general, the specifics of ocular operation were under constant debate.

³³ Thijs Weststeijn, “Seeing and the transfer of spirits in early modern art theory.” *Renaissance Theories of Vision*. Eds. John Hendrix and Charles H. Carman, Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 149-69) 151.

³⁴ Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, (Lawrence, Kansas: Digireads.com Publishing, 2009) 27.

³⁵ The ocular rays are composed of spirits that are produced by the blood and retain the basic characteristics of the blood that ferments them; in other words, the ocular rays of a choleric individual like Tarquin will be sharp, bitter, hot, and dry. See Weststeijn, 151.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 151.

³⁷ Gregorio Comanini, *Il Figino* (1591), quoted in Weststeijn, 150.

³⁸ For a review of the various contending sub-theories of vision see David C. Lindberg’s *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1976) and Nicholas J. Wade’s *A Natural History of Vision* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998).

³⁹ Weststeijn, 160.

⁴⁰ Found in the “Third Book” of Baldassare Castiglione’s *The courtier of Count Baldessar Castilio diuided into foure bookes. Very necessary and profitable for yonge gentilmen and gentilwomen abiding in court, palaice or place, done into English by Thomas Hoby. Imprinted at London : By wyllyam Seres at the signe of the Hedhogge, 1561. Early English Books Online*, accessed March 28, 2011.

⁴¹ Weststeijn (155) points to Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* for a poetic rendition of the same idea: “Thine eye darts forth the fire that burneth me” (196) see John Roe’s edition of *The Poems [of Shakespeare]* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 2000) 90.

⁴² John Roe glosses "colour" as "pretext" (167).

⁴³ Emphasis mine.

⁴⁴ Ritscher, 58.

⁴⁵ Burton, "Part III, Section 2," 87.

⁴⁶F. David Hoeniger in *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), notes that early modern writers did not always adhere strictly to the medical treatises *per se*, but employed established theories as guidelines rather than rules (47-9).

⁴⁷Emphasis mine.

⁴⁸This refers to Tarquin's eyes as windows into his soul and hence his intent.

⁴⁹ This is yet another paradox Shakespeare uses to juxtapose her beauty (earthly) and chastity (saintly).

⁵⁰ See E. L. Ridsen, "Red and White and the Wars of the Roses: Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece*." (*Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest* 10 (2003): 143-153) 145.

⁵¹ Compare this to Tarquin's reaction when he first sees Lucrece lying in her bed:

Look, as the fair and fiery-pointed sun,
Rushing from forth a cloud, bereaves our sight;
Even so, the curtain drawn, his eyes begun
To wink, being blinded with a greater light:
Whether it is that she reflects so bright,
That dazzleth them, or else some shame supposed;
But blind they are, and keep themselves enclosed. (372-8)

In his case, his desire overcomes the blinding power of her beauty and he opens his eyes with the intention of going forward with the rape despite the consequences.

⁵²Again, Shakespeare seems to have anticipated modern psychological findings when he characterizes Tarquin as moved to "more rage and lesser pity" (468) at Lucrece's terrified compliance. Sharon Marcus reports that in a recent survey of rape victims, "passive responses often led to increased violence on the rapist's part." See Sharon Marcus, "Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention," *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds. J. Butler & J.W. Scott. (New York: Routledge, 1992) 395-6. Marcus also points to modern research that contradicts the common notion that physical resistance to rape provokes greater violence from the rapist.

⁵³John Roe glosses "let" as "impediment" or "obstacle," but it can also mean "outpouring" or "discharge" in the sense of allowing a fluid to escape, or the shedding of blood (*OED*). The latter definition makes sense for there is now more room for Tarquin's passion to swell. For a thorough discussion of this antithesis and the multiple meanings of "let" throughout *Lucrece*, see Joel Fineman, "Shakespeare's *Will*: The Temporality of Rape," *Representations* 20 *Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy* (Autumn 1987) 25-76.

⁵⁴ She conjures him by high almighty Jove,
By knighthood, gentry, and sweet friendship's oath,
By her untimely tears, her husband's love,
By holy human law and common troth,
By heaven and earth, and all the power of both (568-72)

⁵⁵ I am indebted to Marshall Grossman for his assistance in working through this idea.

⁵⁶ In Renaissance medical theory, blood and semen are made from the same humor; they are just at different stages in the concoction process. Elaine Hobby writes:
[Some] organs had the function of "transmutation," of turning one bodily fluid into another: for example, special vessels in men's stones (testicles) turned blood into semen, whilst others in women's breasts turned blood into milk. Such transmutations were believed to take place through a process of "concoction," in which substances were heated and matured by the body into a new quality or identity.

See "Note on Humoral Theory," Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book: Or the Whole Art of Midwifery Discovered* (Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 1999, xxxiii-xxxv), xxxiii.

⁵⁷ The narrator uses parallelism to stress the resemblance between the two in the ensuing sixty or so lines (687-749).

⁵⁸ Theresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004) 3.

⁵⁹ Marion A. Wells contends that the "feminization of [Tarquin's] soul ("the spotted princess") clearly indicates that the rape coincides with a fatal identification with the violated Lucrece." See "'To Find a Face where all Distress is Stell'd': *Enargeia*, *Ekphrasis*, and Mourning in *The Rape of Lucrece* and the *Aeneid*," (Comparative Literature 54:2 (Spring 2002), 97-126) 109.

⁶⁰ To reiterate, "affection" means "a powerful or controlling emotion, as passion, lust" (OED), not "love" or "charitable feeling" as we use it today.

⁶¹ Significantly, Lucrece rarely, and never overtly, blames Collatine for her disgrace. In her tirade against Opportunity, she states that her husband would have ridden to her rescue if he were not "stayed" (917) by Opportunity's intervention. One can read the implication that he *should* have been there to protect her, or at least have provided surrogated to protect her if he himself were unavailable. At one point she addresses her husband in her mind's eye as if to explain her disgrace to him. In this imaginary confession she states that "[in his] weak hive a wandering wasp has crept, / And sucked the honey which thy chaste bee kept" (839-40). The image is of an undefended home easily penetrated by an evil invader. In both Roman and Elizabethan times, it is the male head of household's job to protect the weaker members of his family and those under his employ. The text does not conclusively support whether this is a simple statement of fact or an implied criticism.

⁶² John Roe, 183, n820.

⁶³ Coppelia Kahn, "The Rape in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*" (*Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 45-72) 25.

⁶⁴ Catherine Belling, "Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body," (*Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*. Eds. Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004, 113-132) 114-5.

⁶⁵ Kahn, 40.

⁶⁶ Belling, 118.

⁶⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 2.2.70, (*The Norton Shakespeare*, Ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997, 1081-1145) 1103.

⁶⁸ Shakespeare goes on to develop this species of sympathy in such characters as Charmian (*Antony and Cleopatra*) and Titinius (*Julius Caesar*), who willingly follow their leaders to death based on overwhelming emotion.

⁶⁹ In the initial throes of guilt and shame, Lucrece does search for "some happy mean to end a hapless life" (1045), but none were to be found in her chamber (1037-1040). She comes to her senses and realizes she has to stage her action carefully if she wants to reestablish her reputation of chastity.

⁷⁰ As Paster explains in *Humoring the Body*, blood and semen were only separated by where they were in the humoral formative process: "Blood in varying states was considered to be a product of a series of three progressively refined transformations, or concoctions, of food and drink into bodily nutriment. The first concoction, which turned food into chyle, took place in the stomach. . . . The second concoction, sanguification, took place in the liver. . . [and] involved not only the transformation of chyle into blood and

the other humors but the infusion of chyle with 'natural spirit'. . . . The final concoction, which further refined blood into seed, took place in the spermatical vessels. . . ." Purging either blood or semen, or both, would have been the early modern medical remedy for Tarquin's inflamed condition. Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotion and the Shakespearean Stage*, (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 2004) 70-1.

⁷¹ 'In vain', quoth she, 'I live, and seek in vain
Some happy mean to end this hapless life.
I feared by Tarquin's falchion to be slain,
Yet for the self-same purpose seek a knife. (1044-7)

⁷² One of the recurring critiques of Lucrece condemns her for her preoccupation with that "badge of fame." In Christian terms, this emphasis on one's reputation and name smells too much like pride, another of the seven mortal sins. Augustine, in *The City of God*, illustrates the problem:

This matron, with the Roman love of glory in her veins, was seized with a proud dread that, if she continued to live, it would be supposed she willingly did not resent the wrong that had been done to her. She could not exhibit to men her conscience, but she judged that her self-inflicted punishment would testify her state of mind; and she burned with shame at the thought that her patient endurance of the foul affront that another had done her, should be construed into complicity with him. (25)

Although Shakespeare's text closely follows this analysis of Lucrece's motivations for suicide, it does not place the same negative connotation on her "Roman love of glory" or her "proud dread." John Roe notes:

Unlike Augustine, Shakespeare does not ignore the cultural imperatives and taboos of an ancient society, in which pollution, even of an utterly innocent family member, brings shame on the family, shame which the victim's death is believed to cleanse. (*Introduction* 23)

Although Shakespeare is writing for a Christian audience in a time where ecclesiastical and civil laws forbade self-slaughter, he seems to bank on his readers' sympathetic reaction to Lucrece's plight. Her desire to perpetuate her good name would have resonated with the many of the courtiers who may have read the text considering their own reliance on family reputation and honor to gain position in Elizabeth's court. Also, as a historical figure rather than a contemporary, Lucrece's depiction gains a layer of insulation from the condemnatory attitudes of Renaissance morality – the audience does not feel compelled to automatically judge her on the same terms as they would one of themselves in similar circumstances. See St Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*. (Trans. Marcus Dods. New York: The Modern Library, 1993), and John Roe, "Introduction," *The Poems (New Cambridge Shakespeare)*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.)

⁷³ Andrew D. Weiner, "Burdens of Guilty Minds: Rape and Suicide in Shakespeare's Lucrece." (*Graven Images: A Journal of Culture, Law, and the Sacred* 2.(1995): 48-63) 57.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁷⁶ William Spates explains this significant if subtle difference in his defense of reading early modern humoral descriptions literally:

Galenic medicine, in particular, allowed for a complex set of metonyms, rather than metaphors, that were based on the intrinsic relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm. In semiotic terms, metonymy is indexical in nature because it assumes a direct relationship between signs via their signifiers and/or signifieds. Early modern readers and writers viewed disease metonymically as a direct result of their understanding of the body-centered episteme and its inherent interrelations between microcosm and macrocosm. The resulting system of analogies created a complex network of associations that linked disease, excretion, decay, death, and sin.

See William Spates, "Shakespeare and the Irony of Early Modern Disease Metaphor and Metonymy," *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, (Ed. Jennifer C. Vaught. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 155-170) 158.

⁷⁷ Belling, Catherine. "Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body." *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*. (Eds. Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004. 113-132) 128.

⁷⁸ Drew Daniel has a similar view of the situation:

[P]atrician Roman women who had been raped or sexually violated were expected to commit suicide out of sexual modesty rather than to continue to live with the enduring shame of their condition. . . . Within the classical world, suicide constitutes a bid for a curious kind of self-preservation; the self at risk of shame can preserve and uphold personal honor and family reputation through a particularly morbid and aestheticized form of 'self-fashioning' *in extremis*: "self-fashioning" through "self-finishing."

See Drew Daniel, "I Am More an Antique Roman than a Dane': Suicide, Masculinity and National Identity in Hamlet," *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009. 75-87) 77.

⁷⁹ Robin L. Bott, "'O, Keep Me from Their Worse than Killing Lust': Ideologies of Rape and Mutilation in Chaucer's *Physician's Tale* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*," *Representing Rape in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. (Eds. Elizabeth Robertson, Christine Rose, and Christopher Cannon. New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001. 189-211.) 190.

⁸⁰ Tarquin himself enumerates the many reasons a man might decide to rape someone's wife:

Had Collatinus kill'd my son or sire,
Or lain in ambush to betray my life,
Or were he not my dear friend, this desire
Might have excuse to work upon his wife,
As in revenge or quittal of such strife (232-6)

⁸¹ Prior to Augustine's *City of God* ("Book I" composed c. 413 C.E.), the Christian tradition followed that of the Greeks and Romans who generally held that certain circumstances of honor and incurable illness warranted suicide; for an excellent summary of the classical treatment of suicide, see Georges Minois, *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999).

Augustine's treatise changed all of that. His argument that suicide violated the biblical commandment "Thou shalt not kill," revolutionized the way the western world viewed self-murder. Augustine repudiated every justification for self-killing on the following basis: For if it is not lawful to take the law into our own hands, and slay even a guilty person, whose death no public sentence has warranted, then certainly he who kills himself is a homicide, and so much the guiltier of his own death, as he was more innocent of that offence for which he doomed himself to die. (22)

His only concession is for certain biblical figures like Samson whom he believes were "prompted by divine wisdom, to his act of self-destruction" and several of the saints whom he places in the same category. Still, Augustine is quick to point out that what may appear to be divine inspiration could be only the deception of "human judgment."

After Augustine, suicide becomes the embodiment of the deadliest of the mortal sins – despair – in Christian doctrine. During the late Medieval and Renaissance, European states set up harsh laws regarding suicides, many trying the victim posthumously in court to determine his or her guilt in cases where self-murder was unclear. If found guilty, the corpse of the suicide was often desecrated in various ways, denied burial in holy ground, and, in England, the moveable goods of the deceased were often confiscated by the government. For more on the civil and ecclesiastical punishments meted out against self-murderers in the Renaissance, see Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy's *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) which unveils suicide as a common social and psychological phenomenon in the early modern period and Alexander Murray's *Suicide in the Middle Ages* (2 vols. New York: Oxford UP, 1998), which provides a comprehensive historical analysis of self-murder before 1600.

⁸² Another way Lucrece attempts to avoid possible criticism of her forthcoming suicide is to shift blame from herself to her violator. Although she alone resolves to take her own life, she also identifies Tarquin as not only her rapist, but as her murderer. Though she claims she is "the mistress of [her] fate" (1069), and certainly takes steps to purge her own complicity, real or perceived, by embarking on self-murder, she still wants the blame to be shared with Tarquin – "he that made [her] stop my breath" (1180). She names him as she does the deed, exclaiming, "He, he, fair lords, 'tis he, / [t]hat guides this hand to give this wound to me" (1721-2).

"Transformed with Their Fear": Dread, Contagion, and Violence in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, Shakespeare demonstrates affect's ability to transfer across bodily boundaries, producing humoral imbalances in the agents which further lead to actions with far-reaching consequences. In *Julius Caesar*, the humoral imbalance manifests itself at every level, from the individual, to the state, to the earth and heavens. Fear, the prevailing emotion that chains this destructive imbalance together, permeates the very atmosphere. Antony's observation that "passion is catching" (3.1.283) indicates one way that fear holds such a sweeping influence on Julian Rome—as a humoral contagion, fear spreads like wildfire through all but the most rational and balanced individuals in the populace, leading to questionable actions that raise further alarm.

Unlike the blatant exchange of bodily fluids in *Lucrece*, the humoral contagion in *Julius Caesar* is more subtle and diffuse. The foundation for the transmission of affect in this work is the environment itself. Just as human beings each have a complexion—a natural predilection for a humoral type—the very atmosphere of a place and time has humoral characteristics which can actively influence the actions of those grounded in it. For Cassius, Brutus, and Caesar, both the natural environment and the political environment exhibit signs of extreme strain from the beginning of the play. This macrocosmic imbalance is then reflected in the microcosms of the individuals, churning up their humors and instigating actions that they believe will lead to the restoration of balance.

The violent actions in the play result from multiple humoral influences, both microcosmic—"Brutus, with himself at war" (1.2.46)—and macrocosmic—"The heavens themselves blaze forth the deaths of princes" (2.2.31). Imagination takes on a crucial role

in the misregulation of the humors, a situation that, in turn, creates the ideal environment for violent action. Failure to balance the intellect and the passions results in trauma that shakes the very foundation of the Roman Empire with civil war. Fear, the motivational force behind the action in *Julius Caesar*, demonstrates the power of affect over intellect in even the most rational agents.

Complexion as a Foundation for Action

What a piece of work is man - how noble in reason; how infinite in faculties, in form and moving; how express and admirable in action; how like an angel in apprehension; how like a god; the beauty of the world; the paragon of animals. And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? ~ Shakespeare, Hamlet, 2.2.269-74

Fear, like all emotions, depends on several factors in order to become an incentive for action. Internally, complexion and habit oversee the movement of an individual's passions, determining whether or not he has a predilection for that emotion.¹ Externally, environmental input—both humoral and rational—seeps into the porous body and mind, often moving the humoral system into a state of plethora or deficiency. This state of imbalance produces disease in the microcosm of the individual, and in extreme cases, even moves back into the surrounding environment and populace, spreading the contagious *dyskrasia* into the macrocosm.² Each individual's humoral state is directly affected by diverse environmental phenomena including diet, climate, astrological alignment, age, social status, occupation, and gender. Taken with the person's innate constitution and habitual practices, the surrounding world and its upheavals affect change in tangible ways that can have far-reaching consequences. In *Lucrece*, the plethora of lust in one individual ultimately transforms the entire political state. In *Julius Caesar*, the permeation of fear in both microcosm and macrocosm leads to civil war and the restoration of the Roman monarchy.

To better understand the actions leading to the assassination of Caesar and the ensuing civil war, a brief look at each agent's complexion and his complexion's relationship to fear may be useful. Difficult to change, the complexion is the dominant influence on an individual's outward behavior because it guides the way a person responds to both inward and outer humoral excitement, or stimulus. Based upon the literal humoral endowments of an individual's body, the complexion is as much an hereditary characteristic as one's height, or eye color, or nose size. Thomas Elyot, in *The Castell of Health* (1595), emphasizes the elemental nature of the complexion:

Complexion is a combination of two diuers qualities of the foure elements in one bodie, as hot and drie of the fire, hot and moist of the aire, cold and moist of the water, cold and drie of the earth. But although all these complexions bee assembled in euery bodie of man and woman, yet the bodie taketh his denomination of those qualities which abound in him, more than in the other³

Complexion is based on the dominant qualities exhibited by an individual, qualities that correspond to the elemental paradigm that is the foundation of humoral theory. Nancy G. Siraisi further explains that:

each person was endowed with his or her own innate complexion; this was an essential identifying characteristic acquired at the moment of conception and in some ways persisting throughout life. In this sense, complexion was a fundamental organizing principle of each individual human organism considered as a whole. Thus, a particular person might be characterized as having a hot complexion relative to other human beings, and this characterization would apply to him or her throughout life.⁴

At its most basic, complexion summarizes a person's humoral, and hence emotional, tendencies. If a man is known to be of a choleric complexion, his companions know he is easy to anger and are not surprised by behaviors consistent with his humoral type. However, if the same man becomes withdrawn and weepy, his friends and family would assume he has contracted an illness that has unbalanced his humors, leading to the uncharacteristic behaviors. Complexion also refers to the appearance of a person's face (as it does in modern times); the circulation of the humors produced outward signs of the internal state through the medium of the face.⁵

Complexion can vary over time and under changing external circumstances, but modifications to a person's complexion normally occur extremely gradually over a person's lifetime as to remain barely discernable. In the play, only one protagonist demonstrates the exception to this rule, where the complexion alters in a dramatic fashion following a radical event that permanently affects the humoral composition of the person's body— Antony's circumstances illustrate how a complexion can be transformed when faced with extreme environmental and humoral stressors. After the brutal slaughter of his friend and leader, Antony is converted into an agent of vengeance, taking on a role of leadership in the Triumvirate and leading the charge against the fled conspirators. Antony's natural humoral disposition is sanguine, a man who is more apt to love than to fight. According to Burton, persons with a sanguine complexion are "much inclined to laughter, witty and merry, conceited in discourse, pleasant, [. . .] much given to music, dancing, and to be in women's company." They also enjoy plays and sports.⁶ Brutus describes Antony as having a "quick spirit" (1.2.29) and "given / To sports, to wildness and much company" (2.1.187-8) and Caesar notes that he "revels long a-nights"

(2.2.116). As a “masquer and reveller” (5.1.61), the natural Antony is a pleasure seeker and commits to things that serve his own needs. In general, fear seems to have no hold over him. Aside from the reference of Antony "fle[eing] to his house amazed" (3.1.96) after Caesar is struck down, terms of fear are not associated with him in deed or description. Cassius alone recognizes the potential for Antony to be a fearless "shrewd contriver" (2.1.157). Cassius seems to know that the blood dominating Antony's irresponsible and fun-loving complexion, when roused to excess, also produce leadership ability, loyalty, and literal bloody-mindedness—tenacity, courage, and manipulation.

Shakespeare develops the idea of complexion as the basis of action by portraying the main agents in the play as having dominant aspects of specific humoral types (*Figure 2*); although none of them come across as stark stereotypes of each temperament, the early modern audience would have readily recognized the humoral foundations of the top characters. For example, Cassius is choleric; Burton's description of that type fits Shakespeare's description of the conspiracy's instigator extremely well:

[Cholerics] are bold and impudent, and of a more hairbrain disposition, apt to quarrel and think of such things, battles, combats, and their manhood; furious, impatient in discourse, stiff, irrefragable and prodigious in their tenents; and if they be moved, most violent, outrageous, ready to disgrace, provoke any, to kill themselves and others.⁷

Caesar calls him a "great observer" who looks for hidden motives and machinations in the men he meets (1.2.201-2). Known for his “hasty spark” (4.3.111), Cassius' penchant for violence is amply demonstrated in the play. Like the dog that bites when it is afraid, he reaches for his dagger at the slightest provocation and refers to committing suicide on

five separate occasions, exhibiting his willingness not only to murder his enemies but also to kill himself.⁸ Cassius is Antony's opposite, for he "loves no plays" and "hears no music" and only smiles to "mock" (1.2.202-5). He appears "lean," "hungry" (1.2.193) and "spare" (1.2.200). Caesar believes Cassius's choleric nature is dangerous:

Let me have men about me that are fat;

Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;

He thinks too much: such men are dangerous. (1.2.191-4)⁹

Caesar, himself a keen observer, labels Cassius' nature rightly: "Such men as he be never at heart's ease / Whiles they behold a greater than themselves" (1.2.207-8). Fear of being the lesser man provokes him into a state of humoral imbalance.

Figure 3 – Dominant Complexions of Main Characters in *Julius Caesar*

Character	Complexion	Dominant Humor	Personality	Astrological Affiliation	Element
Cassius	Choleric	Yellow Bile	Easily Angered, Restless, Aggressive, Impulsive	Mars	Fire
Brutus	Melancholic	Black Bile	Introspective, Sober, Rigid, Unsociable, Anxious	Saturn	Earth
Anthony	Sanguine	Blood	Sociable, Outgoing, Carefree, Amorous	Jupiter	Air
Caesar	Balanced Sanguine/Choleric	Blood/Yellow Bile	Active, Leader, Responsive, Optimistic, Lives in the Moment	Jupiter and Mars	Fire & Air

A man of “rash humour” (4.3.119), Cassius’ emotions, especially fear, drive him forward with little regard for reason. Unlike Brutus, who is often “with himself at war” (1.2.46) over choosing the best course of action, Cassius commits himself wholly to enterprises based on his gut instinct, allowing rational explanations—if there are any—to reveal themselves along the way. Brutus chides him for being “yoked with a lamb / That carries anger” (4.3.109-110), a bizarre image that ironically illustrates Cassius’ mutability, a “hairbrain disposition.” Though he demonstrates a rapid ability to change his mind—especially where Brutus’ council is concerned¹⁰—he wastes no time on second-guessing his actions; he simply adapts to the new course. Cassius, a practical man, and Brutus, an intellectual idealist, are often at odds due to the inherent incompatibility of their two complexions.

