nterest from Ashgate

s in Shakespeare's England
roline Bicks

nting Emotions
istories of Art, Music and Medicine
pe Gouk and Helen Hills

Years of Medicine in Art
of Prints and Drawings from the
y Collection held in the
tney Medical Library at Yale University
an Wheeler

ISBN 0-7546-3791-3

Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage

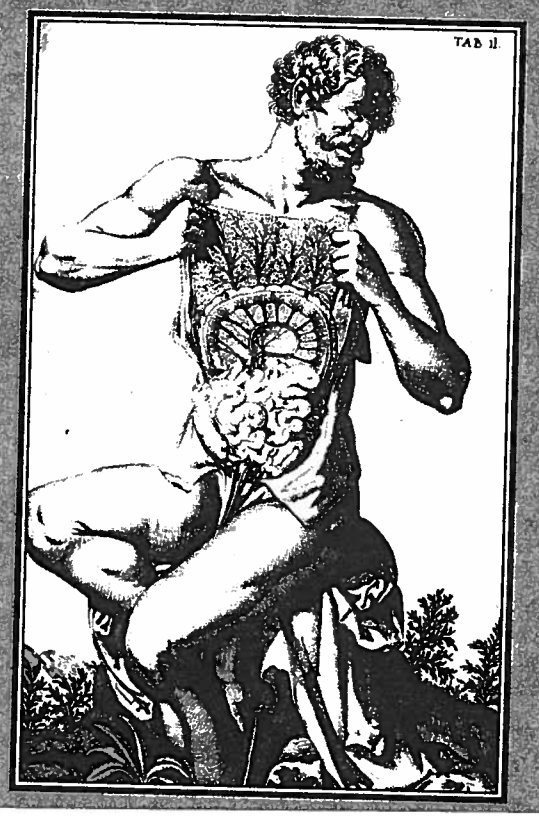
Moss and Peterson

ASHGATE

Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage

EDITED BY

Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson



2004

Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity

Series editors:

This series provides a forum for groundbreaking work on the relations between literary and scientific discourses in Europe, during a period when both fields were in a crucial moment of historical formation. We welcome proposals for books that address the many overlaps between modes of imaginative writing typical of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – poetics, rhetoric, prose narrative, dramatic production, utopia – and the vocabularies, conceptual models, and intellectual methods of newly emergent 'scientific' fields such as medicine, astronomy, astrology, alchemy, psychology, mapping, mathematics, or natural history. In order to reflect the nature of intellectual inquiry during the period, the series is interdisciplinary in orientation and publishes monographs, edited collections, and selected critical editions of primary texts relevant to an understanding of the mutual implication of literary and scientific epistemologies.

Other titles in the series:

Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language
Arielle Saiber

Staging Anatomies
Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Drama
Hillary M. Nunn

The Midwives Book, 1540-1720
The Early-Modern British Sex Manual
Edited by Elaine Hobby

Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage

Edited by
STEPHANIE MOSS AND KAARA L. PETERSON

ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House
Croft Road
Aldershot
Hants GU11 3HR
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington,
Vermont 05401–4405
USA

Ashgate website: http://www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage. – (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity).
1. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Knowledge – Medicine. 2. English drama – Early modern and Elizabethan, 1500–1600 – History and criticism. 3. Medicine in literature. 4. Literature and medicine – England – History – 16th century. 5. Literature and medicine – England – History – 17th century. 6. English drama – 17th century – History and criticism. 7. Physicians in literature. 8. Disease in literature. I. Moss, Stephanie. II. Peterson, Kaara L.
822.3'093561

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage / Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson, editors.
p. cm. – (Literary and Scientific Cultures of Early Modernity).
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. English drama – Early modern and Elizabethan, 1500-1600 – History and criticism. 2. Medicine in literature. 3. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Knowledge – Medicine. 4. Literature and medicine – England – History – 16th century. 5. Literature and medicine – England – History – 17th century. 6. English drama – 17th century – History and criticism. 7. Physicians in literature. 8. Disease in literature. I. Moss, Stephanie. II. Peterson, Kaara L. III. Series.
PR658.M35D57 2004
822'.3093561–dc22
2003025555

ISBN: 0 7546 3791 3

Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

Contents

[59] Abraham, *A Dictionary* 26, 136.

[60] From the early poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, through the sonnet sequence and the plays, Shakespeare encodes alchemical language to varying ends. A number of scholars, including Stanton J. Linden, Charles Nicholl, Lyndy Abraham, W. A. Murray, and John S. Mebane, have amassed significant evidence of alchemical images that picture love as alchemical transformation in Shakespeare's works. See W. A. Murray's "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden?" *Shakespeare Survey* 19 (1966): 34–44.

[61] See Charles Webster's "Paracelsus: Medicine as Popular Protest," *Medicine and the Reformation*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (London: Routledge, 1993) 57–77; 62.

[62] Paracelsus, *Selected* 21 (emphasis original).

Chapter 10

Cankers in *Romeo and Juliet*: Sixteenth-Century Medicine at a Figural/Literal Cusp

Lynette Hunter

Romeo and Juliet (1597, 1599)[1] is a play overtly about contesting models of medical discourse and the relationships between medicine and rhetoric that were preoccupying English practices in the 1590s. It is also concerned to draw parallels between a medical understanding of the human body and a political understanding of the social body. In the process, I shall argue, the play negotiates a pre-Cartesian breakdown into mind and body that is related to a contemporary movement to split the bodily actuality of the humors into anatomical certainty and a symbolic system that eventually becomes psychology.[2] One sign of this anxiety or breakdown is melancholia, a disease that obsessed late sixteenth-century medical texts and eluded treatment as successfully as the plague. Furthermore, because medical practice is inextricably bound to rhetoric,[3] the breakdown is directly related to the shift in the fortunes of rhetoric from a discursive field that deals with probably-the-best actions to a system of plausibility that cannot compete with the certainties of logic.

The topical field of medical discourse is carried largely by the Friar and also by the Prince as he tries to develop a negotiation with the social body, a negotiation based on law. They both deal with different kinds of canker: the canker that is the closed-over but ulcerous wound and the canker-worm that consumes the plant from inside its stem.[4] They both have the ambivalent potential to be at the same time internal contamination and external infection or contagion, a situation parallel to the often contradictory approaches to the plague that is raging throughout Verona but about which we hear so little.[5] Yet the canker-worm is related to the canker–is possibly its social symptom–and both are treated with the Friar's salves, the Prince's bloodletting, with quarantine, and with expulsion, only to result in deaths, just as physicians of the period were helpless against the plague.

Galenic Medicine, the Humors, and Paracelsan Experiment

Galenic medicine brings together humors theory and rhetoric, because it argues that the patient cannot be cured by treatment alone; they must also have "counsel." The character of the Friar does precisely this but would probably have been understood as radical in the 1590s, for physicians in England prided themselves on talking rather than acting,[6] on diagnosis and prescription rather than counsel. Yet while the world of the play is more traditionally Galenic in outlook, the Friar experiments with the new elements of Paracelsan medicine and spends the entire action trying to cure a cankerous wound (the feuding families) with a rhetorical and Paracelsan salve made up of Galenic contraries (Juliet and Romeo).[7] A traditional Galenic system of medicine coalesces around the individual to be treated and a thorough understanding of their environmental, physical, and social contexts. Hence, its drug therapies are as various as the individuals it treats: as the Friar says, "Many for many, virtues excellent,/ None but for some, and yet all different" (2.3.13–14).[8] A further implication is that everything in all contexts is interdependent; hence, plants and stones, as much as planetary movements, are significant environments for each human being. From this perspective, astrology becomes a tool for sensitive ecological understanding.[9]