Brutus does not follow the text book outline of a melancholic put forth by Robert Burton, but his overall complexion tends to fall in that category. He leans towards the “sad and solitary,” is “suspicious” and “fearful,” and labors under “corrupt imaginations.”¹¹ He himself states that he is not “gamesome” (1.2.28) or “quick spirit[ed]” (1.2.29) like Antony, but tends to lower “sad brows” (2.1.307). Like a typical melancholic who prefers solitude, Brutus attempts to leave Cassius’ company without even finishing their initial conversation about the troublesome state of Caesar’s increasing power (1.2.31). He is impatient with Cassius’ Machiavellian asides and just wants him to get to the point:

But wherefore do you hold me here so long?

What is it that you would impart to me? (1.2.83-4)

Naturally cold natured and sober, Brutus finds Cassius' excitable and aggressive tendencies to be irritating when he himself is already troubled. He reveals his disquiet with the political atmosphere by becoming more and more introspective, another typical characteristic of the melancholic. Like Othello's jealousy, Brutus' fear is augmented by his overactive imagination. Whereas Cassius sees personal slights impinging on his honor at every turn, Brutus worries about the state of Rome and the sanctity of the republican ideal.

Brutus' preoccupation with matters of state causes him to retreat from "the world" (1.2.306) to analyze the problems rationally and soberly. He sequesters himself from others by "veil[ing] his look" (1.2.37), even from his friends:

Vexed I am

Of late with passions of some difference,

Conceptions only proper to myself,

Which give some soil perhaps to my behaviors;

.....

poor Brutus, with himself at war,

Forgets the shows of love to other men. (1.2.39-42, 46-7)

Here he explicitly identifies his state of humoral imbalance. The internal struggle between his "love" (1.2.82) for Caesar and his "fear" (1.2.79) of Caesar becoming king changes his normally loving behavior to his friends such as Cassius. The "war" he alludes to is similar to Othello's initial struggle with jealousy: just as the Moor believes that his wife is honest and yet she may not be, so Brutus feels Caesar is a good leader but may be a terrible king. Cassius, as Brutus' Iago figure, provides the spark to "move"

(1.2.166) the "war" from the plains of Brutus' mind into the open forum of the senate.

Embodying the unsociable aspect of the melancholic, Brutus also forgets to show signs of affection to his wife, Portia. Noting her husband's "impatience" (2.1.247), Portia diagnoses her husband's condition as a "sick offence within [his] mind" (2.1.267) rather than a simple "effect of humour" (2.1.249), alluding to the seriousness of his imbalance. Brutus' natural inclination towards the melancholic has been augmented by environmental factors—Caesar's potential coronation, Cassius' burgeoning conspiracy, and even the "civil strife of heaven" (1.3.11)—throwing him into a state of plethora characterized by his inability to "eat," "sleep," or "talk" (2.1.251).¹² In fact, he is so transformed by his advancing melancholy, Portia claims she barely recognizes him as her husband (2.1.252-4). Fearful of what may come if Caesar is crowned, Brutus is driven to act by both his humoral imbalance and the circumstances that augment that fear.

Cassius, too, knows that Brutus lives too much in his mind. He admonishes his co-conspirator to moderate his ruminations to include only that which is helpful:

Of your philosophy you make no use

If you give place to accidental evils. (4.3.143-4)

As a scholar, Brutus would naturally have a melancholic disposition.¹³ Burton describes those of scholarly bent to be particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of over-contemplation, a condition that "dries the brain and extinguishes the natural heat" of the body.¹⁴ Already cold-natured, someone of a melancholic complexion is vulnerable to humoral imbalance; Burton explains it thus:

whilst the spirits are intent to meditation above in the head, the stomach and liver are left destitute, and thence come black blood and crudities by defect of concoction, and for want of exercise the superfluous vapours cannot exhale[.]¹⁵

Brutus, unable to eat, sleep, or vent his emotions, ends up with a humoral system thrown into disarray. He recognizes his own problem when he blames his sleeplessness on the "hideous dream" (2.1.65) that his life has become now that he has decided to join the conspiracy to murder Caesar. Likening his body to that of the "kingdom" (2.1.68), Brutus labels the conflict between his soul, the "genius" (66), and his humoral body and embodied mind ("the mortal instruments" (2.1.66)) as akin to an "insurrection" (2.1.69). He concludes that the only way to re-establish order in both his internal humoral state and the external political one is to purge the plethoric excess created by Caesar's ambition. Taking on the role of phlebotomist, Brutus prescribes a purgation for Caesar who "must bleed" (2.1.170) to restore the political state, and consequently Brutus' health, to balance.¹⁶

Mutability characterizes not only the commoners introduced in the very first scene of the play—whose "basest mettle be [easily] moved" (1.1.61)—but Brutus, Cassius, and the other conspirators as well. Meanwhile, Caesar's grandiose proclamation that he is as "constant as the northern star," "true-fixed" in his course of action, not to be "moved" (3.1.58-61) by prayers or flattery, confirms his arrogance but also sets him as a foil for the rest of the agents in the play. Shakespeare gives many examples of people being swayed from their original courses of action by emotional contagion which often enters the ear through well-placed pathetic appeals. Caesar, who does not allow "his affections [to] sway[. . .] / More than his reason" (2.1.20-1), is perhaps the most

humorally balanced person in the story. His temperament varies according to the appropriate response to external factors: sanguine with his friends and wife when all is perceived to be well, choleric when he rejects those he believes to be enemies, and melancholic when considering possible treachery or failure. Rather than mutability, this adaptability speaks to the complex nature of Caesar's complexion, one containing a balance of the humors and the positive qualities associated with them. This is not to say that Caesar has no weaknesses, it only means that he does not exhibit the humoral extremism of Cassius, Brutus, or even Antony.

Caesar's relationship to fear is the one place his humoral balance fails him. Seeing fear only in terms of vulnerability, Caesar rejects that emotion completely. Gail Kern Paster says that Caesar, "except for the physical reports of his frailty, is vulnerable neither physically nor emotionally." She sees Cassius' rhetorical attacks on Caesar as the "*attempt* to make Caesar seem more womanly in order to assume a greater manliness in himself and the other conspirators."¹⁷ Paster has honed in on one of the ways Cassius and the other conspirators like Caska try to verbally demean Caesar prior to the assassination by telling stories of his real and imagined vulnerabilities. But, physically, Caesar *is* vulnerable: he has epilepsy, "the falling sickness" (1.2.253), and is deaf in his left ear (1.2.212).¹⁸ His wife is "barren" (1.2.8) and with no direct heir, he cannot ensure a succession based on his blood. A healthy dose of fear, as a means of self-preservation, would serve this Caesar better than the blind courage he affects.

Emotionally, Caesar is as subject to passion as everyone else; his humoral balance does not negate the natural flow of feelings prompted by events. The "angry spot dost glow" (1.2.1.82) in his face after his altercation with the mob over the symbolic crown

and his subsequent epileptic fit (1.2.220-252). He is so overcome by disgust at the heckling of the crowd, that he entertains a choleric episode:

When he perceived the
common herd was glad he refused the crown, he
plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his
throat to cut . . . (1.2.262-5)

Caesar differs from the other agents in that he always returns to a place of balance. For example, Cassius' choleric output continues to grow throughout the play; he never reaches a place of humoral stability. In contrast, Caesar may be briefly inflamed with an emotion, only to shrug it off through rational contemplation. Ironically, it is Caesar's rationality that leads to his downfall; unable to place faith in augurers, soothsayers, or dreams, he makes the fatal mistake of attending the senate on the Ides of March. His intellectual rejection of the trappings of fear—even as he incongruously seems most afraid of appearing afraid—helps lead to his destruction.

Environmental Influences on Humoral Balance

This body therefore, which indeede is but the Sepulchre of that God at first created, [. . .] is it but infirme and weakely defended [. . .] for to death and diseases we lie open on euery side. The world is a Sea, the accidents and diuers occurrents in it are waues, wherein this small Bark is tossed and beaten vp and downe, and there is betwixt vs and our dissolution, not an inch boord, but a tender skinne, which the slenderest violence euen the cold aire is able to slice through.

~ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia* (1615)

When Cassius embraces the "tempest dropping fire" (1.3.10), it is because he interprets the environmental chaos as the natural world's endorsement of his plan to murder Caesar:

For now this fearful night

There is no stir or walking in the streets;

And the complexion of the element
In favour's like the work we have in hand,
Most bloody, fiery and most terrible. (1.3.126-30)

Perhaps this sounds far-fetched to a modern reader, but an early modern audience immersed in a culture reliant on Galenic humoral theory would understand that the natural porosity of an individual's humoral system makes it subject to external environmental factors. Whereas the complexion is innate and specific to each person, environmental phenomena can have widespread influence on both microcosmic and macrocosmic levels. Anything from the change of seasons to the advent of a new weather pattern can produce humoral change in the surrounding populace. On a smaller scale, a single person's living space or occupation can have a profound effect on his humoral balance. Gail Kern Paster writes that early modern passions were “fully embedded in the order of nature and were part of material being itself.”¹⁹ The human body, as a microcosm of the larger world, suffers from buffets and chills and warmth and growth just like the rest of the natural world. The passions are the vehicle for this experiential phenomenon; Paster further explains:

The passions operated upon the body very much as strong movements of wind and water operate upon the natural world: they were the body's internal climate of mood and temper, inward motions carried to the sentient flesh by the animal spirits.²⁰

In fact, wind and water are not just metaphors in humoral macrocosmic relations—both of these natural processes have a direct influence on the human body by impacting the concentration and composition of the humors.

Henry Cornelius Agrippa, a sixteenth century natural philosopher writes that a person's humors vary even

according to the course of time and season of the yere, according to the quality of y^e ayre enclosing vs, accordinge to y^e condition of the place where we dwel, and according to the nature of ech age, they are encreased or dimynished.²¹

In *Julius Caesar*, the "nature of [the] age" is a "strange-disposed time" (1.3.33) where the "disturbed sky" (1.3.39) roils with signs and portents as well as thunder, lightning, and hailstones. The Paracelsian saying, "as above, so below," summarizes this idea of universal correspondence—with no clear beginning or end, the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm is one of reciprocal influence.²² The storm itself is at once a product of the state of imbalance swirling through Rome and a instigator of further turbulent action. Depending on the natural inclination of the observer, the storm is interpreted both ways.

In her work on the psychophysiological aspects of Renaissance cursing, Rebecca Totaro emphasizes the relationship between human action and cosmic environmental forces:

Subject to [meteorological] influence, human bodies largely conformed to the rules governing all sublunary bodies. Their emissions, from sighs to curses, were the very meteors of the body [. . .].²³

Harkening back to Aristotle's work *Meteorology*, the Galenic theory of Shakespeare's day accepted that disturbances in the natural realm—storms, earthquakes, lightening, comets, tornadoes, etc.—were evidence of disruption to the four elements composing all of the cosmos. Since the cosmic order is "the macrocosmic equivalent of [the early

moderns'] own bodies," many Renaissance thinkers saw a direct correspondence between observable alterations in the environment and humoral bodies of people within the environment.²⁴ So one explanation for the storm—the one that best suits Cassius—is that the "strange impatience of the heavens" (1.3.70) is a product of Caesar's corrupted governance:

But if you would consider the true cause
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,
Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind,
Why old men, fools, and children calculate,
Why all these things change from their ordinance
Their natures and preformed faculties
To monstrous quality, why, you shall find
That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
To make them instruments of fear and warning
Unto some monstrous state. (1.3.62-71)

The monstrosity that Cassius believes the heavens are reflecting is Caesar himself "prodigious grown" (1.3.77), a man who "in personal action" (1.3.77) causes his subjects to be "fearful" (1.3.78). Cassius uses the tempest in a motivational way. His seduction of Caska is made even easier when he directs the other man's attention to the hypothetical correspondences between Caesar and the power and horror of the storm, predicting that the storm is a "pleasing" (1.3.43) development since they are "honest men" (1.3.43).

On the other hand, the storm that troubles Rome the night before Caesar's assassination serves as a warning to Caesar and his faction that conspiracy is brewing. It

combines the extremes of the natural and supernatural realms. "Horrid sights" (2.2.16) including the walking dead, people on fire, and portentous animals add to the already monumental tempest that makes the very earth "unfirm" (1.3.4). Confounded with frightening dreams that reinforce her interpretation, Calpurnia reads the storm as a direct warning for her husband:

When beggars die there are no comets seen;

The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes. (2.2.30-1)

William Spates reinforces the idea that the combination of these environmental symptoms as not only a reflection of the political upheaval in Rome, but also as a spark that spurs the human agents on:

Scholars often note that these meteorological and astrological events foreshadow the human tragedy of the play, but it would be more correct to say that they instigate it. Calpurnia reads the meteor shower and red rain as symptoms of cosmic disorder that will, in turn, wreak havoc on human lives.²⁵

Caska, too, believes the storm and all the strange "prodigies" (1.3.28) that he has seen that night cannot simply be "natural" (1.3.30); instead, he sees them as "portentous things / Unto the climate that they point upon" (1.3.31-2), though he does not initially assign an anti-Caesarean slant to signs in the storm. Cicero alone resists the desire to assign meaning to the storm, cautioning that men often misconstrue things according to their own personal "fashion" (1.3.34), rather than reading the true meaning of the events or circumstances. For the rhetorician, the storm is merely a "disturbed sky" (1.3.39), not a supernatural message.²⁶

The storm is not the only environmental factor at work in *Julius Caesar*, although it is certainly the most evident. Additionally, there are references to the air and its ability to effect the health of the individual. Thomas Walkington, in *The Optick Glasse of Humors* (1607), makes the relationship between individual bodies and the elements explicit during his exploration of the affective ability of air:

The ayre [. . .] is the beeginning and ending of mans life: for when wee begin to liue, wee are sayd to inspire, when we die, to expire: as the priuation of the aire deprives vs of our being, and the aire being purged and clensed from his pestilent qualities causeth our well-beeing, so the infection of the aire, as in the extinguishing of some blazing comet, the eructation of noysome vapours from the bosome of the earth, the disastrous constellation or bad aspect of some maleuolent planet, the vamping fumes that the Sun eleuates from boggs and fennish grounds, the inflammation of the ayre by the intense heate of the sunne, [. . .] this infection causeth our bodyes first to bee badly qualified, and tainted with a spice of corruption, and so by consequent our very soules to be ill affected.²⁷

Air, the element and substance that surrounds every living being, is itself subject to contagion from the surrounding world. Portia, chiding Brutus for his melancholic behavior prior to the assassination, alludes to this type of aerial contagion:

is it physical

To walk unbraced and suck up the humours
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick?
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed
To dare the vile contagion of the night?

And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air

To add unto his sickness? (2.1.260-6)

Here, the air itself is "sick" with the noxious vapors attributed to the night. According to Renaissance natural philosophy, there are myriad ways for the air to become polluted: comets, earthly eruptions, solar heating of swamps, and humidity to name those listed by Walkington. And once the air is tainted, it enters into the porous human body, first causing physical distress through humoral alteration, that in turn "ill affect[s]" a person's very soul. A similar analysis can be done for each of the remaining elements: polluted water, corrupt earth, and unbalanced fire (solar flares, volcanoes, etc.) all have the power to influence corporal bodies subject to their affects.²⁸ In Julius Caesar, the protagonists ultimately cannot escape the environmental influences that surround them. Like Caesar and Cicero, they may choose rationally to ignore the potential consequences of environmental contagion, but they are still susceptible to the elements and, in the case of the "unaccustomed terror" (2.1.198) of the storm, the fear that permeates the Roman state.

Fear's Contagious Affect

Fear [. . .] is an inconstant Sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing.

~ Baruch Spinoza

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself . . . ~ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address," 1933.

In *Julius Caesar* fear is contagious. It migrates from person to person, manifesting itself in different forms, yet it stems from the same source—apprehension about an uncertain future. Fear travels on several diverse paths: direct observation of awe-inspiring events, aural excitement through gossip and rumor, and phantasms of the imagination. The fear of what Caesar may do to the Roman republic unites Brutus and Cassius in a common cause, but then that conspiracy breeds new fears: Cassius is not

sure Brutus has the resolve to complete their mission, Brutus fears Cassius will turn the "sacrifice" of Caesar into a bloodbath, Calphurnia and Portia both fear for the safety of their respective husbands, and the plebeians fear the consequences of the assassination itself. The play serves as a cautionary tale against rash action in the face of fearful motivation for, in each instance, Shakespeare illustrates that action inspired solely by fear ultimately ends in tragedy; conversely, Julius Caesar also demonstrates that the absence of informed fear is just as destructive: Brutus dismisses Antony as unworthy of fear and Caesar rejects all fear, even when it operates as a system of warning.

Fear and its close relations, alarm, terror and dread, far outweigh the influence of any other emotions described in the play.²⁹ According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *fear* is the "emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by a sense of impending danger, or by the prospect of some possible evil." Fear relies on the *sense*, not the certainty, of things that *may* occur, sometime in the future. Thomas Wright warned about the power of fear in his *Passions of the Mind in General* (1604):

To dread something is to anticipate the outcome of a future event and believe it to be horrible or painful. Fear is a flight of a probable evil imminent; wherefore two things must be proved and amplified to enforce fear: first, that the evil is great; secondly, that it is very likely to happen. The excess of the evil may be gathered out of the precedent discourses; the likelihood, probability, or certainty we draw from sundry circumstances, as from our adversaries' malice and hatred against us, their craft and deceit, their former manner of proceeding; whereupon we may annex the impossibility or extreme difficulties to avoid it, as their might and our weakness, their experience and our rawness; so that where there is obstinate and

implacable hatred against us, knowledge and foresight how to overcome us, power and means to put in execution potent malice and hatred, what wicked effect may not follow?³⁰

For the agents in Julian Rome, both of Wright's requirements—immediacy and extremity of the threat—are proved not by deed, but through extrapolation. Envisioning the future, Cassius, Brutus, and their fellow conspirators judge that Caesar's coronation is "imminent." Shakespeare's descriptions of what might happen seem deliberately ambiguous. Caesar refuses the mock crown thrice; might he reject the real thing if offered by the senate? Caesar's great "evil" and ambition, redundantly stressed by the conspirators, is conspicuously missing when the same assassins come to collect him and he declares they will all "taste some wine" together before leaving for the capital. And when Artemidorus thrusts a letter of warning upon Caesar and stresses that it "touches Caesar nearer" (3.1.7) than all the other petitions he is receiving, Caesar declares that matters concerning himself personally will have to wait until after state business.

Fear, the foundation for action in *Julius Caesar*, cannot exist without imagination, and the imagination has the ability to effect concrete change in bodies and minds, especially when it is itself corrupted by noxious humors or malevolent spirits.

Reservations about the faculty of imagination expressed by early modern philosophers and physicians often hinged on its vulnerability to outside forces. When channeled for creative works and solutions to problems, the imagination is lauded as a complementary faculty of reason, working hand in hand with "common sense" to analyze and respond to situations, past, future, and present.³¹ But when the imaginative faculty becomes diseased, Robert Burton warns that people

are so much affected, that with the very strength of imagination, fear, and the devil's craft, they pull those misfortunes they suspect, upon their own heads, and that which they fear, shall come upon them.³²

This is exactly what happens to Brutus and Cassius: the assassination they undertake to preserve the republic ultimately brings about the dictatorship they fear. Because the future is indeterminate, the play suggests that men find it necessary to construct an outline of what may come, and it is often their natures to assume the worst. For example, Cassius recommends just this course of action to Brutus before the battle of Philippi:

Since the affairs of men rest still uncertain,

Let's reason with the worst that may befall. (5.1.95-6)

Fear is the natural response to perceived calamity and it influences the outcome of events even by its presence. "Mistrust of good success" (5.3.66), a function of the fearful imagination, leads Brutus as well as Cassius to their destructions. As Cassius, Brutus, and company grasp for meaning, desperately searching all of the signs, portents, and auguries for a way to make sense of their hostile world, fear of what lies ahead spurs their actions. If only, as Brutus so aptly wishes, "a man might know / The end of this day's business ere it come" (5.1.122-3), then the fearful imagination might cease to hold sway.

Cassius' primary worry is that he may die an "underling" (1.2.140), complacently accepting what Flavius calls "servile fearfulness" (1.1.76). His fears are not of death, but of dishonor and obscurity. He chafes at the image of himself as "[a] wretched creature [who] must bend his body / If Caesar carelessly but nod on him" (1.2.117-8). For Cassius, his fears do seem to have some basis in reality. Though a "noble Roman, and well given" (1.2.196), he has offended Caesar in the past and it is unlikely that he can

regain his favor. He knows that Caesar disdains him, avoids him, and astutely finds him “dangerous” (1.2.194), leaving him no hope of preferment under Julius’ regime.³³ This leaves him with two choices: resign himself to his greatest fear—a “dishonourable grave” (1.2.137)—or to find the means to “shake” (1.2.321) Caesar from his position of power, risking almost certain death in the process. Knowing his faction will benefit greatly from Brutus’ support, an endorsement that has the power to transform their perceived offences into “virtue and [. . .] worthiness” (1.3.160), Cassius sets out to seduce him to the conspiracy’s cause by reinforcing Brutus’ nascent fear of “the hard conditions as this time / Is *like* to lay upon [them]” (1.2.173-4).³⁴ Fear begets more fear in a vicious, self-perpetuating cycle.

Cassius proves himself an effective orator, spreading the fearful contagion among his co-conspirators, inoculating them against Caesar’s control by persuading them to be more afraid of Caesar’s rule than the consequences of murdering him. Even he seems surprised at how far he gets by riling his fellow Romans up with fear. For example, he is astonished that his “weak words” provoke a “show / Of fire from Brutus” (1.2.175-6); given his sober and reserved complexion, the “fire” is a product of the fearful excitement moving Brutus to humoral excess. And to convert Caska, Cassius merely has to retool the other Roman’s perception of the “menac[ing] heavens” (1.3.44); likening the frightening phenomena of the tempest to “instruments of fear and warning / Unto some monstrous state” (1.3.70-1), Cassius unfolds his plan to assassinate Caesar, a man “most like [that] dreadful night” (1.3.73). The horror of the “strange eruptions” (1.3.78) in the natural world coupled with the deep ambivalence Caska feels for Caesar, easily moves him to join the conspiracy too.

Brutus' motivational fear stems from his increasing uneasiness with Caesar's escalating power, clearly expressing his reservations during his initial exchange with Cassius: "I do fear the people / Choose Caesar for their king" (1.2.79-80). Yet he finds "himself at war" over how to resolve his fear, having conflicting loyalties pulling him in disparate directions. Described variously as "love[d]" by Caesar (Cassius, 1.2.312), "well-beloved" and "Caesar's angel" (Antony, 3.2.174-80), Brutus has some influence over matters of state. As a republican, he also holds sway with the commoners: "he sits high in all the people's hearts" (1.3.157) reports Caska, urging Cassius to finalize his membership in their faction. Further, Brutus belongs to the family of one of Caesar's most outspoken enemies, Marcus Porcius Cato, both through blood (Cato was his uncle) and by marrying Portia, his daughter (2.1.294). Last, Brutus sees Caesar not only as a potential tyrant, but as his "best lover" (3.2.45), a man that he loves and honors (3.2.21-6). All of these considerations weigh on Brutus' mind, causing him to be "vexed [. . .] with passions of some difference" (1.2.39-40).