However, by the early modern period, many physicians had reduced the Galenic system. They still believed that disease came from imbalances in the humoral system that negotiated the effects of all these contexts within each human body and that cures were usually effected by contraries, but they frequently constrained their practice to finding the "contrary" to any condition as laid out in *Materia Medica* of the time.[10] Galenic medicine influenced both physicians and apothecaries: both worked with "simples" or plant extracts but also with products from the alchemical tradition. As Hoeniger has elaborated in detail, alchemical vitalism also interconnects all aspects of the environment and uses this knowledge to produce "purer" elements: greedy alchemists aim only for gold, but responsible alchemists try to produce elements beneficial to many areas of life, including medicine.[11] But the reduced form of Galenic understanding left the practices of both the physicians and apothecaries ripe for change. The transformation of alchemy into chemistry, with its understanding of the natural world as one made up of many pure and individual elements that may be compounded, is happening during the sixteenth century and becomes part of the Paracelsan medical revolution that was a large part of that change.

Like Vesalius, the well-known anatomist of the period, Paracelsus was a surgeon.[12] Both men revolutionized the low status of the surgeon (who, unlike the physician, actually touched the patient) by reforming attitudes to the body and to disease.[13] Paracelsus interpreted alchemy in terms of a Christian Neoplatonism that placed man at the center of God's universe and modeled relations between human beings and the natural world–not on contextual interaction but on an extreme form of Pythagorean correspondence, or the analogies between the microcosmic human body and macrocosmic forces.[14] Contrary to Galen, he posited that infection came from outside the body, a destructive seed from the planets or the earth.[15] Again,

unlike early modern Galenic practitioners, Paracelsus believed in careful observation of the patient,[16] and he also derived from folk medicine homeopathic ideas that "like cures like."[17] This was not a simplistic concept: it might involve the doctor in recreating the "same" or analogous situation in a chemical laboratory and treating the patient with the compound that resulted.[18] For example, Paracelsus discovered that the chemical compounds of elements such as arsenic and sulphur reduced their poisonous side-effects and could be used to treat, among other diseases, syphilis with potassium arsenate. His work is most relevant to *Romeo and Juliet* because he introduced herbal and chemical salves to heal wounds rather than the more usual cauterizing with boiling oil or hot metal scourges, and he believed in chemical medicines rather than bloodletting. All of these issues form topical fields in the play.

Most commentators read the scene that introduces the Friar as placing him within traditional Galenic medicine given his stress on the need for humoral balance and his belief that the same herb may be virtuous and vile (2.3.20) or poisonous and powerfully healing (2.3.24). He also speaks of the imbalance of extremities that induce cankers that will eat up the body until death occurs from the inside out, and he refers to Romeo's "distempered head" (2.3.22) or unbalanced temper. But the Friar also adheres to the Paracelsan belief of correspondences. The apparently metaphorical statement, "The earth that's nature's mother is her tomb" (2.3.9), refers explicitly to the belief that the divine nature of all things makes every element the "mother" of another and that the earth is literally "the mother of all things growing from it."[19] Romeo proceeds to describe a medical problem ambivalently either Galenic or Paracelsan: "Where on a sudden one hath wounded me/ That's by me wounded, both our remedies/ Within thy help and physic lies" (2.3.91–2). And the Friar concludes his talk with Romeo with the lines "this alliance may so happy prove/ To turn your households' rancour to pure love" (2.3.92–3)–which could be cure by contrary or by like. Later on, the Friar has several other Paracelsan moments, especially when he offers Juliet the sleeping draught. He first says: "I do spy a kind of hope,/ Which craves as desperate an execution/ As that is desperate which we would prevent" (4.1.70), indicating a cure of "like by like." This cure is emphasized by his next question: if she will "undertake/ A thing like death [...]/ That cop'st with Death himself to scape from it" (4.1.74–5), then he will offer her a "distilling liquor," or a chemical preparation, to induce the look of death.