Although Brutus later credits Cassius with "whet[ting him] against Caesar" (2.1.61), he has already considered many of the points in Cassius diatribe, telling his co-conspirator that he has "thought of this and these times" (1.2.163) as part of those "passions of some difference" that plague him. He independently has "some aim" (1.2.162) toward preventing Caesar's coronation, and Cassius delivers him the means. The final incentive, that spur prompting Brutus towards action instead of rumination, is based on fear of what may happen if Caesar becomes king. Using a combination of flattery, imaginative suggestion, and personal anecdote, Cassius paints a bleak political picture where worthy Romans such as themselves are underlings to a man of "feeble

temper” (1.2.129) who seeks to “bear the palm alone” (1.2.131) despite his "girl[ish]" (1.2.128) weaknesses. Although Maddalena Pennacchia, citing the popular critical understanding that Caesar's vitality has been compromised by "feminine weakness," reads Caesar as "old, deaf, and conceited" man "whose Romanness is now but a faint echo of past greatness," I believe the breadth of the conspiracy suggests a man who still wields great power.³⁵ If not, then the fear exhibited by his opposition would be on a much smaller scale.

Brutus takes great pride in his status as a noble Roman, often referring to himself in such terms and addressing his peers in a similar fashion. Watching Caesar have “new honours [. . .] heaped” (1.2.133) upon him repeatedly, Brutus, like Cassius, fears what will happen to his own honor. Although he speaks of his high concern for the republic itself, Brutus also has his personal reputation on his mind:

Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay upon us. (I.ii.171-4)

His dedication to his own honor is directly proportional to the fear he has of Caesar's advancement, for each new honor "heaped on Caesar" elevates Caesar another degree above Brutus' own estimation. Despite “lov[ing Caesar] well” (1.2.82), Brutus cannot envision the crowning of his friend yielding positive results. His imagination runs to dread and distaste at the thought of further powers for Julius even as he admits he “has no personal cause to spurn at him” (2.1.11). So, unlike Cassius, who clearly has a personal grudge against Caesar and who would also like more power for himself, “noble” Brutus

must convince himself that Caesar's removal is for the "general good" (1.2.85) if he is to actively join with the anti-Caesarians.

Brutus' reservations about Caesar's power hinge on what "may" (2.1.17, 27, 28) happen when he gains additional authority, on what the "time / Is like to lay" upon the country.³⁶ An epitome of "the end justifies the means," Brutus' contention begins with declaring Caesar's death and then works through the justifications. In the bleak "It must be by his death" soliloquy, he bases all of his pro-assassination arguments on generalities and possibilities, concluding that a pre-emptive strike is necessary if they are to "kill [the serpent] in the shell" (2.1.34). The facts he quotes about Caesar's previous behavior paradoxically undermine his main argument; for example, Brutus admits that the conspirators' "quarrel / Will bear no colour for the thing [Caesar] is" (2.1.28-9). When he argues that power often eclipses compassion and conscience, he cannot fault Julius' present demeanor:

To speak truth of Caesar

I have not known when his affections swayed

More than his reason. (2.1.19-21)

But is not the present that concerns Brutus, it is the imagined, fearful time to come where Caesar may become a tyrannical despot. Interestingly, Brutus never gives specific details about what the "hard conditions" (1.2.173) will be if Caesar is crowned. Instead, the dread of the possibility has eclipsed the elements of the actuality. So, Brutus commits himself to "fashion[ing]" (2.1.30) Caesar's future in both words and blood.

Robert Burton cautions that fear easily takes precedence over reason and imagination if a person does not guard against imbalance. As the emotion that warns of

danger, hence aiding in the preservation of life and limb, fear is the most potent of the passions. But like any other, a plethora of fear leads to dire consequences. Burton likens extreme fear to demonic possession:

Fear makes our imagination conceive what it list, invites the devil to come to us,
[. . .] and tyranniseth over our phantasy more than all other affections.³⁷

Brutus, committed to the conspirators' deadly course of action, and arguably even taking over leadership from Cassius, describes this internal battle between reason and imagination prompted by his own fearful initiative:

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream:
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection. (II.i.63-9)

His imagination won't rest even after he has decided on a course of action. Haunting him in the form of "phantasma[s]" and "dream[s]," his own conscience pricks him with questions. Like Cassius, Brutus is impatient to see the outcome of their venture. It is unclear which aspect of himself—the immortal, soul-like "genius," or the "mortal instruments" of mind and body—argues against Caesar's death. Regardless of the scenario, Brutus, in likening his internal wrangling to that of the larger state, predicts the civil "insurrection" that will result due to his actions. By killing Caesar, Brutus ruptures not only the order of the state, he also disavows the order of friendship and loyalty. In

the end, fear of Caesar's "high-sighted tyranny" (2.1.117) outweighs honor, love, respect and loyalty, perpetrating the downfall of both Caesar and Brutus.

Julius Caesar alone seems impervious to the fear permeating his kingdom, yet his very lack of anxiety ultimately leads to his downfall. Arrogance may account for part of this absence of fear, but not the entirety. Rather, his fatalistic philosophy prohibits him to be frightened of that which he cannot control. In the same vein as the Stoics, Caesar is not denying death and pain—he simply accepts the inevitability of such things:

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come. (2.2.32-7)

The polar opposite of both Cassius and Brutus, Caesar channels his imagination away from worries of the future into solving problems in the present. Always aware of his reputation as man of "reason" (2.1.21), he dismisses the soothsayer as a "dreamer" (1.2.24) and, even though they are in his employ, he ignores the augurers' advice to remain at home on the Ides of March (2.2.41-4).³⁸ Julius, the man, may know fear, but his public persona of Caesar cannot afford to acknowledge that "coward[ly]" emotion. His deliberate dismissal of all the warnings reinforces his fatalistic stance that nothing "can be avoided / Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods" (2.2.26-7).

As a counterpoint to Brutus' over-reaction to the possibility of negative consequences, Caesar's "will come when it will come" philosophy shows the same

aptitude for failure. Hamlet's query regarding right action in the face of uncertainty illustrates this problem of forced dichotomies:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them (Hamlet, 3.1.56-9)

Shakespeare's tragic heroes seem unable to find the *via media*, a compromise between the extremities of action. For example, given Caesar's political aspirations and position, a degree of caution is logically warranted. His sweeping disregard for anything that hints at fear has fatal consequences. His political savviness is in direct opposition to his complete lack of concern for personal safety. On the one hand, he reads Cassius' motives perfectly:

Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous. (1.2.207-9)

Yet after explaining the reasons that one should fear Cassius, Caesar double-backs and staunchly denies that he is in any way afraid of Cassius, asserting that he only mentions what others "liable to fear" (1.2.198) should avoid. As Calphurnia diagnoses, his "wisdom is consumed in confidence" (2.2.49); he "will not" (2.2.64) back down in the face of danger because he perceives his role as Caesar to require him to be "[u]nshaken of motion" (3.1.70). By embracing the larger-than-life aspect of his title, Caesar holds himself to a standard that cannot allow prophets, wives, dreams, or priests to dictate his actions, even if it means saving his life.

Caesar, despite his denials, does experience a species of fear—he is afraid of *appearing* afraid. His reputation, that "immortal part" (*Othello*, 2.3.259) of himself, is vulnerable to the malicious rumor mill threading its way through the capital. To bolster his image and remain a strong leader, Caesar must control reports regarding his valor by never appearing afraid. It is this fear of fear which pushes him to be "consumed in confidence":

Caesar should be a beast without a heart,

If he should stay at home to-day for fear. (2.2.42-3)

Even as he works to eliminate every possible sign of alarm from his actions, he exposes himself to a new, insidious fear – perceived failure or cowardice. Caesar's "constant[cy]" (3.1.60) shows signs of wavering only when his wife begs, on her knees, for him to remain at home (2.2.50-4). His love for her briefly overcomes his need to appear in control and fearless to the senate, but Decius Brutus, a conspirator, reconstructs the meaning of Calphurnia's portentous dream into "a vision, fair and fortunate" (2.2.84), making Caesar regret his brief lapse into caution:

How foolish do your fears seem now, Calphurnia!

I am ashamed I did yield to them.

Give me my robe, for I will go. (2.2.105-7)

Decius further reinforces Caesar's change of heart by subtly challenging his masculinity, hinting that Senate will mock him for listening to his wife's dreams and believe that he is afraid. The man that claims to be "more dangerous" than "Danger" (2.2.44-5) itself, brashly ignores all warnings to the contrary and heads to his death.

Caesar sees everything in terms of the absolute, including his own identity: “always I am Caesar” (1.2.211). He makes no allowances for the middle ground and judges others by his own standards, often finding them wanting. From proffering his exposed throat to the mob to spurning the fears of his wife and closest advisers, Caesar strives to live up to the fearless image he means to project. Caesar hubristically eliminates any need for caution on his part, arrogantly assuming he can face down any enemy that presents himself:

Caesar shall forth. The things that threatened me
Ne'er looked but on my back: when they shall see
The face of Caesar, they are vanished. (2.2.10-12)

And this is a grave mistake: the “things” that threaten him now cannot be dismissed so easily and they will not look him in the face as they pull him down. As Antony later relates, Caska strikes Caesar in the neck from behind (V.i.43-4), not giving Caesar the chance to face him down, and, as the conspirators all take a stab at him, his “mantle muffl[es] up his face” (III.ii.185). Caesar, literally, never sees it coming. His commitment to candid dealing clouds his judgment of the machinations of other men, most especially those of Brutus. Caesar's stubborn refusal to see caution as a prudent measure rather than the admission of fear ultimately leads to his destruction.

As the “gamesome” and “quick spirit[ed]” (1.2.28-9) follower of Caesar, Antony alone, of all the main protagonists, remains blissfully unaware of the fatal atmosphere hovering over Rome until Caesar is brutally assassinated. His thoroughly sanguine complexion and habits seem to render him immune to the pervasive climate of fear leading up to the fateful Ides of March. He even placates Caesar on the subject of

Cassius, wrongly assuring him that the conspirator is “not dangerous,” asserting that he is a “noble [. . .], well given” Roman (1.2.195-6). When Cassius campaigns for “Antony and Caesar [to] fall together” (2.1.160), Trebonius erroneously characterizes Antony as harmless and good only for reveling:

There is no fear in him; let him not die;

For he will live, and laugh at this hereafter. (2.1.189-90)

The truth of the statement lies in the other meaning of “no fear in him”—Antony only uses the word *fear* twice to refer to his own feelings, and each time it denotes a very different state of being from the apprehension exhibited by the conspirators. After Caesar's murder, Antony admits to fear in his letter requesting an audience with the faction:

Say I love Brutus and I honour him.

Say I feared Caesar, honoured him and loved him. (3.1.128-9)

By stating that he “feared” Caesar after omitting the same emotion towards Brutus, Antony declares that he does not fear Brutus, the faction, or death. It also imparts a god-like quality to Caesar, since one ancillary meaning of fear is to hold in awe or high regard.³⁹ Antony's other use of *fear* is ironic:

I fear I wrong the honourable men

Whose daggers have stabbed Caesar; I do fear it. (3.2.152-3)

There truly is “no fear” in Antony here. He lives on to avenge his friend and leader, and his sarcastic approbation of the fear the conspirators use to excuse the murder is merely one small step in that direction.

The Failure of Reason

*O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason.*

~ Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (3.2.105-6)

As fear dominates the Roman populace, reason deserts. With the exception of Antony and Cicero, all of the dominant protagonists base their actions on their relationship to fear. Donald R. Wehrs, citing the inherent problem with passionate excess, reminds us that Renaissance humanism stresses the need for balance between a person's emotional and rational beings:

[R]eason and emotion presuppose and enrich one another, that habitual practices modify states of being, and that moral deliberation hinges upon a cultivated, continuous interplay of right feeling and right thinking.⁴⁰

Without harmony between "right feeling and right thinking," Brutus, Cassius, and Caesar are each lost in a tragedy of their own making. Reason, based on the concept of truth, depends on reliable input. Surrounded by fear-inducing physical, humoral, mental, and supernatural stimuli, this tragic trio inevitably sways from a harmonious course. Fear and uncertainty force the characters to make decisions based on truths perceived through clouded lenses and faulty ears.⁴¹

Peter de la Primaudaye, writing in 1594, cites the failure of perception as the cause of all imbalance:

For all great, violent, and turbulent motions proceede of ignoraunce and inconsideratenesse, or through a false perswasion, which maketh vs to thinke, that the Good or Euill is greater then indeede it is. And this commeth for want of experience, which beeing as it were a darke cloude and mist before the eyes of our minde, doe greatly trouble it: insomuch that we ayme not at that certaine Good, after which wee ought to seeke, but contrariwise we propoude to our selues many sortes of Goods, with many and sundry endes and meanes to attaine vnto

them, which we change and rechange from houre to houre, very inconstantly,
according to places, times and occasions, whereby it is evident that there is
no stayednesse in vs.⁴²

Brutus suffers this kind of rational failure almost systematically. He exhibits ignorance of human nature and a fatal misjudgment of people's capabilities and motives. He accepts Cassius' "false perswasion" at face value, augmenting his own fear of Caesar's ambition, an evil that may not have been as great as the conspirators portrayed it. He dismisses both Caska and Antony out of hand, but then "inconstantly" changes his mind about Caska's importance to their cause (he is given the first stab at Caesar) while later embracing Antony as a friend in the aftermath of the assassination. Ever the idealist, Brutus sees everything through "the eyes of [his] minde" and, since those lenses are "mist[y]," he fails to choose the right actions to bring about his rationalized goals.

Cassius, although he also has a "dark cloude" obscuring his judgment, his is induced by his choleric humoral constitution, not "ignoraunce" or lack of "experience." He uses his own personal grievances with Caesar to augment his political bias against him, and spinning his version of the truth for other Romans willing to listen. He quite deliberately seduces Brutus to his cause, knowing that his "nob[ility]" (1.2.307) will be an asset to the faction once they remove Caesar:

Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is disposed: therefore it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduced?
Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus:

If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humour me. (1.2.308-14)

Even Brutus, for all of his virtue, can be "wrought" from his natural inclination if given the right impetus. Cassius observes that although Brutus' membership in the conspiracy is particularly good for the faction, it is not wise for Brutus; if their positions were reversed, Cassius would not even entertain, or "humour," Brutus' stories. Additionally, Cassius recognizes one of the most basic tenets of contagion—proximity is directly proportional to the likelihood of becoming diseased, or imbalanced. In his treatise *Of Foolishnes of Men* (1582), Johann Rivius concurs with Cassius' observation that "noble minds" should "keep ever with their likes." Rivius identifies bad company as one certain way of compounding ignorance:

For it is behouuefull to marke what companie one vseth, and who are his dailie companions. For, as by the familiaritie of wicked men, we are infected, as with a certaine contagion: so by dailie acquaintance of the godlie and vertuous, we are in manner corrected and amended.⁴³

The affects of one's fellow man move like a disease through a group. Fear begets fear, in the case of the conspirators. By joining with Cassius' group of murders and committing to "kill [Caesar] in the shell" (2.1.34), Brutus is contaminated by their contagion and allows imagination to eclipse his reason. Although he attempts to retain his "honesty" and "nobility" even during the barbaric assassination, Brutus fails to understand that contamination is a two-way street: just as his "virtue" and "worthiness" (1.3.160) may transform the conspirators' dread actions into a necessary "sacrifice" (2.1.165), the actual

butchery and deplorable behavior of the faction may, in turn, tarnish Brutus' standing with those who followed Caesar.

The ease with which so many others in the play also misjudge or “misconstrue” (5.3.84) circumstances reinforces the vulnerability of rational thought. Except for Caesar, who waxes eloquent on his signature constancy, the other main protagonists are characterized by what occurs when reason falters. This is especially true of Brutus, who continues to compound the reasons Caesar had to die, shying away from the possibility that he has made a grave mistake. Brutus believes the rhetoric he “fashion[s]” (2.1.30) to justify his actions, and what begins as a strategy to free Rome from the yoke of tyranny, becomes a series of errors that brings about his ruin. Susan James sheds some light on this trait:

Our investment in our existing emotional dispositions is sometimes stronger than our attachment to rationality and more powerful than our ability to change, and when this is the case, our emotional attachments can generate reasons for our beliefs rather than the other way round [O]ur beliefs are submissive to our emotions.⁴⁴

For Brutus, the truth manifests itself as Caesar's tyrannical ambition and Rome's need for Brutus to “redress” this wrong as his “ancestors did” when “Tarquin [. . .] was called a king” (2.1.53-4). But this analogy seems inherently mistaken: Caesar is not ruled by his blood as the Tarquins were nor is his leadership as malignant to the welfare of the state. And certainly he has not committed a dishonorable rape to spur the kind of public outcry that required the exile of the Tarquins. This lack does not really matter, however, because the doctrine of preemptive strike can only be justified by fear, not reason. Brutus

admits as much to himself in his attempts to rationalize Caesar's death: since what Caesar *is* cannot warrant his assassination, it must be "that what he is, augmented, / Would run to these and these extremities" (II.i.30-1). The dread *possibility* of Caesar's ambition, rather than the actuality, spurs Brutus to help murder his "best lover" (3.2.45). As Patrick Hogan states, "Brutus condemns Caesar on what are, in effect, imaginary grounds."⁴⁵ He places stock in the anonymous missives randomly thrust into his notice because he wants to believe their contents. He ignores the practical concerns that Cassius raises—most importantly the danger posed by Antony (2.1.155-188, 3.1.143-146, 3.1.231-243)—because idealism clouds his judgment, preventing him from accepting anything outside the scope of his "honesty" (4.3.67).

Cassius, despite his "thick [. . .] sight" (5.3.21), sees the state of the "world" (2.1.306) more clearly than his friend Brutus. A Machiavellian at heart, he establishes himself as a "great observer" who "looks / Quite through the deeds of men" (1.2.201-2). He wants to "shake" (1.2.321) Caesar, both for personal and political reasons, and shrewdly hunts the means to his end. Cassius rejects the idealism that hampers Brutus, opting for practicality:

In such a times as this it is not meet

That every nice offence should bear his comment. (4.3.7-8)

Yet, despite his discernment, his "testy humour" (4.3.46) often sways him from the path of reason. Except for his initial "seduc[ti]on" (1.2.311) of Brutus to the rebel cause, the elder Roman always gives ground to Brutus' ideas, even when he disagrees. Deferring leadership to Brutus lends "virtue" and "worthiness" (1.3.160) to the faction's cause, but

Brutus' lack of adaptability and practicality lead to its downfall. Even such lauded traits, when they are incorrectly applied, can cloud the judgment of men.

Sight, a recurring theme in the play, has a direct relationship to the success or failure of reason. Each of the main protagonists—Brutus, Cassius, Caesar, and Antony—sees conditions differently leading up to the events of the assassination and into the ensuing civil war; there is no consensus, especially when emotional motives and supernatural events are involved. Cicero's cautionary words about perception illuminate the problem:

men may construe things after their fashion

Clean from the purpose of the things themselves. (1.3.34-5)

This "fashion[ing]" is directly related to the power of sight, whether it be through the actual physical mechanics of the eye or a product of the "eyes of [the] mindes" mentioned by Primaudaye.⁴⁶ Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky elaborates on early modern philosophers' and physicians' endowment the eye with more than the mechanical capability of sight:

The eye stands in for the mind in the perceiving consciousness, then supplants it, as the act of perception comes to define the self to itself. Consciousness, manifested as an act of self-conception—*idea* (from *idein*, "to see")—begins in the act of visual perception. Eye becomes "I," the self perched on the edge of the body.⁴⁷

The ocular power, by way of metonymy, actually embodies a person's essential capacity for reason. The eye "mediat[es] between world and spirit, flesh and soul," making it the essential organ for rational engagement with every level of human experience.⁴⁸ But, because it is engaged with the flesh, soul, world, and spirit, the eye is also subject to

disturbances in any of those realms, causing the sight, and consequently the power of reason, to wax and wane in efficacy.

The fundamentals of sight in Renaissance thought also explained the difficulties of knowing oneself. When Cassius asks Brutus, "Can you see your face?" (1.2.51), he is exploring the relationship between self-knowledge and being able to see clearly one's own attributes. Brutus takes him quite literally at first and replies that, "No, [. . .] the eye sees not itself, / But by reflection, by some other things" (1.2.52-3). Philip Barrough, a Renaissance anatomist, covers this physical problem:

But the eye which is wont with curious inspection to pry into all other things, and to find out the nature and order of them, hath bin unable to unfold his owne wonderfull constitution, and hath bene alway blind in judging of it selfe, and in foreseeing the discommodities which attend upon it, or in curing them, when they have layed hold of it.⁴⁹

A corresponding difficulty can be extrapolated to individual powers of reason; embedded in the physical body and subject to humoral, spiritual, and corporal agitations, the "eye" of rationality wavers according to each unique individual's experiences. Additionally, the eye is vulnerable to "disease, deception, and the objectifying power of another's gaze."⁵⁰ Brutus never seems to recognize the danger of accepting others' visions of his attributes. Cassius, however, understands exactly how flattery works:

And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of. (1.2.66-70)

If the eye cannot see itself, it has to rely on external reports of its qualities. But the source of these reports must be reliable. Like a cracked mirror, Cassius only reports splinters of Brutus' reflection.

Brutus, confident in his just and "honour[able]" (3.2.15) case against Caesar, believes that *logos* can change optical input if the audience is rationally prepared. Responding to Antony's first sight of Caesar's bloody corpse, he tries to explain, in words, that spectacle is deceptive:

Though now we must appear bloody and cruel,

As by our hands and this our present act

You see we do, yet see you but our hands

And this the bleeding business they have done:

Our hearts you see not. They are pitiful (3.1.165-9)

Brutus reasons that if everyone can "see" what is in the conspirators hearts, then they will be satisfied with the necessity of killing Caesar. Unfortunately for Brutus, what everyone sees is a group of murderers "besmear[ing]" (3.1.107) themselves and their weapons with the blood of fallen Caesar, an act that seems to rightly represent the murder they had in the hearts when they committed the deed. The emotional consequences of such a horrific spectacle cannot be discounted and the conspirators indulgence in the butchery Brutus originally warned against (2.1.161-79) is as reckless as it is reprehensible. But perhaps Brutus' most disastrous failure of reason occurs when he declares Antony as "but a limb of Caesar" (2.1.165) who "can do no more than Caesar's arm / When Caesar's head is off" (2.1.182-3). Not only can he not see beyond Antony's complexion and habits a "masquer and reveller" (5.1.61), but he forgets to consider the depth of the love Antony has for

Caesar. Judging the other man's scope of dedication in the same terms as his own, Brutus sincerely believes that Antony, as well as rest of the populace, will see necessity of Caesar's removal. Daniel Juan Gil believes this rational expectation fails because of its very rationality; Antony's sanguine complexion and naturally "quick spirit" need more than a bit of political logic to pacify them:

[Antony] refuses to regard the assassination as a political act or a political problem, and his irrational commitment to loving Caesar produces a crisis (or perhaps a breakthrough) in his experience of himself and others.⁵¹

Wracked by the "savage spectacle" (3.1.323) of Caesar's murder, Antony is transformed into a violent avenger ready to accompany the "dogs of war" (3.1.273).

Fear, Blood, and Mistakes

*Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood* ~ Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (3.1.105-6)

Brutus, aware that the faction's strike against Caesar may be misinterpreted, cautions his co-conspirators against butchery before the murder:

Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.