Despite the fact that some apothecaries like John Hester[20] or physicians like Thomas Mouffet[21] were enthusiastic advocates for the new Paracelsanism, the differences between Paracelsan and Galenic medicine were not so clear. Take, for example, John Gerard's introductory words to his *Herball*, published in 1599: "if odours, or if taste werke satisfaction, they are both sovereign in plants, and so comfortable, that no confection of the Apothecaries can equall their excellent vertue."[22] The distinction between simples and chemical compounds in words that directly echo the Friar (2.3.25–6) seems obvious until one reads the "Address to the Reader" from the physician at St. Bredewell that probably refers to the newly

installed Professorial Chair of Physick at Gresham College. He suggests that this Chair should be complemented by

> some ingenious labourer in the skill of simples [... to] mightily augment and adorne the whole science of Physicke. But if to it they join a third, namely the art of Chimicall preparation; [...] pure substances may be procured for those that be sicke [...and] this present generation would purchase more to the perfection of Physicke, than all the generations past.[23]

The blurring of these retrospectively perceived boundaries is also attested to by the domestic manuals of the period 1560–1617, in which Galenic receipt sits happily alongside Paracelsan.[24] The "Address to the Reader" in Gerard is more concerned to distinguish between the greedy alchemist and the good chemist, who also works with herbs, than between the Galenic and the Paracelsan.

The Physicians, Surgeons, and Apothecaries

As important to the social dynamic informing the medical topos of *Romeo and Juliet* and the Galenic-Paracelsan debate was the growing number of influential apothecaries who worried the Royal College of Physicians. Established in 1518 as a professional body and followed during the 1540s by incorporation of the Surgeons, the Physicians of the College became increasingly agitated by the power of the apothecaries who were still allied to the Grocers' Guild until the early seventeenth century. During the late-sixteenth century, the College began to exert control over who could and could not practice as an apothecary, partly because they were worried about their own professional standing and partly because there undoubtedly were a considerable number of fraudsters. For various reasons, a gap had opened up in medical practice early in the sixteenth century, which was filled by lay practitioners and householders, many of them women.[25] There is a substantial literature of vernacular books addressed to this lay audience in the period 1540–80, which is often prefaced by the comment that they were for the good of the "commonweal." But from the 1580s onwards, these prefaces begin to make polemical statements about how physicians in particular are attempting to keep herbal and chemical treatments to themselves,[26] or they warn women to keep to "appropriate" knowledge. These statements appear, possibly, because the College began to plan for a *Pharmacopoeia* for their members during the 1580s and in 1593, appointed three doctors (including the Paracelsan Thomas Mouffet) to do so. Nothing came of this venture until 1618, but *Romeo and Juliet* is written against this fraught background.[27]

When the Friar is described as a "ghostly Friar" (2.2.192) by Romeo, this apparent tautology is more probably a reassurance that he is a serious physician and apothecary, not a fraudster.[28] The drawbacks to apothecaries' practicing with no medical knowledge are clearly demonstrated in 5.1, during Romeo's visit to the Apothecary. The Apothecary's shop does not display the "herbs, plants and

stones," that are the essentials for a Galenic medicine and detailed in book after book of "Secrets" such as the popular *Secrets of Alexis of Piedmont*,[29] but the strange and exotic "tortoise," "alligator," and the "skins/ Of ill-shaped fishes" (5.1.42–6). His ingredients are "musty seeds" and "old cakes of roses." He himself is dressed in "tattered weeds, with overwhelming brows,/ Culling of simples. Meagre were his looks,/ Sharp misery had worn him to the bone" (39–41), which are symptoms of excess, as if he has abused his own drugs.[30] More to the point, the Apothecary makes no attempt to find out anything about Romeo or his context. His initial, apparent reluctance to sell the poison to Romeo is more probably a concern to evade the law; after all, there would be no reason to stock a deadly poison if he did not intend to sell it.

The Friar, on the other hand, refuses Romeo poison (3.3.44) and *is* concerned with his larger context. The Friar's cure of Romeo is his rhetorical argument in 3.3, a lengthy scene that often sees its point missed and its text cut. Galenic medicine combined moral instruction with medical cure,[31] believing in "the necessity of a mentor and the mentor's interventionist discourse as enabling both diagnosis and cure."[32] Health in a humoral system is the achieving of a "proper complexion" or decorum of behavior, but the relation of rhetorical discourse to health was changing during this period. If Galenists believed that doctors could diagnose and cure the patient most effectively by persuading them to adjust their behavior and environment (for example, food, drink, sleep, actions), thus bringing the humors into balance and restoring the passions to decorum, Paracelsan doctors, believing that imbalance came from outside the body, thought that something infects or invades and corrupts the humors and affects the passions. This introduction of an external agent contributed to a change in attitude to the humors, such that by the early seventeenth century, writers would argue that excessive passion caused humoral imbalance,[33] and so health became a moral choice. Within this system, "error is like disease, discourse is the instrument of cure."[34] In any of these approaches, treatment by drugs, whether compound or simple, is ineffective and dangerous without a rhetorical understanding of context. It may seem self-evident to us, who live in a world where drug companies exploit a "one drug treats all" course of medication, but Capulet Mother's suggestion that she procure a drug from an apothecary in Mantua to get rid of Romeo is effective in early modern terms only because she wants to kill him rather than cure him: that is, the fact that she seeks a single drug with no contextual reference to Romeo himself is, in itself, potentially lethal.

At the same time, another aspect of Galenic medicine that had become popular in the late medieval period but extended beyond any classical procedure was purgation by bloodletting, which was firmly rejected by Paracelsan practice. Yet bloodletting runs as a consistent thread throughout *Romeo and Juliet* and is allied to the Prince. In this respect, the role of the Prince becomes parallel to the issues at work in the Friar-Apothecary dyad, as the play casts about for the civic equivalent of the "doctor;" someone who will ensure the health of the state. However, the structure of the topos is quite different. Rather than weighted alternatives, with the character of the Prince, the text demonstrates change. In his opening scene, 1.1, the

Prince refers to the "purple fountains" pouring from the veins of the citizens of Verona as they get caught up in the Montague-Capulet feud. Thirty or so years before Harvey's publications on the circulation of the blood, "purple" blood was held to be "bad" blood that had to be drained until the red came in.[35] When we next see him, at the site of yet another civic brawl during which his kinsman Mercutio has been killed, as well as Tybalt, he refers first to Mercutio's "dear blood" (3.1.174) and then says: "My blood for your rude brawls doth lie a-bleeding" (180). The line, within the context of the religious references in the passage, makes it clear that he is no longer worried about needless bloodletting but about heedless sacrifice. In his third and final appearance at the end of the play, in surveying the death of all the young people[36] (along with Montague Mother), he calls on the families to recognize the hand of God: "See what a scourge is laid upon your hate,/ That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love" (5.3.292–3). The "scourge" was not only the whip, but also the cauterizing heat used to burn out infected wounds, and of course, the Biblical scourges that brought death in order to clean out society.

The corollary movement to the implied critique of bloodletting is one concerned with rhetoric. The Prince's opening speech is authoritative and dictatorial. He concludes by ordering the heads of the two families to see him on separate occasions. His second appearance is conveyed in quite different rhetoric, as he asks for an account of what has been happening and then takes it upon himself to provide judgment, simply asking the families "to attend [his] will" (3.1.187). The final scene presents him carefully listening to evidence from the Watches, from the Friar, Balthazar, and the Page before calling on the families to recognize God's scourge directed not only at them but also at him, which leads to the apparent reconciliation between the Montagues and the Capulets. In other words, like the Galenic doctor, he comes to recognize the importance of understanding the specific contexts for the events: that he cannot simply command and/or judge, but has to observe, interrogate, learn, negotiate, and counsel. Yet the movement is simultaneously toward the rhetoric of law, which is complicated by its affinity with anatomy: the opening out of what had been unseen in order to comprehend the working of a particular social body, along with its end-directed impulse that distinguishes it so sharply from the probable rhetoric of earlier medical counsel. The anatomized body is experiencing medicine without discourse because it is necessarily the dead body that cannot speak back. The discourse of the law in *Romeo and Juliet* does not go so far, but in its invocation of authority and judgment, observation and evidence, and proof, it shifts the rhetoric of social healing to one of social control.