We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar;

And in the spirit of men there is no blood:

O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,

And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,

Caesar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,

Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;

Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,

Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds (2.1.165-73)

Brutus, the idealist, wishes to sanitize the assassination, couching it in terms of a godly sacrifice necessary for the “good of Rome” (3.2.45). He recognizes Caesar’s split nature—Caesar, the would-be king, and Julius, the man—but thinks that to disable the ambitious spirit of the ruler, they must kill the man embodying it. Unfortunately, neither he nor Cassius plan for a possible martyrdom. For Cassius, the “great observer” (1.2.201), this is an inexcusable oversight. For Brutus, his unshakeable trust in the justness of his actions prevents him from dwelling overmuch on the possibility that others will find the “sacrifice” abhorrent. Just as Caesar’s “wisdom is consumed in confidence” (2.2.49), so, too, is Brutus’. He believes that his rational arguments will sway any protesters over to their side, including Antony. Donald R. Wehrs points to the failure of Brutus' "rhetorical obfuscation" as symptomatic of his continuing ignorance of human nature:

Brutus disastrously underestimates the influence of personal passions and loyalties, as when he imagines the "ingrafted love" Anthony bears to Caesar can be overcome by presenting the conspirators as "purgers, not murderers," because he imagines that "bath[ing] our hands in Caesar's blood / Up to the elbows" (3.1.106-7) can be viewed symbolically in ways that neutralize the natural repulsion such a sight engenders.⁵²

The assassination of the would-be monarch is meant to be a grand action that will guarantee “Liberty, freedom and enfranchisement” (3.1.81); instead, it becomes the rallying point for further civil strife and ultimately the death of each one of the conspirators.

Cassius and Brutus, aware that the assassination is a historical turning point for Rome, arrogantly assume that they are the ones writing the history. Still failing to attain a balanced mixture of "right feeling and right thinking," they wrongly believe that their rationale for Caesar's murder will win everyone over. Always preoccupied with controlling the future, their corrupted faculty of imagination leads them to see "states unborn and accents unknown" reproducing their story of triumph over tyranny, remembering the faction as "men who gave their country liberty" (3.1.113-18). Likening their base butchery to a "lofty scene" (3.1.112), Cassius and Brutus are blind to the alternate perceptions of their deed. In this celebration of what they *appear* to achieve, Brutus and his fellows reach the height of their power, a height seriously undermined by the bloody means they use to reach it.⁵³ The moment that Brutus disregards Caesar's corpse signals the onset of their fall:

How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport

That now on Pompey's basis lies along,

No worthier than the dust? (3.1.114-16)

Caught in a web of self-righteous justification, Brutus has emotionally removed himself from the scene. Not only can he stand over the body of his "best lover" and look on it as just a carcass, so much "dust," he goes so far as to joke with Caska that they have done Caesar a great service by abridging his days of "fearing death" (3.1.105). Brutus' balance between emotion and rationality tips towards cold, unfeeling facts, leaving him vulnerable to the unexpected emotional responses of others. Antony, in contrast, allows his emotions to flow free, openly mourning the death of his friend even as he "flatter[s]" (3.1.193) the conspirators into believing he will stand with them. He recognizes the

importance of Caesar's body and the story it tells, and is willing to be "meek and gentle with [Caesar's] butchers" (3.1.255) if it means he can win the right to speak "the order of his funeral" (3.1.230).

Brutus discovers the disparity between *logos* and *pathos* the hard way. The commoners he wishes to protect from Caesar's supposed tyranny are fickle and do not subscribe to the same idealism that characterizes his "virtue" (1.3.160). "[A]rmed so strong in honesty" (4.3.67), Brutus presents but one reason for Caesar's removal – ambition. He asks the public to believe him for his "honour" and their "respect of" that honor, but produces no hard evidence to support his thesis, just like he produces no clear vision of what disasters Caesar's coronation would have brought onto the state. Brutus' self-assurance that even "the son of Caesar [. . .] should be satisfied" (3.1.225-6) that the conspirators' actions are just leads him into a false sense of security. He believes so strongly in the cause himself that he never questions his ability to pacify the plebeians:

Only be patient till we have appeased
The multitude, beside themselves with fear,
And then we will deliver you the cause,
Why I, that did love Caesar when I struck him,
Have thus proceeded. (III.i.179-83)

Brutus' claim of love rings hollow to Antony whose own love for Caesar inspires his leadership of the counter-insurgency. Just as Antony professes love to Brutus and the others when he pretends to join with the faction (3.1.128, 133, 189, 220), Brutus' vows of friendship with Caesar are empty in light of his murderous actions. In Antony's case, he

deliberately deceives the conspirators in order to exact his revenge; Brutus, however, only deceives himself.

Antony's naturally sanguine complexion mutates under the influx of rage, horror, and sorrow following the bloody murder of his friend. No longer just a “masquer and reveller” (5.1.61) to be summarily dismissed, Antony transforms into an instrument of “Caesar’s spirit, ranging for revenge” (3.1.270). What he lacks in the way of profound philosophical insight and high rhetorical training, he makes up for in emotional intelligence, tenacity, and calculation. After the Caesarian supporters flee “amazed” (3.1.96) from the capital, Antony alone returns to the murder scene to demand answers from the faction, desiring to know “Who else must be let blood” (3.1.152) and “reasons / Why and wherein Caesar was dangerous” (3.1.221-2). Like Brutus who is prepared to die at his country’s request, Antony expresses his willingness to die by Caesar’s side:

I do beseech ye, if you do bear me hard,
Now, whilst your purple hands do reek and smoke,
Fulfil your pleasure. Live a thousand years,
I shall not find myself so apt to die.
No place shall please me so, no mean of death,
As here by Caesar, and by you cut off (3.1.157-62)

His approach shows both bravery and shrewdness; like Cassius who offers his dagger to Brutus so he can cut out his heart (4.3.99-104), Antony places himself at the conspirators’ mercy in expectation that Brutus, at least, will not slaughter him. His gamble pays off, and he cunningly establishes himself as a “coward or a flatterer” (3.1.93) in the minds of the killers, going so far as to tell them they should think of him as such. The conspirators

gravely underestimate both his power and his dedication to their downfall, a mistake each of them will pay for with his life.

Brutus loses control over the symbolic value of Caesar's death, and ultimately his spirit, in the literal blood bath on the Ides of March. In the heat of the moment, careful planning gives way to carnage: not only do the conspirators hack and "hew" his corpse, they "bathe [their] hands in Caesar's blood" (3.1.106), fulfilling Calphurnia's premonition while denying Brutus' vision of a sanitized purification. René Girard sees the conspirators' bathing in Caesar's blood, an action suggested by Brutus no less, as a turning point:

[The] blood spattered conspirators do not make a favorable impression, but they make a very strong one and they provide the already unstable populace with a potent mimetic model, a model which many citizens will imitate The crowd becomes a mirror in which the murderers contemplate the truth of their action.⁵⁴

The mob, and the ease with which it is manipulated, figures heavily in the action after Caesar's death.⁵⁵ As Cicero warns, people will see events from their own perspective, regardless of the actual meaning of the events. In *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Yves Marie Bercé details how little it takes to spark a riot when the pervasive atmosphere is ripe with contention:

The spark corresponded to a vague state of fear that was always apt to reawaken, or to a collective obsession rendered all the more immediate by a number of previous indications. People heard that the grain would be in short supply, that the brigands were indulging in dangerous acts, that an epidemic had broken

out not far away, that policies had been decided upon which would be a heavy burden on people . . .⁵⁶

The atmosphere after Caesar's murder is ripe for revolt: "Men, wives and children stare, cry out and run, / As it were doomsday." (3.1.96-7). Rather than a "vague state of fear," Rome is thrown into chaos where the people "fear there will a worse come in [Caesar's] place" (3.2.112). Brutus' funeral speech fails to persuade because he does nothing to address this aspect of environment. Even though he "sits high in all the people's hearts" (1.3.157), Brutus and his stoic, high-minded rhetoric cannot compete with the piteous spectacle of Caesar's mangled body.

The dismissal of Caesar's broken body will prove a drastic error in judgment for the conspirators. Antony alone sees the value of the corpse in the aftermath of the bloody coup; in fact, he addresses it directly:

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times.

Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood! (3.1.254-8)

The body may no longer house the spirit of Caesar, but it is a residue of his greatness. Knowing that "[p]assion is catching" (3.1.283), Antony uses the bloody mutilation of Caesar's body to rewrite the story of Caesar's end, deliberately moving the people of Rome against the conspirators.⁵⁷ He unleashes Caesar's spirit from the confines of the faction's logical explanations of tyranny and ambition, revealing new facts, such as Caesar's generous public will, and stirring up raw emotions to mirror his own rage and

grief. Gail Kern Paster believes "[Antony's oration] takes up and redirects the political valences of the conspirator's own rhetoric of blood and bodily conduct, denying the conspirators exclusive rights to the Roman body politic."⁵⁸ Antony, in effect, uses their own bloody tools against them. Although death has taken away Caesar's volition, the telling of his death, sculpted by Antony, invigorates those that would carry on in his spirit. The "ruins of the noblest man that ever lived" becomes the rallying point for the counter-coup against Brutus and Cassius' faction.

Emotion, not reason, again rules the actions of men as Antony in his sorrow moves his countrymen to "a sudden flood of mutiny" (3.2.204).⁵⁹ Just as rage and horror increase his own choleric humors, he uses a series of oral and aural pathetic appeals to incite a choleric response in the crowd. Jean-François Senault, the early modern Augustinian philosopher, discusses the contagious aspect of this affect:

Choler is a Contagion which spreads itself through a whole Town in a moment; one Oration hath made a whole Nation take up Arms, and Men, Women, and Children, agitated with this Passion, have been seen confusedly to kill their own Citizens, or declare war against their enemies; Subjects have revolted against their Princes, Souldiers have conspired against their Commanders; the common people have bandied against the Nobility, Children have risen up against their Parents, and all the rights of Nature have been violated at the solicitation of Choler.⁶⁰

Antony depends on this "solicitation['s]" effect on the plebeians attending his oration.⁶¹ Although his initial rebuttal of the faction's logical analysis of why Caesar had to die barely moves them, he eventually wins the crowd through spectacle, visually appealing to their sense of pity and horror when he publishes the rents in Caesar's cloak, one by one,

recreating the murder before their eyes. The *coup de grâce* is the revelation of Caesar's mutilated corpse: "Look you here, / Here is himself, marred as you see with traitors" (3.2.194-5). Donald R. Wehrs cites Antony's insistence on foregrounding the visual evidence of the murderers' brutality as the factor that turns the tide against the conspirators:

Whereas Brutus's oration renders Caesar into a succession of abstractions, Antony's incessantly calls attention to the body: 'Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through; / See, what rent the envious Casca made' (3.2.172-3).⁶²

Caesar speaks again through these wounds as Antony prophesies:

Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,
And bid them speak for me.

.....

ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
In every wound of Caesar that should move
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. (3.2.218-9, 21-23)

The crowd "see[s]" the "piteous spectacle" (3.2.196) and, Caesar's "spirit, ranging for revenge" (3.1.270), finds the plebeians to be willing tools for that end. Crying, "Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!" (3.2.199) the choleric mob departs, carrying "mighty" Caesar's corpse with them as a talisman on their way to drive the conspirators out of Rome.⁶³ The cycle of violence begun with the murder of Caesar blooms into civil war.

Death and the Restoration of Order

He that iudgeth of the life of a man, must looke how he carried himselfe at his death; for the end crowneth the worke, and a good death honoureth a mans whole life, as an euill defameth and dishonoureth it.

~ Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdome, The Second Booke, Chapter XI* (1608)

Unlike the stability alluded to after Collatine and Junius Brutus drive the Tarquins from Rome, the double-coup perpetuates even greater discord and violence. The fears of Cassius, Brutus, and the other conspirators are realized in the formation of the Triumvirate. Now exiled and divided from one another, the negative consequences of "shak[ing]" (1.2.321) Caesar from power manifest themselves. Intent on securing their future, the faction instead brings on the "worse days" (1.2.321) that they feared under Caesar. Cassius, distempered at the bad turn of events, is full of a "rash humour" which plagues him with a short temper and impulsive behavior (4.3.119). Brutus, worn down under the pressures of exile and distraught over Portia's suicide, admits to "ill-temper" (4.3.115) as well, but only after he has lambasted the other man for his plethora of ire. Quarrelling over Cassius' supposed denial of aid, Brutus mocks Cassius' choleric excesses:

Must I give way and room to your rash choler?

Shall I be frighted when a madman stares?

.....

[F]ret till your proud heart break.

Go show your slaves how choleric you are,

And make your bondmen tremble. Must I budge?

Must I observe you? Must I stand and crouch

Under your testy humour? By the gods,

You shall digest the venom of your spleen,

Though it do split you. (4.3.39-40, 42-8)

With images of corporal breaking and splitting, Brutus rightly predicts that Cassius' splenetic humor will, in fact, destroy him.

Brutus receives premonitions of his own demise in the form of Caesar's ghost. Unlike the specter in *Hamlet* which is observed by multiple people, no one else sees the "ill spirit" (4.3.286) that warns Brutus of impending doom on the battle fields of Philippi. Brutus is preoccupied briefly with finding out if anyone else observed the ghost because he is afraid that he may have constructed the entire thing with his imagination. One symptom of extreme humoral imbalance is to see and hear things that are not present, a fact that Brutus seems to know: "I think it is a weakness of mine eyes that shapes this monstrous apparition" (4.3.274-5). In this case, we are never quite sure if the ghost is real or not, but Brutus reports its presence at Philippi just before he kills himself, stating that it is the portent that lets him "know [his] hour [of death] is come" (5.5.20).

In the Rome of the Caesars, an honorable death punctuates the positive aspects of what has come before as well as redeeming the person through the action of his death. As Lucrece rewrites her chastity in blood, so Cassius and Brutus wish to ensure their status as "noble" Romans, erasing the blot of "traitor" from their reputations by embracing a "Roman's part" (5.3.89); they believe that what has come before matters less than how they meet their end. Yet the emotion of fear still haunts their actions, whether those actions are considered honorable or not. Aware that there is a good possibility they will lose the Battle of Philippi, Brutus and Cassius discuss suicide as the honorable exit for martial failure as they are leaving for the final battle.⁶⁴ Brutus recommends "patience" (5.1.105) before self-murder, regarding the practice as "cowardly and vile" when exercised "For fear of what may fall" (5.1.104). Cassius, hot-blooded as ever, is

shocked that Brutus may, by his “rule of philosophy” (5.1.100) forego an honorable death and allow himself “to be led in triumph / Through the streets of Rome” (5.1.108-9).

Brutus fears dishonor more than he fears death (1.2.88-89) and his co-conspirator’s stark reminder of his fate should he be captured sways his aversion to self-murder: “Think not [. . .] That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome. He bears too great a mind” (5.1.110-1).

Brutus, though he claims to be “armed so strong in honesty” (4.3.67), refuses to be tried for the murder of Caesar.

Rash actions—the product of extremities in complexion, environment, and fear—bring both Cassius and Brutus to the ultimate violence of self-murder. In the climate of failure and misgiving that follows the faction’s exile, self-annihilation offers one sure way to “abridge[. . . a person’s] time of fearing death” (3.1.104-5). Suicide ensures that a person’s end, at least, is in his own hands at the time of his own choosing. After Brutus and Cassius lose the war—partially as a result of further mistakes instigated by fear—they both attempt to regain honor by taking their own lives on the battlefield. Both meet with some success: Brutus calls Cassius the “last of all the Romans” and Titinius sees him as “brave” (5.3.80) while the Antony and Octavius label Brutus “noble” (5.5.69) and “honourabl[e]” (5.5.80) respectively. But this “glory by [the] losing day” (5.5.36) is inherently problematic—reputations are essentially mutable, reflecting the interpretation of the person remembering the suicides. Despite Brutus’ insistence that the faction was honorable and did Caesar “justice” (4.3.19), his enemies can and will rewrite the suicides as they see fit.

Cassius sees evil signs and portents all around them, clearly believing he and his faction have run their course:

[R]avens, crows and kites

Fly o'er our heads and downward look on us

As we were sickly prey: their shadows seem

A canopy most fatal, under which

Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost. (V.i.84-8)

Cassius, who has worked others to dangers, now turns that imaginative malignancy on himself. He likens himself to Pompey (5.1.74) just before the battle, an ominous association since Pompey was defeated by Caesar. In spite of his half-hearted rally before Messala—"I am fresh of spirit and resolved to meet all perils very constantly" (5.1.90-1)—Cassius has already convinced himself that his "life is run his compass" (5.3.25).⁶⁵ Even before he misconstrues Titinius' fate during the scouting mission, the "great observer" convinces himself that his death is imminent. "Mistrust of good success" (5.3.66) serves as his final prompt to take his own life: "Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius" (1.3.90).

Brutus, confronted with the body of his friend, remains stubbornly stoic. Afraid that Cassius' funeral may discomfit the camp—and perhaps himself—he banishes the body to an island near Philippi (5.3.104-6). Still, Brutus' melancholic disposition asserts itself after the loss of the next battle:

Now is that noble vessel full of grief,

That runs over even at the eyes. (5.5.13-4)

The stress of losing so many friends, imminent capture, and seeing the seemingly portentous "ghost of Caesar" (5.5.17), moves Brutus to believe his "hour is come" (5.5.20). Despite his companions' pleas to "fly" (5.5.30, 43, 44), Brutus gives in to the

"Night [that] hangs upon [his] eyes" (5.5.41). Passions cloud the "eyes of his minde," leaving his reason subject to one motion: [He] will have glory" (5.5.36). Even as Brutus claimed Caesar's life as the debt for ambition, he himself pays the debt for the murder of "great Julius" (4.2.19) by running onto his own sword. Antony, recovering a measure of his good humor after winning the final battle, posthumously re-establishes Brutus' "noble" intentions, explaining that his membership in the faction was not malicious:

He only, in a general honest thought

And common good to all, made one of them. (5.5.72.3)

With the deaths of the conspirators and the conclusion of the battle, fear seems to be, at least temporarily, subsumed into the "glories of [that] happy day" (5.5.82) for the victors. History will prove this restoration of balance a fragile one.

¹ Robert Burton's description of passionate contention alludes to both the complexion (disposition) and a person's habits:

Lust harrows us on the one side; envy, anger, ambition on the other. We are torn in pieces by our passions, as so many wild horses, one in disposition, another in habit.

See "Democritus to the Reader," *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Ed. Holbrook Jackson. New York: New York Review Books, 2001) 69.

² In her history of the humors, Noga Arikha explains this basis of disease:

Disease was understood as a state of imbalance or *dyskrasia* between the humours that made up the body's *krasis*, its general constitution or *complexion*. Curing a disease meant rectifying the imbalance within the organism by returning the humours to the proper "mixing," or *eukrasis*, and thereby to a healthy state of balance, or *isonomia*.

See *Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 8.

³ Thomas Elyot, *The castell of health, corrected, and in some places augmented by the first author thereof, Sir Thomas Elyot Knight*, 1595. EEBO. Accessed November 12, 2010.

⁴ Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval & Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990) 102.

⁵ Obvious examples of this include the "war of lilies and roses" (69) in Lucrece's face and the "angry spot [that] doth glow on Caesar's brow" (1.2.182).

⁶ Burton, "Part I, Section 3," 400.

⁷ Robert Burton, "Part I, Section 3," *Anatomy of Melancholy* (Ed. Holbrook Jackson. New York: New York Review Books, 2001) 401.

⁸ See 1.2.94-6, 1.3.89-100, 3.1.22, 4.3.99-101, 5.3.41-6. Cassius finally carries out the last threat, having his faithful servant Pindarus "guide" the sword into his "bosom" rather than be captured.

⁹ Although a penchant for "think[ing] too much" is often ascribed to melancholics, an overactive brain could be a sign of either choleric or melancholic imbalance. In Cassius' case, his thoughts revolve around personal slights, injustices, and conspiracies.

¹⁰ See Brutus' rebuttal of Cassius' desire to take oaths (2.1.113-39), Brutus' refusal to have Antony killed (2.1.161-190), Brutus' rejection of Cicero as a conspirator (2.1.140-52), and Brutus' revision of battle plans at Phillipi (4.3.195-223).

¹¹ Burton, "Part I, Section 3," 402.

¹² Plethora is often defined as a "pathogenic excess of blood," but can also refer to an excess of other humoral fluids like melancholy. See Gianna Pomata, "Menstruating Men: Similarity and Difference of the Sexes in Early Modern Medicine" (Eds. Valeria Finucci and Kevin Brownlee, *Generation and Degeneration: Tropes of Reproduction in Literature and History from Antiquity through Early Modern Europe*, Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001, 109-152) 133.

¹³ Plutarch stresses that Marcus Brutus, unlike his severe and inflexible ancestor Junius Brutus, augmented his natural talents with the study of philosophy and involvement in public affairs. See Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans, Volume 2*, (Trans. John Dryden. Ed. A. H. Clough. New York: Random House, 1992).

¹⁴ Burton, "Part I, Section 2," 302.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁶ Brutus appears to entertain no other options for Caesar's modulation. From "It must be by his death" (2.1.10) to "Remember March, the ides of March remember: / Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?" (4.3.18-19), Brutus does not waver in his commitment that killing Caesar was the best course of action.

¹⁷ Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993), 101.

¹⁸ "He fell down in the market-place, and foamed at the mouth, and was speechless" (1.2.251-2).

¹⁹ See Gail Kern Paster, "The Body and Its Passions," (*Shakespeare Studies* 29.(2001): 44-50) 45.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

²¹ Henrie C. Agrippa, *Of the Foure Elements*. Quoted in Anglicus Bartholomaeus, *Batman vppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum, newly corrected, enlarged and amended: with such additions as are requisite, vnto euery seuerall booke: taken foorth of the most approued authors, the like heretofore not translated in English. Profitable for all estates, as well for the benefite of the mind as the bodie*. (London: Imprinted by Thomas East, dwelling by Paules wharfe, 1582, *Early English Books Online, Web*, September 12, 2010.)

²² For more on Paracelsus and the relationship between Renaissance medicine, magic, and the natural world, see Philip Ball, *The Devil's Doctor: Paracelsus and the World of Renaissance Magic and Science* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

²³ Rebecca Totaro, "Revolving This Will Teach Thee How to Curse': A Lesson in Sublunary Exhalation," *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Ed. Jennifer C. Vaught. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 135-151), 135.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

²⁵ William Spates, "Shakespeare and the Irony of Early Modern Disease Metaphor and Metonymy," *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England* (Ed. Jennifer C. Vaught. Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010. 155-170), 159.

²⁶ This Cicero is not only the companion of Julius Caesar but also, according to David Daniell, the "father of humanist rhetoric, much studied in Elizabethan schools." See *Julius Caesar: (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)* (Ed. D. Daniell. New York: Routledge, 1998) 184, n4.

²⁷ Thomas Walkington, *The optick glasse of humors. Or The touchstone of a golden temperature, or the Philosophers stone to make a golden temper wherein the foure complections sanguine, cholericke, phlegmaticke, melancholicke are succinctly painted forth, and their externall intimates laide open to the purblind eye of ignorance it selfe, by which euey one may iudge of what complection he is, and answerably learne what is most sutable to his nature. Lately pend by T.W. Master of Artes* (London, 1607).

²⁸ See Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters, and Places* Trans. Paul Potter. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2010.

²⁹ I conducted research on Shakespeare's use of the word "fear" across the canon by searching MIT's *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* online at <http://Shakespeare.mit.edu> on April 5, 2009. The word "fear" or one of its derivatives (ex: "fearful," "fearfulness," etc.) occurs 917 times in the 37 plays attributed to Shakespeare. It occurs 41 times in *Julius Caesar* alone, almost 65% more often than the average occurrence of 25 times per play. Only two plays utilize the word more often: *Macbeth* has 48 occurrences and *Richard III* has 45.

³⁰ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (Ed. William Webster Newbold. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 283-4.

³¹ Burton, "Part I, Section 1," 159.

³² Burton, "Part I, Section 2," 364.

³³ Cassius: "Caesar doth bear me hard" (I.ii.312); historically supported in Plutarch's *Lives*, "Caesar."