What both the Friar and the Prince are dealing with socially is an older system of family feuding inimical to civic and national peace. The concept of citizenship rested partly on an agreement not to fight those within one's city or country.[37] The feud between the Montagues and the Capulets has, from the start, built a city "cankered with peace" (1.1.86), a social body with closed-over but unhealed wounds from previous fighting. More importantly, these derive from the "cankered hate" of the two families–the worm that will eat them up during the course of the play. The fashion of the newly forming civic state was to displace the action of fighting within the political boundaries of city or nation onto trained fencing in which swordsmanship was not supposed to result in bloodshed and death.[38] Yet as Q2 text underlines in its extended version of 1.1, the heads of each family irresponsibly support unschooled street brawls, which, the Prince tells us, do result in bloodshed. The play offers several markers of the imbalanced humors that have produced too much choler or anger and resulted in these actions. From the opening wordplay on coals, colliers, choler, and collar (1.1.1–5); to the description of Tybalt as "fiery" (100), who is full, by his own admission, of "wilful choler" (1.5.88); and to Benvolio's reference to these days when the "mad blood" stirs (3.1.4) and "furious" Tybalt meets the "fire-eyed fury" of Romeo (112–15), the humors in these young people are disturbed, as if they embody a kind of disease. This family feud is an internal contamination of the state that, the Prince implies, is spilling bad blood throughout the city, infecting the populace.

Neoplatonism and the Disease of the Passions

At the same time, the sustained bloodletting in the play is a temporary release of a more deeply embedded wound or disease or canker: the melancholia of the young and its associated isolation and cynicism. This disease is rooted in the passions, another imbalance of the humors. But if the characters of the Friar and the Prince demonstrate an ambivalence between the Galenic and the Paracelsan, between bloodletting and anatomy, the ambivalence itself displays medical knowledge on a cusp of realistic and figural semiotics that is remarkably similar to the nature/nurture debate of today. For a conventional Galenist, the passions and the soul are inextricably part of a balanced humoral body that responds to its cosmological contexts through careful training in rhetoric and with the mentoring of the personal counselor. Thomas Newton notes in *The Touchstone of Complexions* (1573) that nationalities have characteristics defined by birth but that "Education, institution and discipline, altereth the usuall Nature."[39] Thirty years later, Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* (1601) elaborates on complexion as the complex interaction of body chemistry with environment that is mediated especially by rhetoric as a way of achieving the decorum and prudence proper to civic behavior.[40] Yet Wright's title underlines the shift from a holistic understanding toward a separation of mind from body nevertheless still bridged by the complexion of the passions and negotiated by probable rhetoric.[41]

However, during this period, humors theory was being challenged by Neoplatonic thought, partly mediated by Paracelsan medicine. Neoplatonism disrupts the cosmological holism of the humors and places human beings at the center of God's universe.[42] Neoplatonism, particularly in the commentaries and translations of Ficino and those influenced by him, who combined readings of Plato with Christianity (in England these included the influential educationalists John Colet and Erasmus), suggests "beauty" as the central principle guiding us to truth and goodness.[43] Although Neoplatonism is not necessarily idealist or proto-

essentialist in its focus on beauty and the visual as an instantaneous mode of proof, both promoted concepts of "certain" truth and downgraded the probability of rhetorical reasoning and counsel which takes place over time.[44]

But Neoplatonism is only part of the picture relevant to this play. Others have argued, persuasively, that anatomy with its focus on revealing the previously unseen was even more devastating for Galenic medicine.[45] Neoplatonism was concerned with any visual observation and, thus, informed Paracelsan surgery. However, it was frequently reduced to external visualization and became allied with conjuration and magical imitation or correspondence.[46] Anatomy, on the other hand, linked illness or disease with visually identifiable internal parts of the body, breaking down the interconnectedness of the humoral system and the link between external bodily appearance, the passions, the soul, and the mind. It is interesting to note that Newton's extensive descriptions of the outward physical characteristics of different "kinds" of people depending on where they fit in the humors become, in Wright's text, a system linking thought to physiology in a prototypical gesture to psychology. Concurrently, Thomas Overbury and his "friends" are using physical appearance as reductive caricature, self-consciously dislocating "natural" elements into social stereotypes or "characters."[47] At the same time that medical knowledge was becoming separated from rhetorical counsel, the humors become a figural discourse partly retained by psychology and partly reduced to stereotype. Hence, it is difficult to know, when Capulet Father says to Juliet, "Out, you green-sickness carrion [...]/ You tallow-face" (3.5.166–7), whether he is really referring to a physical condition experienced by young women in the early years of menstruation, to the behavioral characteristics the humors induce during this period, or is using the words as a clichéd dismissal.