³⁴ Emphasis mine.

³⁵ Maddalena Pennacchia, "Antony's Ring: Remediating Ancient Rhetoric on the Elizabethan Stage," *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009. 49-59), 49-50. Coppelia Kahn's work on the feminization of Caesar's corpse seems to me to be very relevant, but those who stretch her ideas to cover his character before the assassination seem to me to have missed the point of the conspirators' fear of his power. See Coppelia Kahn, *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*, (London, England: Routledge, 1997) 96-9.

³⁶ In addition to the three uses of "may" in this soliloquy, Brutus also speaks of how the power "might" change Caesar's "nature." The lack of real evidence against Caesar adds to the ambiguity Shakespeare cultivates in this play.

³⁷ Burton, "Part I, Section 2," 262.

³⁸ Yet Caesar does not always shun superstition and the supernatural; for instance, he does believe the Lupercalian ritual which says that a barren matron will become fruitful again if touched by one of the competitors during the festival's race:

Forget not, in your speed, Antonius,
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,
The barren, touched in this holy chase,
Shake off their sterile curse. (1.2.6-9)

Additionally, Cassius reports that Caesar is "superstitious grown of late" (2.1.194), but he is not necessarily a reliable source on Caesar's habits.

³⁹ *fear* (v) 6. To regard with reverence and awe; to revere. Now only with *God* as obj.; formerly in wider sense. (*OED*).

⁴⁰ Donald R. Wehrs, "Moral Physiology, Ethical Prototypes, and the Denaturing of Sense in Shakespearean Tragedy," (*College Literature* 33.1 (2006): 67-92), 68.

⁴¹ In some cases, quite literally; Caesar is deaf in his left ear (1.2.212) and Cassius has thick sight (5.3.21)

⁴² Peter de la Primaudaye, *The second part of the French academie. VWherein, as it were by a naturall historie of the bodie and soule of man, the creation, matter, composition, forme, nature, profite and vse of all the partes of the frame of man are handled, with the naturall causes of all affections, vertues and vices, and chiefly the nature, powers, workes and immortalitie of the soule*, (London: 1594).

⁴³ Johann Rivius. *Of the foolishnes of men in putting-off the amendement of their liues from daie to daie a godlie and profitable treatise for the present time; written in the Latine tongue by that reuerend and worthie member of Christ his church in this age, Iohn Riuius. Newlie translated by Thomas Rogers*, (London: 1582).

⁴⁴ Susan James, "Passion and Politics," *Philosophy and the Emotions* (Ed. Anthony Hatzimoyisis, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003, 221-34), 228.

⁴⁵ Patrick Colm Hogan, "Narrative Universals, Heroic Tragi-Comedy, and Shakespeare's Political Ambivalence," (*College Literature* 33.1 (2006): 34-66), 46.

⁴⁶ Primaudaye.

⁴⁷ Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Taming the Basilisk," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (Eds. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio. New York: Routledge, 1997), 202.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁴⁹ Philip Barrough, *The Method of Physicke, containing causes, signes, and cures of inward diseases in mans body, from the head to the foote* (London: 1590), 49, quoted in Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Taming the Basilisk," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (Eds. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio. New York: Routledge, 1997), 198.

⁵⁰ Lobanov-Rostovsky, 202.

⁵¹ Daniel Juan Gil, "'Bare Life': Political Order and the Specter of Antisocial Being in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*" (*Common Knowledge* 13.1 (2007): 67-79), 75.

⁵² Wehrs, 78.

⁵³ Many thanks to Maynard Mack for emphasizing this detail in his review of an earlier version of this chapter.

⁵⁴ René Girard, "Collective Violence and Sacrifice in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," (*Salmagundi* 88-89.(1990): 399-419), 409.

⁵⁵ The power of emotion over reason in a crowd setting is evident in Flavius' and Murellus' manipulation of the commoners in Act 1. They transform a Caesarian celebration into a funeral dirge for Pompey, appealing to the crowd's fear of the gods' displeasure and stirring up guilt at their perceived defection. It takes only twenty-nine lines to "move [. . .] their basest mettle" (1.1.62), a preview of the Plebeians' reaction to the death of Caesar. Also, Caska, as he describes Caesar's rejection of the mock crown, addresses the inherent instability of the mob emotion. Describing the vehemence with which the "rag-tag people" (1.2.257) expressed their pleasure and displeasure with their ruler's actions, he acknowledges that even the mighty Caesar is, at least partially, subject to the mob's rule. In fact, Caesar's reaction to the "rabblement[']s]" (1.2.243) joy when he refuses the crown shows how much power "the people" (1.2.222) wield. In a precursor to Brutus' offer to give his life for Rome (3.2.45-7), Caesar opens his shirt to the mob and "offer[s] them his throat to cut" (1.2.264-5).

⁵⁶ Yves Marie Bercé, *Revolt and Revolution in Early Modern Europe: An Essay on the History of Political Violence*. (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1987) 110.

⁵⁷ Gail Kern Paster states, "The outbreak of civil mutiny in Rome can be seen, then, to result not so much from the disclosure of Caesar's "will" □ his maleness □ as from the disclosure of his wounds, his femaleness, and from the affective power these wounds have in flowing to transform Antony from part to whole, from Caesar's limb to motivated Orphic speaker, causing stones to rise up." See *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1993), 112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁹ Carlo Pagetti recognizes the importance of the mob in the way the ruling class conducts their business: they become vociferous actors, material bodies claiming their rights of ownership on Rome (and Caesar's testament, read by Mark Antony, will validate their role). See "Shakespeare's Tales of Two Cities: London and Rome," *Identity, Otherness and Empire in Shakespeare's Rome*, (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009. 145-155), 149.

⁶⁰ Jean-François Senault, *The use of passions written in French by J.F. Senault; and put into English by Henry, Earl of Monmouth* (*Early English Books Online-Text Creation Partnership*. Web. March 27, 2011) 414.

⁶¹ Ismene Lada identifies the effectiveness of contagion in a crowd as the product of emotional merger: "emotional response causes individuality to merge with the prevailing mood of the spectating body. Losing perspective on himself as a social entity, the viewer tends to forget what differentiates him from his fellow spectators." See "Weeping for Hebuca': Is It a 'Brechtian' Act?'" (*Arethusa* 29.1 (1996): 87-124), 89.

⁶² Wehrs, 78.

⁶³ Like Lucrece's blood-stained corpse, Caesar's has the ability to incite the populace to attempt regime change.

⁶⁴ These two men disagree on the timing of the action more than the action itself. Brutus' reservations about Cato's, and later Portia's, suicide stem from the desperation portrayed during the act. Ever aware of his status and reputation, Brutus does not want to participate in anything that smacks of cowardice. Cassius, known for his "hasty spark" (4.3.111), wishes to act, and act quickly, once he is resolved.

⁶⁵ The battle coincidentally takes place on his birthday, and Cassius takes this as a sign that the day on which he took his first breath, should also be the day he takes his last (V.iii.23-5).

“Eaten Up with Passion”: Deliberate Contagion and the Failure of Reason in *Othello*

Lovers and Madmen have such seething brains . . . ~ Shakespeare, A Midsummer Night's Dream

Fear, the contagious motivational force that underpins violence in *Julius Caesar*, also works its destructive wiles in Shakespeare's *Othello* as its subspecies jealousy.¹ Iago takes on Cassius' role of seducer, manipulating the Moor to serve his own ends.

Desdemona, like Caesar, trusts her murderer, seeming surprised that death arrives at his hands. Othello, like Brutus, is "move[d]" to act against his "lover" by ill words loosely based on facts. But in *Othello*, the "sacrifice" (5.2.65) meant to serve "Justice" (5.2.17) is proved to be unwarranted. Although Shakespeare's ambiguity towards truth and motive is evident in both plays, Brutus clearly has some legitimate reservations about Caesar's power; Othello's fears, on the other hand, are based on suspicion and weak circumstantial evidence.

Taken from a purely rational standpoint, Othello's actions seem unbelievable. In his exploration of love in Shakespeare's works, Marcus Norland identifies the Moor's transformation as a source of unease for most readers/viewers: "The most horrifying and bewildering aspect of *Othello* is that its main protagonist swerves so very quickly from the role of loving husband and turns into a howling murderer."² If we look at the circumstances in the play through the lens of humoral theory, however, a consistent pattern of poison, contagion, and humoral imbalance emerges. Psychological disorders—including the murderous madness exhibited by Othello—were often attributed to the overabundance of certain humors in early modern medical discourse.³ By tracing the innate and external factors that incense the Moor into an uncontrollable, jealous rage, we can gain a better understanding of the forces that, in turn, motivate the action in this tragedy.

The Cause

Give me that man / That is not passion's slave . . . Shakespeare, Hamlet (3.2.71-2)

Just as critics have been stymied over the motive for Tarquin's "too timeless speed" (44) so have they struggled with the reason for Othello's extremity of jealousy. In his exploration of jealousy in *Othello*, Marcus Norland surveys the possible motives for this destructive emotion as suggested by a wide range of Shakespearean scholars: misogyny, anxiety over paternity, the color of Othello's skin ("racial despair"), his advanced age, self-loathing, sexual disgust, or the fear of losing Desdemona. Norland concludes that none of these explanations are sufficient:

The scary and interesting thing about Shakespearean jealousy, then, is that its deepest mystery cannot be explained away. We cannot assign it to the barbaric and unenlightened past, to a pathological insecurity that can be eradicated by equal doses of therapy and social change, or to some hardwired mate-killing module.⁴

I would suggest that scholars have been looking in the wrong place for Othello's motive. Trying to make sense of the irrationality of Othello's actions through reason simply doesn't work. I believe Shakespeare gives sufficient evidence for us to believe Othello, like Tarquin, is ruled by his affections. He suffers from a humoral imbalance which leads him to kill Desdemona, and attempt to kill Cassio, the objects of his jealous rage. Like Tarquin's attempt to purge lust via rape, the Moor's similar effort to rid himself of fear by way of murder has bleak consequences for both his victims and himself. Othello's failure to utilize "reason to cool [his] raging motions" (1.3.331) is ultimately the source of the tragic events that ensue.

Desdemona, like recent critics, cannot fathom Othello's jealousy. In fact, she initially cannot believe that he is really suffering from that malaise:

my noble Moor

Is true of mind and made of no such baseness

As jealous creatures are

.....

I think the sun where he was born

Drew all such humours from him. (3.4.26-31)

Here Desdemona explicitly links jealousy with humoral complexion. Othello's past actions and bearing have been such that Desdemona "ne'er saw [jealousy] before" in his behavior, nor has any reason to believe he has the natural capacity for that emotion. Confident that she has "never gave him cause" (3.4.158) she has no reason to guard her own words and actions, which, though innocent, become twisted by Iago's machinations so her "virtue [turns] into pitch" (2.3.355). Like Lucrece, who "touched no unknown baits, nor feared no hooks" (103), Desdemona's very virtue makes her unable to deal effectively, or affectively, with the unbalanced world she finds in Cyprus.

Emilia, however, knows a bit more of the world than her mistress. In reply to Desdemona's bewildered assertion that she has done nothing to "cause" Othello's displeasure, Emilia assures her that jealousy doesn't require a reason:

But jealous souls will not be answered so:

They are not ever jealous for the cause,

But jealous for they are jealous. It is a monster

Begot upon itself, born on itself. (3.4.159-62)

Essentially, Emilia is describing an innate imbalance operating outside of the realm of rational cause and effect; jealousy exists unto itself without the necessity of outward stimulation, and once it infects someone, it continues to feed itself *ad infinitum*, with no additional nourishment required. In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton finds this illogical phenomenon particularly vexing:

[There is] some doubt whether this malady may be cured or no, they think 'tis like the gout, or Switzers, [. . .] those hired soldiers, if once they take possession of a castle, they can never be got out.⁵

Once jealousy has "possessed" Othello, the only way he can rid himself of it is to destroy the objects of that passion. The cure, like Lucrece's sacrificial blood-letting, is the one that kills.

The cause exists in the realm of the hot humoral body, not cold reason. And for all of Othello's positive qualities, his physical dark complexion speaks to a corresponding black humoral one. Swarthy skin, inherently linked with melancholy, symbolizes one aspect of Othello's underlying disposition, a disposition that the ease of his devolution suggests has been carefully suppressed by habits and manners, but has been present all along. In Elizabethan England, Othello's skin color would naturally been associated with "inferiority and wickedness,"⁶ making Shakespeare's initial portrayal of the Moor as "valiant" (1.3.50), "noble" (2.2.1), having a "clear spirit" (3.4.144), "all sufficient" (4.1.265), and possessing a "nature / Whom passion could not shake" (4.1.265-6) all the more striking. According to Sara Deats, early modern culture "depicted the [typical] Moor as passionate, libidinous, jealous, violent, bestial, treacherous, thieving, and pagan."⁷ Othello, with his constrained temper and care for honor, his denial of an

inordinate sexual "appetite" (1.3.263) and attention to Christianity (2.3.166-8), appears to renounce both the humoral expectations submitted to him at birth as well as the societal one. But as Iago works his "poison" (3.3.328), the general begins to resemble his race's stereotype more and more.⁸ He himself hints at the inevitability of his fall when he speaks of "unshunnable" (3.3.279) destiny which is "fated" (3.3.280) on each man as soon as he "quicken[s]" (3.3.281) in the womb. The "noble" Moor is defeated by the malicious suggestions of his ensign and seduced into believing that his fate, both as a cuckold and as a "black" (3.3.267) man, has already been determined.

Carol Thomas Neely's work on early modern lovesickness—of which jealousy is an extreme type—reveals that the early modern discourses on humoral theory categorizes bodies "based on their humoral complexion and their climatic heat," not one or the other.⁹ Founded on the idea that environment has a direct impact on a person's humoral makeup, and subsequently his emotional and mental qualities, the relationship between climate and complexion was a literal one in Renaissance medical theory; John Huarte, channeling Aristotle, explains:

those who inhabit a country, either ouer cold, or ouer hot, are fierce and fell in countenance and conditions; [. . .] a good temperature, not only maketh a good grace in the body, but also aideth the wit and abilitie. And as the excesses of heat & cold do hinder nature, that she cannot shape a man in good figure; So (also for the like reason) the harmonie of the soule is turned topsie turuie, and the wit proueth slow and dull.¹⁰

In this view, Othello, as a Moor, also has the natural tendency to be choleric, the complexion associated with people hailing from the hot Mediterranean regions. The

expectation for Moorish men to be prone to "hot-bloodedness and transgressive desire" is at once supported and denied by evidence in the play.¹¹ Othello's potential to be a balanced, valued, and civilized member of the Venetian state despite his inherited complexion is proved by his "parts," "title," and "perfect soul" (1.2.31) held so valuable by the Signoria of Venice. The vicious racial epithets Iago uses to characterize him to Desdemona's father—"black ram" (1.1.87), "devil" (1.1.90) and "Barbary horse" (1.1.110)—bear no resemblance to the man who reports to the Venetian Senate to answer the charges of kidnapping brought against him. So far, the only Moorish stereotype Othello has possibly indulged in is thieving; having not asked Brabantio's permission to wed Desdemona, the Moor has essentially robbed him of his daughter. These circumstances, including Desdemona's role in wooing Othello and deceiving her father, and Othello's reluctance to enter into matrimony in the first place,¹² set up the tragic dynamic between heterosexual and homosocial love that eventually will "enmesh them all" (2.3.357).

Othello is of a "constant, loving, noble nature" (2.1.287) and even Iago believes he will be a "most dear husband" (2.1.289) if left to his devices. But Othello is not as immune to extreme passion as he would lead everyone to believe. Disturbed from his marriage bed by the drunken brawl orchestrated by Iago, we see the first signs of possible cholera:

Now, by heaven,

My blood begins my safer guides to rule

And passion, having my best judgement collid,

Assays to lead the way. Zounds, if I once stir,

Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
Shall sink in my rebuke. (2.3.200-5)

Provoked by the lack of judgment demonstrated by his men and their reluctance to disclose what began the quarrel, Othello's "blood" begins to overcome his sense of reason. There is also the insinuation that his blood may already be hot as a result of his time with Desdemona in bed just prior this disturbance. Either way, he warns the brawlers that if his passion is allowed to "lead," even those loyal may bear the brunt of his anger. Although critics generally gloss *rebuke* to mean "reprimand" or "check," there is the possibility for a more dangerous interpretation—if he becomes "stir[red]" to the point his rational being is no longer in control, his "rebuke" will be a physical one. He needs only "lift [his] arm" and even those "best" men will fall under the weight of blows. Additionally, his word choice for impaired judgment is critical; to *colly* something is to "blacken," "begrime," or "darken with blows."¹³ To give into passion's dictates is to allow that dark humor, melancholy, the fundamental basis of all fear, jealousy, and self-destruction, to subvert reason's sovereignty.

Poison and Disease

The wounds made by a lover are faithfull, but the kisses of him that hateth, dangerous.

~ Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*

Teresa Brennan's transmission of affect theory postulates that emotions can be either generated internally by an individual or subsumed into the body from an external source.¹⁴ Othello's "nature / Whom passion could not shake" (4.1.265-6) is wracked by two forces: innate disease and external poison. The inherited complexion and societal pressures due to his race are but one part of his natural predilection for imbalance; embryonic epilepsy and jealousy are both already present in Othello's humoral

framework, only needing the right circumstances to manifest themselves. Externally, passionate poison invades the Moor through his ears and eyes, "loving[ly]" applied by Iago, his "honest" ancient.¹⁵ These two factors work together to bring the general to ruin. The noxious "medicine" (4.1.45) introduced into Othello's system provokes both jealousy and epilepsy from their dormancy. Iago deliberately "work[s]" (1.3.390) this emotional contagion into the Moor's subconscious, employing a more sophisticated version of the direct humoral contagion heaped on Lucrece by Tarquin. There are hints that Iago himself is inflamed with jealousy—he refers to the "poisonous mineral" that "gnaw[s]" his "inwards" (2.1.295) and even tells Othello that he tends towards jealousy (3.3.150)—and one way to relieve his own discomfort is to destroy the man he sees as an obstacle to his desires. So, like Tarquin who must purge his imbalance by loading Lucrece with his lust, Iago works to rid himself of his hatred and jealousy by transferring them to Othello. His "revenge" (2.1.292) begins as soon as he ruptures Othello's balance of "right feeling and right thinking."¹⁶ When the general's right thinking begins to degrade, his emotional state decays as well, leaving him subject to the "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168) of jealousy.

Despite Desdemona's claim that Othello has not the innate "humour" (3.4.31) of jealousy, there is evidence to the contrary. A confirmed bachelor until his late marriage to Desdemona, Othello has spent his life among the "Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war" (3.3.357), rejecting the "light-winged toys / Of feathered Cupid" (1.3.269-70). Now that he is "fast married" (1.2.11), the general's freedom is put into "circumscription" (1.2.27), not by Desdemona's loving rule but by the fear that he cannot control her "appetites" (3.3.274). Even before Iago first hints at Desdemona's possible

"revolt" (3.3.191), Othello experiences conflict between his life as a soldier and that of a devoted husband. Desdemona's tenacious suit to restore Cassio to his former position is met with a mixture of annoyance and indulgence by the Moor who finally, after granting Cassio's reinstatement, ask his wife the favor of "To leave [him] but a little to [himself]" (3.3.85). On one level, this is a simple request for her to leave the room so he can concentrate on business pertaining to the governance of Cyprus; a more insidious suggestion is that the "Excellent wretch" (3.3.90), as he calls her, is subsuming too much of his masculine power, a condition the Moor is distinctly uncomfortable with and which prompts him to ask for some distance. Significantly, the moment she "leave[s]" him is the same moment that Iago begins his seduction.

Othello instinctively fears that love has the ability to corrupt his "estimation" (1.3.275) among his peers, likening his potential fall to "housewives mak[ing] a skillet of [his] helm" (1.3.273). His identity heretofore has been based on his prowess in the male-dominated world of warfare and Desdemona's feminine influence threatens to undermine that identity. Iago and Cassio refer to the possibility that Othello is pawning his honor for Desdemona's affection when they agree that the "general's wife / is now the general" (2.3.309-10), the "great captain's captain" (2.1.74). This, coupled with the fact that Othello publicly admits Desdemona initiated their relationship (1.3.163-9) and supports her speech in the public forum (1.3.261), strongly suggests the Moor is initially one of the "fondlings" Robert Burton refers to below. Although this is not jealousy *per se*, it is one of the main causes of that humoral imbalance according to Burton, who believes that a man besotted with his wife fears losing the respect of others as well as his reputation as a man:

We have many such fondlings that are their wives' packhorses and slaves, to carry her muff, dog, and fan, let her wear the breeches, lay out, spend, and do what she will, go and come whither, when she will, they give consent. [. . .] [M]any brave and worthy men have trespassed in this kind, [. . .] and many noble senators and soldiers have lost their honour, in being *uxorii*, so sottishly overruled by their wives.¹⁷

The inordinate affection these "sottish" gentlemen feel for their wives cause their humors to swing from one extreme to the other. First they internalize the cold, feminine humors of their women, softening and weakening their masculine qualities; then, when the fear of emasculation overcomes the effeminate humors their bodies are harboring, an overabundance of melancholy and choler takes over, driving them towards the extremity of jealousy. Othello, for example, is essentially unmanned when he admits he "will deny [Desdemona] nothing" (3.3.76, 3.3.83), a phrase he repeats twice at the crucial turn in the center of the play (only 195 lines later, Othello is convinced that she has "abused" (3.3.271) him and commits himself to "loath[ing] her" (3.3.272) instead of loving her.) The Moor's subsequent boast that "All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven" (3.3.448) symbolizes the rejection of his former role of indulging husband, where "fond" has the deprecatory meaning of "doting," a weak, effeminate characteristic.¹⁸ By rejecting the loving, sanguine humors that he inherits from Desdemona and replacing them with "black vengeance" (3.3.450) and "tyrannous hate" (3.3.452), Othello seems to embrace Thomas Wright's suggestion that humoral balance can be achieved by stirring up the humors most opposite to one's natural inclinations. Unfortunately, this theoretical cure transforms

Othello into a stereotypical Moor rather than his incarnation as the "noble and valiant general" (2.2.311-2).¹⁹

The other factor pointing to a predisposition to jealousy is the readiness with which Othello entertains Iago's tactical suggestions. Were the Moor as impervious to jealousy as his wife and friends initially think, Iago's poison would be ineffectual. Without a natural inclination, reason would easily dismiss all of the circumstantial evidence and uncover the flaws in the rumor about Desdemona's infidelity. For example, when exactly did she have time to commit "the act of shame / A thousand times" (5.2.209-10) with Cassio when they have only just arrived, on separate ships, in Cyprus? Othello's extremity of love for Desdemona makes him vulnerable to the fear of losing that love. Iago's disparaging observes that:

[Othello's] soul is so en fettered to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function (2.3.339-43)

It is this love, already a part of the Moor's humoral makeup, that provide the opening for jealousy, the fear of losing the beloved . Although he discounts the emotion when Iago first cautions him against the "green-eyed monster" (3.3.168), Othello's natural inclination towards absolutes necessitates his swing from love to jealousy when doubt enters his mind; this aspect of his complexion is best summarized by his boast to Iago after their first foray into the topic of cheating wives: "on the proof there is no more but this: Away at once with love or jealousy!" (3.3.194-5).