Romeo and Juliet is written and played for the first time at precisely this moment of the unhinging of the connections between body, passion, soul, and mind, a moment that is still central to Western concepts of the constructions of subjectivity. The signal marker of the disconnection between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was melancholia, the disease of the passions. Melancholia eluded not only conventional Galenic medicine and the new Paracelsanism, but also anatomical discovery–largely, I would argue, because the effectiveness of rhetoric and counsel as part of medical treatment was being undermined and relegated to merely plausible opinion. The foregrounding of the humors as a discourse balanced on the cusp of the actual and the figural is laid out in the first scene. For instance, Benvolio introduces Romeo's melancholia as similar to his own: "Being one too many by my weary self,/ Pursued my humour, not pursuing his/ And gladly shunned who gladly fled from me" (1.1.119–20). The isolation and inward-looking regard of this state is described by Montague Father as "artificial," a "Black and portentous [...] humour" (1.1.131–2) from which only "good counsel may the cause remove" (133). Yet Romeo has discarded traditional medical help, for he is "his own affections' counselor," and Romeo is, in the words of Montague Father:

> [...] to himself I will not say how true
> But to himself so secret and so close
> So far from sounding and discovery
> As is the bud bit with an envious worm
> .....
> Could we but learn from whence his sorrows grow
> We would as willingly give cure as know. (1.1.138–42; 45–6)

This melancholia, isolation, and self-regard is the canker worm that destroys the entire younger generation. Romeo, Mercutio, Paris, and Juliet are described each singly as a flower, yet, as the Friar tells us, with imbalanced humors, "Full soon the canker death eats up that plant" (2.2.29–30).

Romeo links his condition quite openly with Neoplatonism, in which love was considered by most of the English translators of Neoplatonic texts as the primary guide to beauty and truth.[48] At his first appearance, he claims that love is "muffled still" (1.1.162), showing him not certainty but the chaos of oxymoronic contraries: "heavy lightness, serious vanity,/ Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,/ Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health" (169–71). The language becomes so ornate that it turns into a parody of the self-regarding stance of the lover, yet it is also resistant to Galenic cure, for how does one cure a state of contrariness by contraries? And it is resistant to Paracelsan remedies, for how does one find the counteraction to a contradiction? Romeo's "sickness" (193) leads him to answer his father's question, "Is to himself I will not say how true[?]" (139), by saying: "I have lost myself, I am not here,/ This is not Romeo, he's some other where" (188–9). Not only Romeo, but also Mercutio, and to some extent, Benvolio, are caught up in this quest for love or beauty that will reveal truth. Still, all, especially Mercutio, find nothing but uncertainty.

Mercutio's characterization may be considered the limit case for the disease of melancholy. Overwhelmed by anatomy's promise to locate specific places for the passions and cut out what does not work, Mercutio blazons Mab's coach (1.4.59–68), Rosaline's body (2.1.17–20), and Romeo's lovesick body (2.4.13–15)–degenerating, in his death throes, into invoking lists (3.1.91–2). Yet these anatomies are not pursuits of truth, as his cynical use of Rosaline's body to "conjure" Romeo indicates. Mercutio's first invocation, "Romeo, humours madman, passion lover" (2.1.7), is a tidy list of Galenic and Paracelsan clues to his predicament, made more fragile by Q2's change of "liver" for "lover," which turns the set of correspondences into another potential anatomy that will dislocate the humors and separate the passion from the body, the body from the soul and mind. Mercutio like Romeo, is also obsessed by dreams and their significant private reality–just as Descartes was to turn to dreams as "so interior, so close, so remarkable."[49] Mercutio and Romeo contest with each other over dreams, with the former's preventing Romeo from telling about his dream by launching into the extended Queen Mab speech, as if he is afraid of hearing Romeo's personal fears, and the latter's stopping Mercutio's speech as it turns to horror.