Humorally compromised by the feminizing power of intemperate love, the Moor himself alludes to his worries about the unsustainable nature of his epic love for Desdemona:

If it were now to die
'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate. (2.1.187-91)

Othello believes things can only get worse. His happiness is so complete at that moment, that it physically causes him discomfort: "It stops me here, it is too much joy." (2.1.194-5) Although this is sometimes glossed as the Moor being choked up, the words "stop[ped]" in his throat, I believe he is pointing to his heart; his humors are so overwrought with love then that his heart literally stops with the excessiveness of his joy. Desdemona is taken aback by this excess, chiding her husband that their "loves and comforts should increase / Even as [their] days do grow" (2.1.192-3). Iago, on the other hand, rejoices at this excess. He counts on the fact that this love-sick Othello can easily be "work[ed]" into a jealous Othello; the extravagance of the general's feelings for his wife predisposes him to extremities of other emotions, most especially fear of losing that love. As Arthur Kirsch points out:

Iago's words, in [the first] exchange, literally emanate from Othello. Iago is certainly the aggressor, but Othello is clearly ready to respond, and it is he who actively makes the association between the words Iago repeats and the threatening thoughts behind them.²⁰

In the first part of his seduction of the general, Iago does not say anything explicitly derogatory about Cassio or Desdemona; he lets Othello's imagination concoct the possibility of betrayal from vague generalities and the ancient's impassioned warning against jealousy (3.3.168-72). All the humoral elements are present; all Iago needs to do is find the tools to excite the general into a feverish passion opposite the loving one he already indulges in. From the success of his first foray, the ancient can infer that the general already contains the seeds of jealousy. Fate hands Iago the implements he needs to provoke a "jealousy so strong / That judgment cannot cure" (2.1.299-300) in the form of a gullible lieutenant, a lost handkerchief, and several unaware accomplices.

Othello's other native disease is epilepsy. We see one fit within the play and Iago alludes to another, but there is no indication from anyone that the Moor has suffered from an attack prior to this fateful visit to Cyprus. In Galenic terms, epilepsy is the result of two possible conditions: demonic possession or hereditary disease.²¹ Despite the references to witchcraft and the demonic within the play, there is no evidence that any of it is to be taken literally. Iago, often likened to the Vice figure and called "devil" (5.2.284, 5.2.298) at the tragic conclusion of his plot, is still just a Machiavellian manipulator, not a supernatural being, so he cannot be the direct cause of Othello's malady through sorcery.²² Instead, like Othello's inherent potential for excess choler and melancholy, his epileptic weakness lies dormant until external environmental factors aggravate it into exposure. Just as Julius Caesar suffers from an attack after being provoked by the plebeians' jeers (*Julius Caesar*, 1.2.253), Othello's emotional stamina is taxed to the extreme by Iago's description of Cassio having sex with Desdemona (4.1.32-43). Stephanie Moss suggests that the "events in and around Othello's 'epileptic' episode"

also reinforce his "social and cultural isolation"; he is further and further estranged from the Venetian world he adopted as his own as his rational control and his language begin to fail.²³ One of the many symptoms of epilepsy recognized by Renaissance doctors was the failure or degradation of language; Othello's jealous ramblings containing fragmented sentences ("Pish! Noses, ears, and lips" (4.1.42), "blood, blood, blood" (3.3.454) and "Goats and monkeys!" (4.1.263), for example) can be seen as further indications of his underlying epileptic condition as well as the tangential erosion of his reason.

On Othello's diseased canvas, Iago fulfills his potential to conceive a masterpiece of destruction. Choosing his poisons well, the ancient "ensnare[s]" Othello "body and soul" (5.2.299). The brilliance of Iago lies in his opportunistic application of unrelated and unplanned events to his cause; his ability to adapt unplotted events to his design makes him all the more convincing. Knowing that if he can "practi[ce] upon his peace and quiet / Even to madness" (2.1.308-9), then Othello will, at the very least, lose his position, and Iago will have a measure of revenge, and a modicum of relief for his own jealous imbalance. He begins with innuendo and then works up to visual evidence. By feeding Othello only little hints of something "monst[rous]" (3.3.110) and refusing to reveal the details of his thoughts, Iago riles up the passion that he displayed after Cassio's drunken brawl (2.3.200-9). Shakespeare signals his emotional agitation in both places with a curse: "Zounds!" (2.3.203, 3.3.158).²⁴ Robert C. Evans cites Iago's clever caution as one means of his success: "Ironically, it is Iago's very hesitancy and reticence—not any blatant incitement to anger or obvious flattery—that finally push Othello over the edge and plunge him into his famous epileptic fit."²⁵ And as Christopher Pye asserts, "the drama is as preoccupied with the perils of the devouring ear (see 1.3.149–50) as it is

with the perils of the gaze."²⁶ By subordinating Othello's eyes and ears to his malignant reasoning, Iago infects the Moor with hate under the guise of love.

Iago's first line of attack is through the ear. Initially Othello seems immune, scoffing at the innuendos Iago puts forth under the auspices of looking out for the general's well being:

Exchange me for a goat,
When I shall turn the business of my soul
To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,
Matching thy inference. (3.3.183-6)

Echoing the measured response offered by the Duke of Venice when he himself was accused of witchcraft, Othello's reason actively resists reading anything untoward in Desdemona's actions with Cassio.²⁷ Inherently understanding the power of stories,²⁸ Othello needs proof before he doubts Desdemona's truth:

Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt,
For she had eyes and chose me. No, Iago,
I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove,
And on the proof, there is no more but this:
Away at once with love or jealousy! (3.3.190-5)

But Iago subtly unbalances him by using the ear's ability to receive language and convert it into images for Othello to "see" in his mind's eye. And the grotesque and lewd images he describes to his general are so potent they have Othello foaming and spitting in his

fury, unable to see anything except what his ears have shown him through the medium of imagination.

Shakespeare deliberately plays on the Renaissance commonplace that hearing is the purest of the senses, less likely to be hindered by sin or polluted by the distractions of the world.²⁹ Unfortunately, as Vives points out, that is not a guarantee that all auditory input is healthful:

Suffer not suche as be skoffers, smell feastes, folysshe and fylthye talkers, triflers, bybbers, fylthye and shameles lurkers, bealy guttes, and suche other, apte either by their wordes or deedes, to cause lewede laughter [. . .] Kepe not onely thy mouthe from foule and impudente communication, but also *thine eares being as a man shuld say, windowes of the mynde*, remembryng euer that olde sayinge of the Apostle, Naughty communication ofte tymes corrupteth good maners.³⁰

For Othello, the ear is a bodily opening weakly fortified against the potential poisons of the world. He never witnesses his ancient's cruel or crude speech since Iago carefully disguises his true feelings and diction behind "shows of service" (1.1.51), so he feels no reason to guard his ears from his "honest" ensign. This is a grave mistake, because the auditory poison insidiously offered to Othello by Iago is as real in the Renaissance understanding of the humors as the actual poisoned seed left in Lucrece's body by Tarquin; the Moor's unity of body, spirit, and reason are all affected by the "pestilence" his ancient liberally "pour[s]" "into his ear" (2.3.351).³¹ Just as images can fundamentally alter the body's humoral balance as they enter the body through the eyes, so can sounds and their corresponding ideas directly affect the humoral body through the ear. Bruce R. Smith, an expert on Renaissance acoustics, stresses that "[f]or early

modern men and women, hearing was a whole body experience."³² Smith explains the mechanics behind this bodily fluctuation:

The sixteenth century inherited a model of hearing that derived ultimately from Aristotle's *De Anima*, expanded and worked out in detail to accord with the medical writings of Galen and to incorporate recent anatomical investigations. According to this model, oscillations of air impinge on the eardrum, which transmits the impulses to the spiritus, the aerated fluid that courses through the entire body and communicates among all its parts. Spiritus then conveys the impulses to common sense, where they are fused with other sensations of the external event (such as vision) and are thence conveyed to the imagination or "phantasy." Imagination converts the sensations into a species (or internal image), which spiritus then disburses through the entire body.³³

In a well-balanced individual, the "species" transmitted by the imagination is equal to, or at least relatively close to, reality. When Othello possesses a "clear spirit" (3.4.144), his "common sense," otherwise described as reason, works seamlessly with the imagination to produce rational analysis and distribution of information to all his "valiant parts" (1.3.254). When "wrought" (5.2.343) with jealousy, the general's "phantasy" churns out twisted versions of what he sees and hears.

Iago's campaign to drive Othello into "madness" (2.1.309) relies heavily on the imagination's ability to supply images and infer ideas when the mind only receives hazy information. Eyes are not necessary for visual input—ears can serve that function when partnered with the imagination. John T. Wall points to this in "Shakespeare's Aural Art: The Metaphor of the Ear in *Othello*" and cites Lear's admonition to the blinded

Gloucester, "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears" (4.6.146-7).³⁴ Iago recognizes that the power of suggestion can produce "morbid affections and seizures of mind"³⁵:

Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste
But with a little art upon the blood
Burn like the mines of sulphur. (3.3.328-32)

With patience and persistent innuendo, Iago arouses Othello's suspicions despite the Moor's insistence that he will "see before [he] doubt[s]" (3.3.193). Then, with a combination of cunning and chance, the ancient's suggestions slowly get reinforced with visual "proof": Cassio's hasty departure from Desdemona, his possession of the handkerchief, Desdemona's continued suit on behalf of Cassio, and Cassio's defamation of Bianca which Othello misconstrues as pertaining to Desdemona. The "eyes of the minde,"³⁶ under the influence of both corporal eyes and ears (Vives' "windowes of the mynde"), become corrupted by Iago's "pestilence" (2.3.351).

The Failure of Right Thinking

For oft the eye mistakes, the brain being troubled. ~Shakespeare, *Venus & Adonis* (1085)

Iago deliberately infects Othello with his malicious poison; this is no accidental transmission of affect. His effectiveness relies on his ability to convince those around him that he is "honest" and that the tender emotions he conveys—love, duty, concern, friendship—are true. An expert flatterer, or "parasite," Iago successfully conveys emotion to Othello by means of degree, rather than content. The ancient couches his great "hate" in "shows of service" (1.1.51), "trimm[ing]" (1.1.49) his malice to look like "love."³⁷ Iago's feigned love appears fervently true because he injects it with the violence

of the hatred he actually feels. And because the Moor is "of a free and open nature" (1.3.398), he believes that Iago is "honest" because he "seem[s]" so (1.3.399). Rob Wilson observes that "[i]ronically, the Moor's very 'free and open' psyche allows Iago to enter in, to mediate, to infect his unintegrated subconscious with specular imaginings about the infidelity of all women and his own."³⁸ Likening the general to an "ass" that can "tenderly be led by th'nose" (2.1.400-1), the ancient "abuse[s] Othello's ear" (1.3.394) with lies couched in shows of concern and love. A favorite subject matter of early modern conduct manuals, flatterers like Iago could be considered a "plague of great ones" (3.3.277); Thomas Newton relays a warning (1569) that Othello could have found useful:

[T]he festuring Canker of feigned flaterie [is the] most contagious. Nothing is sopestiferous to Princes and maiestrats as to listen and geue eare to the fauning flatterie of Cosening claubackes, and the ranke rable of pieuish parasites, whose nature (hunting after lucre and Bellichere) is vnder the countrefect visure of their sugred spech and diabolical dissimulacion to feede the humour of those, whom it hath pleased god and good fortune to decorat with worldly dignitie and temporal regiment, aboue the commune sort of other people. The hurt that therof ariseth, is by infinite examples more apparaunt then that it needeth here to be declared.³⁹

Characterized as a sore ("canker"), Iago's type of flattery is considered the "most contagious." Deliberately "feed[ing]" Othello's humoral imbalance with his "diabolical dissimulacion," Iago first uses Othello's "eare" to deprive him of right thinking, and then reinforces his poison with sights that inflame the general's jealousy even further.

Othello's senses undermine his faculty of reason. As Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky contends in his work on early modern anatomies of the eye, the "act of visual perception" is intrinsically linked to conceptions of the self.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, both sight and hearing are subject to external environmental and humoral influences that can corrupt them, and in turn, impair the rational faculty. John Dolman, in his translation of Cicero (1561), makes the connection between diseased sight and hearing and the failure of the mind to perceive reality:

For nowe trulye, se not so much as those thinges whyche we se with our bodelye eyes, neyther is there any sense in our bodye. But (as not onelye the naturall Philosophers, but also the Phisicians do saye, who haue seene the same opened and disclosed) certayne wayes and holes there be, bound frome the inner vaute of oure minde, to our eyes, eares, and nosethrilles. And for this cause sometyme it hapneth, that we are so blynded, eyther wyth some sadde thought, or vehemente disease, that oure eyes and eares beyng both hole and open, yet we can neyther heare nor see. So that we may well perceyue, that it is oure mynde, that seeth and heareth, and not those partes, whiche are but the casementes of the same. Without the whyche, neuerthelesse, the minde it selfe can perceyue nothinge, vnlesse it be earnestlye bent thereon.⁴¹

Bruce Smith reinforces the key point with his observation that "[r]eason ought to direct the passions, but the passions have a friendlier working relationship with the senses."⁴² Similarly, Robert Burton despairs that "[p]erturbations and passions which trouble the phantasy, though they dwell between the confines of sense and reason, yet they rather follow sense than reason, because they are drowned in corporeal organs of sense."⁴³

When Othello's senses enter into league with his emotionally-fired "phantasy," he loses the steady, rational control that has underpinned his reputation as a "noble" leader in the past. The fatal turn occurs for Othello when he begins to see both himself and Desdemona through Iago's corrupt eyes. The first sting to penetrate Othello's mental armor is based on a fact—"She did deceive her father" (3.3.209) to marry him.

Carol Hansen identifies Desdemona's deception of her father as the root of Othello's distrust. Suggesting that misogyny unites Othello, Iago, and Brabantio in a "masculine code," Hansen believes Desdemona's very dedication to Othello's love appears as a mark against her.⁴⁴ Iago pitches the circumstances as a fault on her part, rather than a boon for Othello:

She that, so young, could give out such a seeming,
To seal her father's eyes up close as oak-
He thought 'twas witchcraft (3.3.211-4)

This merely reinforces the warning issued by Brabantio when he takes his final leave of his daughter and Othello:

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:
She has deceived her father, and may thee. (1.3.293-4)

By forcing Othello to doubt his own vision of Desdemona's virtue, Iago subtly inserts his own version of events into the Moor's passion-clouded eyes. He drives the first dagger of suspicion home with the "loving" warning, "Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio; / Wear your eye thus, not jealous nor secure" (3.3.200-1). But Iago is asking the Moor for the impossible: he wants him to exist in a state of uncertainty, something that Othello inherently resists because of the fundamental absolutism underlying his

character. He must be *either* "jealous" or "secure." Consequently, Othello's vision becomes clouded by the acerbated humors stirred up by these innuendos offered by the ancient. Everything he sees and hears with his corporal, outward senses is necessarily corrupted because the humors that transfer that input to his brain are already compromised with jealousy. All the additional details about his wife's supposed perfidy get filtered through the diseased portals of Othello's senses, adding to the downward spiral of his rational faculties. His zealous desire to "see" (3.3.193, 3.3.368, and 3.3.447) the truth of Desdemona's faith is doomed because his disordered eyes are incapable of seeing anything but guilt and his ears only hear the condemnatory suggestions offered by Iago, even when the ancient himself entertains counterarguments.⁴⁵

Despite his initial resistance to the contagion, Othello's imagination, his "phantasy," starts to turn the "facts" around in his mind; suddenly insecure about Desdemona's motives for picking him to be her husband, he hones in on the other idea first initiated by her father: by choosing him, Desdemona "err[ed] / Against all rules of nature" (1.3.101-2). Echoing this insidious thought—wondering "how nature, erring from itself" (3.3.242) might not be tempted to return to its like—Othello is firmly caught in Iago's aural trap. Arthur Kirsch explains that "Othello eventually internalizes Iago's maleficent sexual vision and sees himself with Iago's eyes, rather than Desdemona's."⁴⁶ The Moor's ability to see is soon muddied with his own budding feelings of inadequacy and his trust of Iago's "honest" judgment:

This fellow's of exceeding honesty
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,

Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind
To pray at fortune. Haply for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years—yet that's not much □
She's gone, I am abused, and my relief
Must be to loathe her. (3.3.262-72)

Iago, feeding the fire of the proto-jealousy, confesses that it is his "fear" that Desdemona, no longer finding Othello novel. "Her will, recoiling to her better judgement" (3.3.240) will seek someone "Of her own clime, complexion and degree" (3.3.234). Othello, suddenly insecure about his complexion, his age, and his rhetorical skills, rapidly comes to the conclusion that Desdemona has cuckolded him.⁴⁷ Iago uses Othello's power of imagination against him. Keith Oatley identifies the correspondence between the Moor's self-destructive imagination and Iago's improvisation: "The theatrical model that Iago stages works for Othello because its themes resonate with the damaging themes that he has already internalized."⁴⁸ The general's only relief is to fall back into the familiar masculine realm of war where he can "loathe" his wife as the enemy of his manhood.

Eric Levy contends that emotions are needed as much as reason in the administration of the humoral body; "the fundamental danger posed to reason [. . .] is that it might lose sovereignty over *emotion*."⁴⁹ When Othello digests Iago's contagious conceits, his mind starts to lose control over the passions that he has so successfully managed in the past. As Keith Oatley suggests, Iago uses his own emotive power to

create "a simulated world to transform Othello's perception, and ultimately his sense of himself."⁵⁰ This influx of foreign emotion, disguised as "love," stems from the hatred Iago has for the Moor. The motive for that malevolence is not clear—again Shakespeare complicates with persistent ambiguity—but the degree of emotion is not feigned.⁵¹ As Robert Cockcroft points out, in order for Iago to spread his emotional poison effectively, he must make Othello think he is seeing and feeling the same things:

Where *pathos* is concerned, Quintillian (like Cicero) insists that to move others we must first be moved ourselves. To do this the persuader must employ the *phantasiai* or *visiones* through which 'things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes,' a faculty familiar to everyone in the form of daydreaming. Quintillian shows how a pleader would stir up horror, pity and detestation through a detailed mental recreation of events on which the mind would dwell in turn, moving itself to feel those emotions so acutely that every aspect of voice, expression, gesture and attitude would impel the audience to share them.⁵²

This is exactly how Iago operates; creating a false empathy based on his "shows of service" (1.1.51), he weaves a deadly tapestry of distorted images that inflame the Moor's senses and unbalance his humors. The unsolicited affects Othello receives from his ancient are so effective that Iago, over the course of only one scene (3.3), turns the indulgent Othello who will "deny [Desdemona] nothing" (3.3.83) into a man of hate who takes a sacred vow to "ne'er ebb to humble love" (3.3.461) again. Iago efficiently "dashe[s] [Othello's] spirits" (3.3.218) with his innuendos, emphasizing the Moor's agitated state by referring to him as "moved" (3.3.221 and 3.3.228) twice during the first

segment of the seduction, a claim that the general denies initially (3.3.219) and then reluctantly admits when he qualifies that he is "not much moved" (3.3.228). Here Othello is "moved" by Iago's counterfeit love into a corresponding commitment to the ancient, even claiming that he is "bound to [him] for ever" (3.3.217), a circumstance he will come to regret mightily. To fulfill that commitment, the Moor must embrace jealousy and repeal his devotion to Desdemona; he cannot be "bound" to them both.⁵³

Failure of language signals reason's corruption. Othello, when he takes on Iago's filthy language of lewdness and decay, devolves into the beast that Iago labels him from the beginning, at points only able to howl for, "blood, blood, blood!" (3.3.454). By stealing Othello's epic language and replacing it with his own sordid speech, Iago "engender[s]" (1.3.402) within the Moor a "monstrous birth" (1.3.403) of decayed language. Melanie H. Ross links Othello's adoption of Iago's linguistic style to a parody of the humanistic practice of rhetorical imitation:

Rhetorical imitation, the primary method of rhetorical study in Shakespeare's day, entails taking in words from one another until, in the ideal Erasmian version, they merge into one's own words and self to emerge as something new and original yet deeply stamped and impressed by the source of imitation. The resulting creation is imbued with the spirit of both self and other, a mixture and synthesis of both.⁵⁴

The Moor's capacity for jealousy and violence, heretofore kept under rigid control by his "tranquil mind" (3.3.351), emerges from the synthesis of his words and Iago's ideas. This fusion necessarily destroys the original Moor, replacing him with an Iago-ized replica so changed that Desdemona exclaims, "My lord is not my lord, nor should I know him /

Were he in favour as in humour altered (3.4.125-6). In her exploration of rhetorical subjectivity, Lynn Enterline states that what a person says, either about themselves or others, reflects "a speaker's idea of what counts as 'worthy' or 'unworthy,' [which] will carry with it all the culturally inflected baggage of gender, sexuality, and generation that defines the speaker's social position."⁵⁵ Iago, with his diseased, misogynistic, lewd discourse conveys a disgust and hatred for everyone that he encounters, though he disguises it when it is politic. Guarding one's voice becomes necessary for the preservation of one's own "parts," "title," and "soul" (1.2.31); in Othello's case, the moment he begins to adopt Iago's brand of rhetoric is the moment he becomes firmly ensnared in Iago's web of emotional pestilence.

Gayle Greene also links Othello's preoccupation with absolutes to the failure of his language and, eventually, his reason:

We hear [. . .] in words like 'never', 'all', 'forever', a tendency to absolutes which points to an inability to tolerate ambiguity or uncertainty, a failure of irony.⁵⁶

Unable to discern truth and reality from lies and fantasy, the Moor quickly goes mad. His need for stasis and verisimilitude is imbedded in the significant if-then statements he is wont to throw out; for example:

Excellent wretch! perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love the not
Chaos is come again. (3.3.90-2)

or

And on the proof there is no more but this:
Away at once love or jealousy! (3.3.194-5)⁵⁷

For Othello, life is based on a series of opposing dichotomies, good and evil, light and dark, love and hate; Arthur Kirsch notes that even as the Moor slides into humoral agitation and eventual madness, "the absolutism characterizes him throughout."⁵⁸ Iago's strategy works precisely because Othello cannot linger in doubt.

A man of action who scoffs at the mutability of the moon (3.3.181), Othello must be "resolved" (3.3.183) to purge the doubt Iago's gossip has instigated. Experientially, doubt itself, the root of all fearful jealousy, is the emotion that jars the Moor from his solid rational foundation. Humorally "chang[ing] with [Iago's] poison" (3.3.328), and merged with him in rhetorical similitude, Othello chooses the familiarity of the male bond over the anxiety of the marriage pact. Othello renounces both his "occupation" (3.3.360) and "fond love" (3.3.448), trading them both for "black vengeance" (3.3.450) on the shaky evidence relayed to him by Iago. He even acknowledges the possibility that Iago is "slander[ing]" Desdemona to "torture" him (3.3.371), yet he still thinks Iago "honest." The Moor's decision to murder his wife ends up being based on the "shows" (1.1.51) of love orchestrated by his deceitful ancient:

I think thou dost [love me];
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath,
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more:
For such things in a false disloyal knave
Are tricks of custom, but in a man that's just
They are close delations, working from the heart
That passion cannot rule. (3.3.120-7)

As Patricia Parker asserts, "'dilation' is a particularly pronounced form of elaboration, traditionally referring to a visual format—show me more—but also conveyed through the augmentation of narrative description."⁵⁹ Othello's confidence that Iago cannot feign the artful hesitations and coyly constructed details of Desdemona's supposed infidelity is sorely misplaced. The Moor ignores Iago's warnings of his own "jealous" (3.3.150) nature and disregards the ancient's hint that he should "take no notice" of his "imperfect [. . .] conceits" (3.3.152-3). Othello even accuses him of "conspir[ing] against [his] friend" (3.3.154) when Iago pretends to shy away from disclosing all the dilatory details; the Moor's active prying makes him complicit in his own undoing.

Corporal Contamination

O beware, my lord, of jealousy!

It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock

The meat it feeds on.

~ Shakespeare, *Othello* (3.3.167-9)

In early modern humoral theory, the body, mind, and spirit are all subject to humoral excitement and contagion; all of the systems are integrated. Passions are significant forces within the microcosm of the individual, helping to regulate a person's response to internal and external stimuli. Thomas Wright, author of *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1604), reminds us:

[W]hen these affections are stirring in our minds they alter the humours of our bodies, causing some passion or alteration in them.⁶⁰

When Othello accuses Iago of "ensnar[ing his] soul and body" (5.2.299) he is speaking quite literally. Certainly Othello's last actions—murdering his wife and then committing suicide—would qualify as blots against his soul in the Christian paradigm of the Renaissance, but I believe this line is meant to convey the depth of emotion that Iago thrusts upon the Moor. Affect leads to action, so Othello is implicitly moving the blame

for the tragic events from himself onto Iago, the instigator of his "extreme" (5.2.344) jealousy.⁶¹ Though Othello tells his captors that he is "an honourable murderer" (5.2.291) who acted only "in honour" (5.2.292), all signs leading up to the murder point to a man mad with passion; despite the external prompts, ultimately the Moor is still responsible for his actions, both legally and spiritually. Even with his prevarication, Othello recognizes this when he imagines Desdemona greeting him on Judgment Day: "This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven / And fiends will snatch at it" (5.2.272-3).

Jealousy, a type of "ire," or anger, "tyrannizeth and consumeth both body and mind," according to Wright.⁶² Soon after Iago's affective poison begins to spread through Othello's imagination, his body begins to exhibit evidence of his affliction. During his first encounter with Desdemona after Iago's warnings of her infidelity, the Moor complains of a headache characterized as a "pain upon [his] forehead" (3.3.288), and speaks so softly and hesitantly to Desdemona that she knows immediately that he is unwell (3.3.287). Although many critics commonly refer to his claim as a fear of the horns of cuckoldry, there is no reason to believe that his head does not actually hurt.⁶³ Considering the emotional and mental stress he is suddenly under and his subsequent epileptic seizure, a headache would be a logical physical symptom of his unbalanced humoral condition. His "salt and sullen rheum" (3.4.51) in the next scene can also be read as a pretense to get Desdemona to produce his handkerchief. But an overflow of bodily humors—especially "salt" and "rheum" which are associated with phlegm, the humor ruled by the brain—also explicitly relates to humoral imbalance. Basically, Othello's mind is so overcome with the plethora of mental humors stirred up by Iago's

emotional contagion, his body is trying to purge some of the excess through his eyes and nose.

As Iago's malevolent "medicine" (4.1.45) spreads through Othello's mind and body, other symptoms appear, getting progressively worse as his condition deteriorates. "[E]aten up with passion" (3.3.394), he begins to appear less and less in control of both his words and actions. As his "strange unquietness" (3.4.134) gives way to "savage madness" (4.1.55), Iago celebrates that there is nothing Othello can do to escape the passion that has him in thrall:

Look where he comes. Not poppy nor mandragora
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday. (3.3.333-6)

In one sense, the ancient is correct: Othello cannot be cured of his excess choler and melancholy by simple pharmaceutical concoctions. His only possible cure is to have "ocular proof" of his wife's faithfulness so his faculty of reason can reassert its dominion over his passions. And even that might not slake the one humoral imbalance that Robert Burton thinks may be incurable.⁶⁴ Once jealousy takes root in Othello's imagination, his mind creates "cause[s]", even where there are none. As Emilia says, "It is a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself (3.4.159-62).⁶⁵

Othello, "overwhelmed with grief" (4.1.77), exhibits uncharacteristic and decidedly unmanly behavior, at least according to the masculine standards attributed to the time period. Iago chides him about his seizure, a "passion most unsuited such a man" (4.1.78), even as he continues his subtle goading. Since Iago's goal has been to

unman Othello since the beginning, his progressive weakness is met with the ancient's secret delight. Not so, Lodovico, who witnesses Othello's unleashed rage when he strike Desdemona in public: "Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?" (4.1.269) queries the astonished Venetian. From the height of rage, Othello fluctuates into despair. His brain's extreme unbalance, mostly reflected in his behavior, also manifests itself in a medically recognizable way: crying. Tears, referred to as the "brain's thinnest excrement" by Timothy Bright,⁶⁶ were understood in early modern medical texts as "being eliminated by the compression of the brain through open channels of the body being provided for this purpose."⁶⁷ As Desdemona continues to deny that she has played him false, the Moor starts weeping (4.2.43-4), an action seen as a "symptom of melancholy" as well as an "outlet for passions."⁶⁸ In Othello's case, both seem applicable. The extremities of his emotion have to find a physical outlet if he is to prevent another epileptic seizure and move towards a resolution to his imbalance, and, as a man consumed with jealousy, Othello is in the throes of what Robert Burton refers to as an extremity of "love-melancholy."⁶⁹

Desdemona, still unable to believe Othello is jealous and explaining away his strange behavior as a product of matters of state, observes other physical manifestations of her husband's humoral distress:

Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?

Some bloody passion shakes your very frame (5.2.43)

and

And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then

When your eyes roll so (5.2.37-8)

Like Tarquin consumed by his "rage of lust," Othello is overcome physically, mentally, and emotionally by jealousy, a "A wound that so infects the soul and heart, / As all our sense and reason it doth master."⁷⁰ With all three of his internal systems—emotional, physical, and mental—under siege, the Moor must take action to "relie[ve]" (3.3.271) the "bloody passion" that consumes him. Though he calms down from his initial desire to "tear her all to pieces" (3.3.434), Othello's corrupted sense of justice requires that he "sacrifice" (5.2.65) his wife lest she "betray more men" (5.2.6).

Imaginary Crimes and Hasty Judgment

Imagination. This is the dominant part of man, this mistress of error and of falsity, and still more treacherous since it is not always so; for it would be an infallible rule of truth if it were an infallible rule of lies. But, being most often false, it gives no mark of its quality, marking the true and the false with the same character.

~ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

Othello, unable to control his seething humors, allows the poison-induced passion to operate as "a tragic or fatal force" driving him to kill his wife and order his friend's murder.⁷¹ His darkened vision, infected by the Iago's relayed images, can no longer distinguish between truth and lies, crippling his power to reason.⁷² Othello's decisive move towards action is based, like all the "proofs" (3.3.444) against Desdemona, on Iago's verbal poison and his carefully orchestrated spectacles.⁷³ Othello declares that he "[does] see 'tis true" (3.3.447) that Desdemona is false after his ancient professes to have observed "Cassio wip[ing] his beard" (3.3.442) with the handkerchief the general gifted his wife. The provoking image—ripe with the sexual innuendo of Cassio's masculinity ruffling Desdemona's virtue—pushes the Moor over the edge. Already having dismissed the need for "ocular proof," Othello accepts the proffered circumstantial evidence as fact. He accepts Iago's paradigm of acceptable evidence:

If imputation and strong circumstances

Which lead directly to the door of truth

Will give you satisfaction, you may have't. (3.3.409-11)

Katherine Eisaman Maus, in her look at the correspondence between English criminal prosecution in the early modern period and Othello's initial demand for ocular proof, explains that the difficulty of obtaining evidence for crimes of a sexual nature led to the acceptance of strong circumstantial evidence as acceptable proof.⁷⁴ She identifies Desdemona's assertion that she has not abused the Moor "either in discourse of thought or actual deed" (4.2.155) as a recognition that she can be condemned for both physical crimes (actual adultery) and "thought-crimes," a category usually reserved for "treason or witchcraft."⁷⁵ Othello, taking on the role of co-accuser, judge, and executioner, is deluded into thinking he has sufficient evidence to execute the death penalty and that the law is on his side.

Othello uses Desdemona's naturally sanguine complexion—the embodiment of youth, happiness, optimism, and love—as one point of condemnation:

Hot, hot, and moist: this hand of yours requires

A sequester from liberty, fasting and prayer,

Much castigation, exercise devout;

For here's a young and sweating devil, here,

That commonly rebels. (3.4.39-43)

Unsure of her husband's cryptic words, Desdemona blithely answers that it is her hot and moist nature that enabled her to give him her heart. Dwelling on the humoral and physical signs of his wife's passionate nature, the Moor is further incensed by Desdemona's subsequent, unwise pursuit of having Cassio reinstated. Thinking only to

steer the conversation away from the missing handkerchief, Desdemona inadvertently compounds the evidence against her. Othello's "mind misgives" (3.4.91) at what he sees as the confirmations of his wife's duplicity: biologic evidence in her complexion, physical evidence in the missing "napkin" (3.3.291), and verbal evidence from her pleas on Cassio's behalf; her guilt becomes a "foregone conclusion" (3.3.430). Under the hypnotizing affect supplied by his ancient, Othello's imagination becomes murderous:

If there be cords, or knives,
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied! (3.3.391-3)

Ultimately, he links his satisfaction with her death, unaware that his rage's fulfillment will bring about his own destruction.

Whatever the evidence or lack thereof, Othello's act of "honourable murder" (5.2.291) is fundamentally based on his feelings of jealousy and inadequacy. The Moor's mind, reputed to be "clear" (3.4.144), "tranquil" (3.3.351), and "true" (3.4.27), merely needs the right poison to "misgive" (3.4.91). Like his friend Cassio who cannot hold his wine, Othello cannot curb his fear of being betrayed. Once his palate is w[h]etted, the general is unable to contain his jealous intoxication. Seeing marriage's curse as the inability for men to control their wife's "appetites" (3.3.274), the Moor has a greater concern for how he is perceived as a result of her infidelity rather than the infidelity itself.⁷⁶ He tells Iago that he would have been "happy" if all the men of the camp had had her as long as he "had nothing known" (3.3.348-50); but now that he does "know" she has been untrue, the consequences include the loss of his "occupation" (3.3.360), implying that her infidelity strips him of his personal and professional honor. At the

moment he truly decides to murder her, requesting that Iago provide him with some poison (an office the ancient excels at, unbeknownst to Othello), he cries out "Cuckold me!" (4.1.196) in astonishment, quickly followed by "With mine officer!" (4.1.198). The fear of losing Desdemona becomes conflated with the fear of losing his manhood. This dual fear is the cause for the general's drastic justice, not the puritanical prevention of future whoring that he alludes to the night of the murder.

Othello's first violent motions against Desdemona and Cassio do not refer to justice or sacrifice—he employs the language of "black vengeance" (3.3.450) and "tyrannous hate" (3.3.452), full of "bloody thoughts" (3.3.460), even raging that he will "chop her into messes" (4.1.196). His mind is completely undone by hate contracted from Iago under the guise of love. The Moor's language, a reflection of his rational mind, shows signs of decay, moving from an epic elegance to misogynistic abuse, stilted images, animal-like roaring. Elizabeth Stiller explains the early modern medical basis for Othello's complete transformation:

From a medical perspective, love-sickness [of which jealousy was the most extreme form] was understood to be a malign humoral imbalance that arose when an image (presumably of the beloved) led to a malfunctioning of the would-be lover's brain. Visual images came into the body in the *sensus communis*, sited in the normally warm and moist first ventricle of the brain. Sense perceptions would normally then be transferred to the central ventricle, the hottest part of the brain, which was the site of reason and imagination, while the last ventricle, cool and dry, provided a place in which ideas and sense perceptions could be collected and stored for later use. In those who suffered from love-melancholy, though, these

transfers between the ventricles did not happen; instead, the "estimative faculty" of the second ventricle seemed to focus intently and persistently on the image of the beloved, drawing the heat and moisture from the other parts of the brain and body. When the body responded to a visual image in this manner, it caused profound and dangerous changes in the humoral balance and physical complexion.⁷⁷

In Othello's case, the "fond love" (3.3.448) he has for Desdemona at the beginning of the play paves the way for his subsequent imbalance; the image of Desdemona's virtuous perfection preoccupies the central ventricle of his brain, beginning the overheating process. Iago's emotional poison changes Othello's initial "dot[ing]" (2.1.205) image of Desdemona into an obsessive portrait of betrayal. The more he thinks about the possibilities of her "stolen hours of lust" (3.3.341), the hotter his brain burns. Unable to recognize his own dangerous medical condition, the Moor believes his only "relief" (3.3.271) is to "loathe her" (3.3.272), a form of hatred that only excites his humoral system to an even higher pitch, rather than offering him the outlet that he desires. Like a perpetual engine, the general's jealousy circulated through his humorally unbalanced body, feeding wave after wave of the destructive emotion driving him towards murder.⁷⁸

Othello's rational faculties are so affected by his inordinate passion that his motives for killing Desdemona are no longer clear, even to himself:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,□

Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!□

It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;

Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,

And smooth as monumental alabaster.

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men. (5.2.1-6)

Othello, the jealous husband, is transformed into Othello, the protector of his fellow men. Overcome by warring emotions as he gazes at his sleeping wife, the Moor begins to cry again:

I must weep,

But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,

It strikes where it doth love. (5.2.20-22)

According to Marjory E. Lange, "[i]n order for weeping to occur, the heart must be moved. Fear and sorrow contract the heart, whose vapors rise to the brain, which also contracts, producing tears,"⁷⁹ demonstrating Othello's conflict between the original love he had for his wife and the jealous fear that drives him towards murder. For just a moment, he is "almost persuade[d]" (5.2.16) that Desdemona should live, but jealousy infecting his brain cannot be sufficiently purged by a few tears.

Constructing the annihilation of his wife as a necessary, even religious, sacrifice (5.2.65), Othello's plan is marred by Desdemona's refusal to confess her "sins" (5.2.40). Full of "heavenly" sorrow, likened by E. A. J. Honigmann to the sorrow God feels when he must chastise a sinning human, the general sets about the execution.⁸⁰ Following "merciful" (5.2.86) Christian protocol, he makes sure Desdemona has a chance to unburden her soul before her "mouth is stopped" (5.2.71). Her counter-arguments, based on reason and truth, only enrage him, turning his heart to "stone" (5.2.63)⁸¹, preventing any further internal debate about whether he should "put out the light" (5.2.7) or not. Nothing can now "remove or choke the strong conception" (5.2.55) thrust onto the Moor

by his deceitful ancient, no matter how hard his wife "strive[s]" (5.2.80) to plead her innocence. Without foresight or remorse, crying "Down, strumpet!" (5.2.78), Othello throttles Desdemona on their wedding sheets.

Immediately undermining his claim that the "cause" is one of sacrificial love, the Moor is disgusted when he finds out that Cassio has survived the attempt on his life:

Not Cassio killed?

Then murder is out of tune, and sweet revenge

Grows harsh. (5.2.113-5)

Othello quickly learns that his "great revenge" (5.2.74) is nothing but an unforgivable, unconscionable mistake. Arthur Kirsch believes that "[Othello's] eventual destruction of [Desdemona] is itself an irremissible, suicidal act. He has loved her as his own flesh, and when he destroys her, he destroys the basis of his own existence."⁸² As Iago's base plot unfolds, the Moor regains enough of his senses to realize that he has committed a grave error, wrongly murdering his "heavenly true" (5.2.133) wife and, in doing so, "damned [himself] beneath all depth in hell" (5.2.135). He can no longer rely on his "perfect soul" for guidance, his "title" is revoked and given to Cassio (5.2.329-30), and his "parts" (1.2.31) are forever tainted by the "monstrous act" (5.2.186) that cannot be undone. Othello is, in fact, polluted by the sin he has committed, both "body and soul" (5.2.299). The holistic relationship between all of the aspects of the humoral body—mental, emotional, and spiritual—necessitate this cross contamination.

Ironically, Othello's acknowledgement of his diseased state seems to return a modicum of clarity to his sense of sight. Gazing on Desdemona's dead body after Iago's

plot is revealed, the Moor suddenly "sees" the truth of her fidelity and his "slave[ry]" (5.2.274) to corruption:

Now: how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench,
Pale as thy smock.

.....

Cold, cold, my girl,
Even like thy chastity. O cursed, cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! (5.2.270-1, 273-8)

Her pallor, coldness, and "snow" white skin (5.2.4) can now be read as signs of her enduring "chastity," physical evidence of her purity that Othello could not recognize in his inflamed state. His own actions, in light of her innocence, appear "horrible and grim" (5.2.201) and make him nothing more than a "cursed slave" who was unable to regulate his passions. Unable to wait for the punishment that he imagines awaits at the hands of the "devils," the Moor develops a plan for self-punishment.

Bereft of the very thing he was insistent on protecting—"honour"—the Othello mirrors the split identity experienced by Lucrece after her rape; he answers Lodovico's summons with "he that was Othello" (5.2.281), recognizing that the murder rewrites his entire identity.⁸³ He is no longer the "noble and valiant general" (2.2.1-2), just as Lucrece is no longer the "chaste wife" in the aftermath of her forced league with Tarquin. Othello develops a redemptive strategy similar to Lucrece's: believing "'tis happiness to

die" (5.2.287), Othello sets the stage for his suicide, hoping to rewrite his "honour" (5.2.292) in blood. He seems to come to the same conclusion as Lucrece that:

'Tis honour to deprive dishonoured life;
The one will live, the other being dead.
So of shame's ashes shall my fame be bred,
For in my death I murder shameful scorn;
My shame so dead, mine honour is new born. (*Lucrece*, 1186-90)

The Moor concludes that there may be one way to expunge the black contagion which has separated "valiant" Othello from his "perfect soul" (1.2.31)—kill the part of himself that "traded" (5.2.352) the natural order of love (5.2.42).

Setting the stage of his judicial self-murder, Othello begins by reminding the company that he has "done the state some service" (5.2.337), drawing attention to his past greatness in the hopes that they will couch his dishonorable story in the context of his previous virtues. He regains his pre-jealousy storytelling ability, asking the Venetians to speak:

Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought
Perplex'd in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. (5.2.342-9)

The Moor's attempt to preserve the trappings of his "occupation" is at once self-delusional and accurate: the jealousy he experiences is "extreme," a product of both inherent tendencies and the evil machinations of a trusted fellow soldier, but it is hard to stomach his claim that he loved "too well" or that he was "not easily jealous." His description of Desdemona as a "pearl" of great worth potentially backfires since it plays into the misogynistic language introduced by Iago who labels her a "land carrack" (1.2.50) at the beginning of the play, turning his wife into a commodity instead of a living, loving human being. The metaphor meant to emphasize his mistaken carelessness merely reinforces the disconnect between Othello's emotional understanding of events and his rational one: he has irrevocably silenced the woman who loves him enough to forgive him her own murder, not lost a bauble. Last, he outright lies about the humoral overflow from his brain—"the melting mood" has been plaguing him from his first foray into jealousy. The "medicinal" tears he weeps here at his own death give further evidence of his continued imbalance. His sorrow cannot be mitigated by tears alone, so a thorough blood-letting is in order.

Like Lucrece, Othello carefully constructs the spectacle of his suicide for maximum effect. As his speech gathers force, the general again refers back to the deeds that have won him fame and admiration in the past:

Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,
And smote him, thus. (5.2.349-54)

Whereas Lucrece reestablishes her chastity by setting an example for all future wives to follow, Othello attempts to reinvigorate his honor by following his own historic example. Split into the "noble" soldier who has protected the interests of Venice and the "malignant" "dog" that murdered his wife, the Moor exacts the same mortal justice he required for Desdemona. Through heroic suicide, Othello seems to regain a modicum of his honor, leaving Iago to face retribution for the "tragic loading of [the] bed" (5.2.361). The humoral turbulence traced in the play points to the real "cause" of Othello's murderous rage but refuses to completely exonerate him from responsibility for his tragic actions. If the Moor's premonition of hell is any indication, further payment for his black deed will be exacted in the afterlife.

¹ Robert Burton defines jealousy as a type of fear:

Jealousy is described and defined to be "a certain suspicion which the lover hath of the party he chiefly loveth, lest he or she should be enamoured of another"; or any eager desire to enjoy some beauty alone, to have it proper to himself only: a fear or doubt lest any foreigner should participate or share with him in his love. Or "a fear of losing her favour whom he so earnestly affects."

See "Part III, Section 3," *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Ed. Holbrook Jackson, New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 258.

² Marcus Norland, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Love: Literature, Culture, Evolution* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2007), 163.

³ For a detailed look at the relationship between humoral imbalance and psychological disease, see Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004.)

⁴ Norland, 195.

⁵ Robert Burton, "Part III, Section 3," 288.

⁶ Arthur Kirsch, *The Passions of Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1990), 53.

⁷ Sara Deats, "The 'Erring Barbarian' and the 'Maiden Never Bold': Racist and Sexist Representations in *Othello*" (*Women, Violence, and English Renaissance Literature: Essays Honoring Paul Jorgensen*, Eds. Linda Woodbridge and Sharon Beehler, Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003, 189-215), 193.

⁸For a more in depth look at race in *Othello*, see Michael Neill, "Othello and Race" (*Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Othello*. New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America, 2005. 37-52) and Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello* and Bringing to Light" (*Women, 'Race,' and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. London: Routledge, 1994. 84-100).

⁹ Carol Thomas Neely, "Hot Blood: Estranging Mediterranean Bodies in Early Modern Medical and Dramatic Texts," (*Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004, 55-68), 56.

¹⁰ John Huarte, *Examen de ingenios: The Examination of Mens Wits. In which, by discovering the varietie of natures, is shewed for what profession each one is apt, and how far he shall profit therein. Translated out of the Spanish tongue by M. Camillo Camilli. Englished out of his Italian, by R. C. Esquire*, (London: Printed by Adam Jslip, for Richard Watkins, 1594. *Early English Books Online*. Web. Accessed November 12, 2010.)

¹¹ Neely, 62.

¹² But that I love the gentle Desdemona
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscription and confine
For all the sea's worth. (1.2.25-8)

¹³ *OED*.

¹⁴ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2004), 2-3.

¹⁵ "Love" and "loving" are used by in reference to Iago's relationship with Othello nine times (excluding the ironic, dissembling references made by Iago himself); various characters refer to Iago as "honest" twenty-three times in the play.

¹⁶ Donald R. Wehrs states that Renaissance "[R]eason and emotion presuppose and enrich one another, that habitual practices modify states of being, and that moral deliberation hinges upon a cultivated, continuous interplay of right feeling and right thinking." See "Moral Physiology, Ethical Prototypes, and the Denaturing of Sense in Shakespearean Tragedy," (*College Literature* 33.1 (2006): 67-92), 68.

¹⁷ Burton, "Part III, Section 3," 268.

¹⁸ The word "fond" at this juncture has many applicable meanings, all disparaging: 1. That has lost its savour; insipid; sickly-flavoured. 2. Infatuated, foolish, silly. Since 16th c. the sense in literary use has been chiefly: Foolishly credulous or sanguine. In dialects the wider sense is still current. 3. In stronger sense: idiotic, weak-minded, mad; (also) dazed (*OED*).

¹⁹ See Book III, Chapter 2: "Means to mortify Passions." Here Wright outlines the eight basic ways a man may control his passions, the first of which is to exercise habits that are at the extreme opposite of his natural inclination or complexion. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General*, Ed. William Webster Newbold (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 150-4.

Similar advice is given to the love-sick Romeo by Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*:

One fire burns out another's burning,
One pain is lessen'd by another's anguish;
Turn giddy, and be holp by backward turning.
One desperate grief cures with another's languish[.] (1.2.45-8)

²⁰ Kirsch, 63.

²¹ See Stephanie E. Moss' book-length treatment of all the possible readings of Othello's epileptic seizure: "Reading epilepsy in "Othello." (Diss. University of South Florida, 1997. *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text, ProQuest*. Web. July 11, 2011). She claims that "[b]ecause Othello's relationship to Iago encodes supernatural characteristics, the Moor's epilepsy may be interpreted as a case of hysterical epilepsy," a condition often treated as demonic possession in the Renaissance (viii).

²² See Leah Scragg's classic exploration of this trope: "Iago - Vice or Devil?" (*Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production* 21(1968): 53-65.)

²³ Stephanie Moss. "Transformation and Degeneration: The Paracelsan/Galenic Body in *Othello*," *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004. 151-170), 153.

²⁴ Also at 3.4.99 as Othello storms away from Desdemona when she cannot produce the handkerchief.

²⁵ Robert C. Evans, "Flattery in Shakespeare's *Othello*: The Relevance of Plutarch and Sir Thomas Elyot," (*Comparative Drama* 35.1 (2001): 1-41), 21.

²⁶ Christopher Pye, "'To Throw Out Our Eyes for Brave Othello': Shakespeare and Aesthetic Ideology," (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 60.4 (2009): 425-447), 432.

²⁷ The Duke of Venice's caution against hasty judgment when Othello's hasty marriage to Desdemona is contested by her father, who claims that Othello used witchcraft to seduce her seems prophetic in light of what is to come:

To vouch this is no proof,
Without more certain and more overt tests
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods
Of modern seeming do prefer against him. (1.3.107-110)

²⁸ The power of his story won him Desdemona's love (1.3.129-72).

²⁹ See John N. Wall's "Shakespeare's Aural Art: The Metaphor of the Ear in *Othello*" (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 30.3 (1979): 358-366.)

³⁰ Emphasis mine. Juan Luis Vives, *An introduction to vvysedome, made by Ludouicus Viues, and translated in to Englyshe by Rycharde Morysine* (London, 1544, *Early English Books Online*, Web, March 12, 2011.)

³¹ Maynard Mack notes that there is a potential connection between the verbal poison wielded by Iago and the literal poison that Claudius pours in Old Hamlet's ear to assassinate him (Hamlet, 1.5.62-70).

³² Bruce R. Smith, "Listening to the Wild Blue Yonder: The Challenges of Acoustic Ecology" (*Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening, and Modernity*, Ed. Veit Erlmann, Oxford: Berg, 2004, 21-42) 37.

³³ *Ibid* 37.

³⁴ King Lear quote taken from the Conflated Text in *The Norton Shakespeare* edited by Stephen Greenblatt *et al*, 1997.

³⁵ Definition of *conceit* (*OED*).

³⁶ Peter de la Primaudaye, writing in 1594, cites the failure of perception as the cause of all imbalance:

For all great, violent, and turbulent motions proceede of ignoraunce and inconsideratenesse, or through a false perswasion, which maketh vs to thinke, that the Good or Euill is greater then indeede it is. And this commeth for want of experience, which beeing as it were a darke cloude and mist before the **eyes of our minde**, doe greatly trouble it: insomuch that we ayme not at that certaine Good, after which wee ought to seeke, but contrariwise we propoude to our selues many sortes of Goods, with many and sundry endes and meanes to attaine vnto them, which we change and rechange from houre to houre, very inconstantly, according to places, times and occasions, whereby it is euident that there is no stayednesse in vs. (Emphasis mine)

See *The second part of the French academie. VVherein, as it were by a naturall historie of the bodie and soule of man, the creation, matter, composition, forme, nature, profite and vse of all the partes of the frame of man are handled, with the naturall causes of all affections, vertues and vices, and chiefly the nature, powers, workes and immortalitie of the soule*, (London: 1594).

³⁷ His "hate" is identified immediately and referred to three separate times in Act 1 alone: 1.1.6, 1.3.367, and 1.3.385. In Act Three, the "seduction," Iago's love for Othello is mentioned eight times.

³⁸ Rob Wilson. "Othello: Jealousy as Mimetic Contagion," (*American Imago: Studies in Psychoanalysis and Culture* 44.3 (1987): 213-233), 222.

³⁹ Thomas Newton, in the introduction to his volume of Cicero translations, recounts this warning against flattery issued by Sir Walter Myldmay, a knightly member of Elizabeth I's Privie Council. See *The booke of Marcus Tullius Cicero entituled Paradoxa Stoicorum Contayninge a precise discourse of diuers pointces and conclusions of vertue and phylosophie according the traditions and opinions of those philosophers, whiche were called Stoikes. Wherunto is also annexed a philosophicall treatyse of the same authoure called Scipio hys dreame*. London: T. Marshe, 1569. *Early English Books Online*. Web. March 12, 2011.

⁴⁰ "Consciousness, manifested as an act of self-conception—*idea* (from *idein*, "to see")—begins in the act of visual perception. Eye becomes "I," the self perched on the edge of the body." Sergei Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Taming the Basilisk," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (Eds. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio. New York: Routledge, 1997), 202.

⁴¹ Quote of Cicero's exploration of perturbation like emotions and how they affect mental perception in John Dolman, trans., *Those fyue questions, which Marke Tullye Cicero, disputed in his manor of Tusculanum: written afterwarde by him, in as manye bookes, to his frende, and familiar Brutus, in the Latine tounge, And nowe, oute of the same translated, & englished, by Iohn Dolman, studente and felowe of the Inner Temple* ([London]: 1561. *Early English Books Online*. Web. March 24, 2011.)

⁴² Bruce Smith, "Hearing Green" (*Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, Eds. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, 147-168) 149.

⁴³ Burton, "Part I, Section 2" 258.

⁴⁴ Carol Hansen, *Woman as Individual in English Renaissance Drama: A Defiance of the Masculine Code* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 32-3 and 37.

⁴⁵ Although it is generally thought to be a sophisticated rhetorical ploy on Iago's part to occasionally suggest that Desdemona may be honest and that he himself may be wrong about the affair to Othello, the ideas are still out there for Othello to embrace and analyze. He does not do so. When Iago stresses to the nobles who come to investigate the aftermath of Desdemona's murder that he "told him what [he] thought, and told no more / Than what he found himself was apt and true" (5.2.172-3), his prevarication has a modicum of truth: the Moor is complicit in his own seduction. Othello's understanding of the truth has been thoroughly corrupted by his own humoral imbalance, a product of fearful jealousy.

⁴⁶ Kirsch, 66.

⁴⁷ Robert Burton labels the this type of self-doubt as one of the main cause of jealousy:

A fourth eminent cause of jealousy may be this, when he that is deformed and, as Pindarus of Vulcan, *sine gratiis natus* [ugly from birth], hirsute, ragged, yet virtuously given, will marry some fair nice piece, or light huswife, begins to misdoubt (as well he may) she doth not affect him.(270)

Othello is not "deformed" our sense of the word, but his advanced years and the swarthy color of his skin would have been seen as detractions in the early modern period. Burton also addresses older men marrying younger women as a subset of this cause for jealousy (267). See "Part III, Section 3."

⁴⁸ Keith Oatley, "Simulation of Substance and Shadow: Inner Emotions and Outer Behavior in Shakespeare's Psychology of Character," (*College Literature* 33.1 (Winter 2006): 15-33), 26.

⁴⁹ Eric P. Levy, "The Problematic Relation between Reason and Emotion in *Hamlet*" (*Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* 53.2 (2001): 83-95), 83.

⁵⁰ Oatley, 21.

⁵¹ Kelly Oliver states that "Unwanted affects are not so much projected onto another person but transferred onto or injected into another person such that the recipient's own affects are transformed." See "Colonial Abjection and Transmission of Affect," *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 2004) 48. Oliver's focus is on colonization and the way affect can be used to subjugate native populations, but her explanation for the change in emotional species during transmission makes sense here as well.

⁵² Robert Cockcroft, *Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing: Renaissance Passions Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 52.

⁵³ For a deeper exploration of Iago and Othello's homosocial "marriage" as it is often termed, see Nicholas F. Radel, "'Your Own for Ever': Revealing Masculine Desire in Othello" (*Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare's Othello*, Eds. Peter Erickson and Maurice Hunt, New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America, 2005, 62-71).

⁵⁴ Melanie H. Ross, "Conceiving Jealousy: Othello's Imitated Pregnancy" (*Forum for Modern Language Studies* 41.1 (2005): 1-17), 1.

⁵⁵ Lynn Enterline, "What 'Womanhood Denies' the Power of 'Tongues to Tell'" (*Shakespeare Studies* 27 (1999): 25-36), 31.

⁵⁶ Gayle Greene, "'This That You Call Love': Sexual and Social Tragedy in *Othello*," *Shakespeare and Gender: A History* (Eds. Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamps. London, Verso Books, 1995. 47-62), 49.

⁵⁷ Valerie Traub states, "Othello's subjectivity is predicated upon an absolute dichotomy between chaos and stasis." See "Jewels, Statues, and Corpses: Containment of Female Erotic Power in Shakespeare's Plays." (*Shakespeare Studies* 20 (1987): 215-238), 98.

⁵⁸ Kirsch, 55.

⁵⁹ See Patricia Parker, "Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': Africa, *Othello* and Bringing to Light" (*Women, 'Race,' and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, London: Routledge, 1994, 84-100.)

⁶⁰ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (Ed. William Webster Newbold, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), 94.

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- ⁶¹ Lodovico seems to agree with Othello, telling Iago, "This is thy work" (5.2.362).
- ⁶² Wright, 327.
- ⁶³ E.A.J. Honigmann, ed. *Othello (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series)*. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 227 n 288.
- ⁶⁴ Burton, "Part III, Section 3," 288.
- ⁶⁵ Richard Hooker (1554-1600), extrapolating from Aristotle's *De Anima*, saw the imagination as subject and agent of the eye:
The mind while we are in this present life, whether it contemplate, meditate, deliberate, or howsoever exercise itself, working nothing without continual recourse unto imagination, the only storehouse of wit and peculiar chair of memory. On this anvil it ceaseth not day and night to strike, by means whereof as the pulse declareth how the heart doth work, so the very thoughts and cogitations of man's mind be they good or bad do no where sooner bewray themselves, than through the crevices of that wall wherewith nature hath compassed the cells and closets of fancy.⁶⁵
- Quoted in Donald James Gordon, *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures by D. J. Gordon* (Ed. Stephen Orgel, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), 120.
- ⁶⁶ Qtd. in , Marjory E Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996) 20.
- ⁶⁷ Marjory E Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996) 30.
- ⁶⁸ Marjory E. Lange, *Telling Tears in the English Renaissance* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996) 19-20.
- ⁶⁹ Burton, "Part III, Section 2" 257.
- ⁷⁰ Burton, "Part III, Section 3," 288.
- ⁷¹ George L. Dillon, "The Seventeenth-Century Shift in the Theory and Language of Passion" (*Language and Style: An International Journal* 4 (1971): 131-143), 134.
- ⁷² Faye Tudor states, "Reason, given the sense of sight, finds its vision darkened by sin and it becomes damaged and weakened, subject to the dangers of the passions." See "All in him selfe as in a glass he sees": Mirrors and vision in the Renaissance." (*Renaissance Theories of Vision*, Eds. John Hendrix and Charles H. Carman, Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010, 171-86) 182.
- ⁷³ For a thorough treatment of the ocularization of language, see James L. Calderwood, *The Properties of Othello*, (Amherst: U of Massachusetts Press, 1989.)
- ⁷⁴ Katherine Eisaman Maus, "Proof and Consequences: Othello and the Crime of Intention." *INwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1995), 118-9.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 122-3.
- ⁷⁶ Lee A. Ritscher claims that "[o]ne of the founding principles of misogynistic discourse of the early modern period was the assumption that the female body was grotesque, beyond control, apt to exceed its socially prescribed boundaries, and in need of male guidance in order to function properly within English society." See *The Semiotics of Rape in Renaissance English Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009, 48.
- ⁷⁷ Elizabeth Spiller, *Reading and the History of Race in the Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 33.

⁷⁸ See Emilia's explanation of the perpetuity of jealousy: "a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (3.4.161-2).

⁷⁹ Lange, 33.

⁸⁰ E.A.J. Honigmann, 307 n 21-2.

⁸¹ See *The Rape of Lucrece*, 645-8. Tarquin's rage is only augmented by Lucrece's rational pleas to be spared. These men, rapt in their passions, will not consider reasonable arguments.

⁸² Kirsch, 65.

⁸³ Again, Lucrece mirrors this just before her suicide: "For she that was you Lucrece, now attend me" (1682).

“O Bloody Period!”: Conclusions about Tragedy and the Transmission of Affect

In the previous pages, I argue that emotions, embodied as humors in the Renaissance medical theory current in Shakespeare's day, transcend bodily boundaries, influencing the actions of the main protagonists in each of these tragic stories. With these explorations of the way humoral influences exert varying levels of control over the behavior and actions of the characters in the texts, I hope to have brought yet another subtle layer of analysis to the critical discussion of each, not to replace other critical approaches. I have examined each work with an eye to what other primary sources from the period say about humors, emotions, and the consequences of humoral imbalance, in an effort to capture the historical context in which Shakespeare wrote and thought. In the end, I believe this dissertation adds to the already rich discourse of current early modern studies dedicated to the body by drawing attention to the humoral exchange between both individuals themselves and individuals and the environment as a whole.

In both Shakespeare's and his contemporaries' works, humoral balance is dependent on emotional balance and vice versa; one cannot exist without the other because of the humorally imbedded nature of the passions themselves. In each of the works examined here, an overabundance of a particular emotion causes the humoral imbalance that sets violent purges in motion. So, in a very concrete way, emotion leads to action. In both *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*, the primary emotion is fear. Fear of what Caesar may do and fear of losing reputation and power in the wake of "new honours" (1.2.133) bestowed on Caesar motivate the murderous actions of both

Brutus and Cassius. For Othello, jealousy is both the fear of losing the beloved to another and the insidious terror that the person whom you trust may betray you. Even for Iago, one could argue that he suffers from jealousy: he alludes to both losing his position of power within Othello's regiment and Emilia's loyalty even as he admits to Othello that he is plagued with jealousy (3.3.150). Envy, another melancholic excess, may seem a better fit for Iago, and it certainly describes one aspect of Tarquin's "rash false heat" (48). Based on the fear that one's possessions or attributes are not good enough, "envy of so rich a thing" (39) is one aspect of Tarquin's mad dash to rape Lucrece. However, in this last text, pure "lust" (156) eclipses fear as the motivational force for the Prince, the initial recipient of emotional contagion. Lucrece, who receives the "load of lust" (734) from Tarquin, is also motivated by a form of fear. Like Cassio who laments his lost reputation, that "immortal part of [himself]" (2.3.259-60), Lucrece fears that her reputation as a chaste wife is irrevocably damaged by her rape. Her decision to sacrifice herself to prove that her mind remains "untainted" (1710) hinges on this fear as well as grief over what has befallen her.

In all three texts, humoral imbalance is a result of contamination via bodily openings, especially eyes and ears. Tarquin is aurally and ocularly ravished by Lucrece's beauty; Brutus is "moved" (1.2.166) by Cassius' oratory skills and Antony makes the most of the "len[t]" ears of his "countrymen" (3.2.74); and Othello is overwhelmed by the poison Iago "pour[s]" "into his ear" (2.3.351) even as he searches for "ocular proof" (3.3.363) of his wife's infidelity. In the Renaissance, both senses were considered particularly vulnerable to outside influences because a person cannot easily fortress eyes or ears against sensory input. The role of the eye is

especially important in *Lucrece*, where there is evidence of the early modern extramission theory of vision, an explanation of sight where the eye actually emits ocular rays that can influence the actions and humors of another person. In *Othello*, this idea manifests itself at the end of the play where Lodovico claims that the tragically loaded bed “poisons sight” (5.2.362), alluding to agency on the part of the tragic “object” (5.2.362) which shares the room with him. Intentionality is not necessary for either a person or an object to influence the humors of the people through ocular and aural sensory input. In each of the works examined here, the sensory input creates a humoral plethora that requires purgation, a purification that has tragic consequences.

Imagination, also referred to as phantasy, plays a significant role in exciting a humoral imbalance in the protagonists in each text. In Renaissance medical theory, the brain is divided into three ventricles: the first ventricle that processes all of the sensory input from the physical body, the central ventricle which is the seat of both the imagination and reason, and the cool and dry last ventricle where ideas and sense perceptions are stored in memory. The early modern imagination’s function—quite different from our post-Romantic notions—is to help translate sensory input to common sense, or reason, and then move the results into memory and back again as needed; it is also seen as the force that communicates mental results to the rest of the body. Although phantasy is supposed to be subject to rational control, emotional agitation and humoral imbalance can cause it to take control of common sense. In each text under consideration, imagination is hijacked by the unbalanced humors of the protagonists, leading to the failure of reason and to tragic action. For Tarquin, the

imagined "froth of fleeting joy" (212) he will obtain by raping Lucrece eclipses all else, most especially the rational arguments that would prevent his sexual indulgence. Brutus, in comparison, seems much more restrained than Tarquin and appears to be using rational argument to make his case against Caesar; however, his desire to "kill [Caesar] in the shell" (2.1.34) relies almost exclusively on the fear of what "may" (2.1.17, 2.1.27, 2.1.28) happen, and Brutus' preoccupation with the future is clearly symptomatic of an overactive imagination. He never does produce concrete evidence against Caesar, merely alluding to Caesar's "ambition" (3.2.28) as the foundation for the assassination. Last, Othello's rapid deterioration is a result of a faulty imagination. All of the "proof" (3.3.194) produced by Iago to prove Desdemona's infidelity only rings true in Othello's phantasy. His seething brain misreads the sensory input brought in by his eyes and ears and corrupted imagination creates an alternative reality where Iago is Othello's best friend and Desdemona is foul.

Additionally, a human instigator exists in each work, a person whose aural or visual input incites a humoral plethora in another agent. In the case of Iago, the inflammatory stimuli are intentional. He plants seeds of doubt in the Moor's ear, playing on his fear of losing Desdemona in an effort to drive him "even to madness" (2.1.309). In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius serves as an Iago-like figure; he does intentionally "move" Brutus to join the faction with his well-placed derogatory comments about Caesar and by playing on Brutus' existing fears of Caesar's possible tyranny, but there are other external factors at work as well. I argue that the heavens and the environment also offer an incentive for Brutus and the rest of the faction to act even as they send a warning to Caesar about the murderous conspiracy against

him. In *Lucrece*, the instigator is none other than the heroine's husband, who inadvertently rouses Tarquin's vicious lust. Whether intentional or not, in each case a humoral imbalance is created and the resulting actions wreak tragic consequences on both the agents and their loved ones, particularly their wives.

The way contamination affects the individual is also dependent on his or her natural temperament. Complexion, or the natural humoral tendencies of an individual, plays a significant role in how agents act when exposed to emotional contagion in each of the texts under consideration. But rather than being a reductive force that makes Shakespeare's characters simple stereotypes, here complexions inform and complicate the actions of the characters. Tarquin is choleric, easily inflamed with anger, an anger that manifests itself as an overwhelming desire to physically possess his friend Collatine's wife, even if it destroys her. Brutus, the classic scholastic melancholic, retreats from the world, unable to eat or sleep until he reaches the conclusion that Caesar's death is the only thing that will solve his, and the republic's, problems. Othello, burdened with both extreme love for his wife (a type of melancholy) and the choleric humors supposedly inherent in those from a hot climate, loses his well-documented balance soon after Iago begins his campaign of reverse psychology. All of these characters react in ways that align with their humoral tendencies, but Shakespeare is careful not to overtly blame the humors as the only cause. In each case, free will offers them the ability to overcome the influence of the humors but their rational faculties lack the strength to regulate the ultimately overwhelming emotions they experience.

Physical evidence of humoral plethora occurs in each work, although the visual proof of that condition is most dramatic in *The Rape of Lucrece*. When Lucrece conducts her prescribed bloodletting, "some of her blood still pure and red remained, / and some looked black, and that false Tarquin stained" (1742-3). The corrupted blood is black like the uncontrollable lust, the "glow[ing]" "coal" (47) that the Prince contains in his own plethoric state prior to the rape. Lucrece's contamination is not metaphorical. The pollution is real and evident in the separate streams of her post-mortem blood. Concrete humoral evidence is scarcer in *Julius Caesar* and relies more heavily on behaviors than on physical evidence. Perhaps the clearest diagnosis of humoral overabundance comes from Portia, who tells Brutus that he has "some sick offense within [his] mind" (2.1.267), an "effect of humour" (2.1.249) which prevents him from eating, sleeping, and talking with others. Brutus himself discusses his internal war twice in the text, alluding to the struggle between his love for Caesar as a person and his need to destroy him in the name of "the general good" (1.2.85). In *Othello*, the Moor exhibits several physical symptoms of his humoral imbalance including tears on several occasions, a "salt and sullen rheum" (3.4.51) and what Iago refers to as epileptic seizures. I argue that the epilepsy is an inherent condition that only manifests itself as the extremity of humoral imbalance overtakes Othello, but the tears and the "rheum" are both specific symptoms of the emotional disease inflicted on him by his ancient. In early modern science, tears and other manifestations of phlegm signaled an unhealthy compression of the brain where the leaking fluids were the excess that need to be purged in an attempt to restore humoral balance.

Just as medical treatises of the time recommended bloodletting to cure cases of physical plethora, a form of bloodletting is required in each text to restore the main agents to humoral balance. Tarquin may, at least temporarily, purge his excess by raping Lucrece, expelling his overabundant blood in the form of semen, and Lucrece inherits his load of lust which requires her to “let forth” her own “defilèd blood” (1029) through suicide. Similarly, Othello thinks to eliminate his jealous rage—a symptom of extreme love-melancholy—by sacrificing his polluted wife. His relief is short-lived, the “horrible and grim” “act” (5.2.201) he attempts to disguise as an “honourable murder” (5.2.291) creates a new plethora of grief in light of her innocence. Othello then follows in Lucrece’s footsteps in an effort to restore his reputation, letting forth his traitorous “Turk” (5.2.351) blood in a bid to return at least a modicum of his former “valiant” (2.2.2) reputation. Brutus plays physician to Caesar, lecturing the faction that they are to be “purgers” (2.1.179) because Caesar “must bleed” (2.1.170) for his ambition. To Brutus, Caesar represents a plethora in the state of Rome itself and his bleeding will restore the republic to its proper motions. The turbulent heavens signal the imbalance in the state of Rome and order can only be restored through the “sacrifice” (2.1.165) of Caesar. Even if his initial diagnosis is correct, the bloody mutilation of Caesar’s corpse and the ensuing revelation of that “bloody sight” (3.2.198) to the commoners, creates a new plethora that can only be assuaged by the death of Brutus and the conspirators.

Humoral influences, sometimes described as overwhelming forces beyond the protagonist’s command, ultimately do not control the fate of the tragic agent, and

Shakespeare is very careful not to ascribe absolute control to the humors. Rather, just as a physical illness may hamper some people from completing a task while others laboring under the same debilitating condition go on to finish, humoral imbalance represents an impediment to success that *may* be overcome; in tragedy, the protagonist is unwilling or unable to successfully regulate his or her emotions and hence humoral imbalance. The very nature of the Galenic humoral system emphasizes the porosity of the body and the readiness with which it can take in both curative and noxious forces from the outside world. In other words, the tragic figures suffering from plethora can cure themselves if they recognize their illness and embrace the means to wellness. For both Tarquin and Lucrece, their illnesses are clearly recognized, but a killing cure is adopted rather than a healthful one. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus is an incompetent physician, misdiagnosing the trouble in Rome and his own humoral motivations. Likewise, Othello misidentifies the source of pathos and excises the wrong “lover” from his life. The existence of emotional and humoral contagion does not negate free will, nor does it allow the protagonists of these tragedies to abdicate responsibility for their actions. Rather, as we observe these depictions of humoral imbalance and the resulting behavioral influence, we can gain a new and deeper understanding of the motivation behind tragic action.

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