Juliet's part counteracts Mercutio's not only in her reversal of the blazon into an "anti-anatomy" (2.2.40–42), but also in her material realizing of Romeo's

dream of love. When they meet for the second time, in 2.2, she asks him to discard his Petrarchan Neoplatonism that has left him without a sense of himself.[50] She rejects his oath of love made to the "inconstant moon" (2.2.109), a Petrarchan cliché, and even the ambiguity of "[his] heart's dear love" (115), asking him to "swear by [his] gracious self" (112). After his marriage, Romeo ceases to question his "self" and even confidently reprimands Tybalt, saying: "I see thou knowest me not" (3.1.58). When Romeo questions whether this second meeting with Juliet "is but a dream" (2.2.140), twice she returns to him, reassuring him of its substantiality. The second time she returns, she, like Mercutio, invokes Romeo. Yet here, unlike before, he appears as if claiming his "self" for the first time.

However, Romeo's final dream, that Juliet came "and found [him] dead/ (Strange dream that gives a dead man leave to think.)/ And breathed such life with kisses in [his] lips/ That [he] revived" (5.1.6–9), is a gesture that he simply forgets or loses in his self-centered attempt to "deny" the stars, to render himself literally alone, as if his dreams are private. The melancholy disease not only anatomizes and isolates parts of the body, but in its rejection of the counselor or mentor, it turns in on itself and isolates the person from the community inside a private world like Romeo's "artificial night" (1.1.31).

Literal Certainty and Getting Rid of Counsel

An impulse towards the literal dominates Romeo's actions in the latter part of the play, dramatizing the displacement of the analogical and probable rhetoric by the attempt at certainty. Once the swordplay has ceased to be a game and become literally deadly with Mercutio's death, Romeo seems to click over into a different mindset. Having killed Tybalt, Romeo embarks upon a grotesque literalization of the flea encomium (3.3.35–42), which is a type of anatomy, and then follows up with his attempt at suicide (108). Although there is a partial reprieve during the consummation of his marriage in 3.5, when he hears of Juliet's death in 5.1, he literalizes the Friar's analogy of an herb's poisonous and healing powers by telling the Apothecary that his poison is a cordial (5.1.85). The text indicates that this literalization sets up a congruency in Romeo's mind between the Friar and the Apothecary. Not only does it note that they both gather simples, but when he asks the Apothecary for poison, it makes Romeo think that "the trunk may be discharged of breath/ As violently as hasty powder fired/ Doth hurry from the fatal cannon's womb" (5.1.63–5), directly recalling the Friar's language at 2.6.9–11 and 3.3.132–3. Romeo proceeds to offer the Apothecary gold, claiming that the gold is poison while the poison is gold (82–3), calling up an image of the greedy alchemist pursuing the *aurum potabile*, the liquid gold that is the purest element rather than searching for pure elements beneficial to the health of mankind. It may be significant that, at the end of the play, the grieving fathers pledge to build statues of Juliet and Romeo in "pure gold" (5.1.299) as recompense.

The problem of the disease of melancholy is analogous to the plague that besets Verona. The Prince's answer is to banish, to expel the diseased, just as

Capulet Father attempts to expel Juliet and turn her onto the streets (3.5.192) as a diseased harlot. Yet both come to realize that the disease is not so cleanly cut out of the social and familial body. The Friar, in a sense, quarantines the diseased, keeps them separate from society until each is "better." His solution is far more ambiguous as regards who the diseased are: the people in the quarantined house (Verona, the Capulets' house) or those outside it. It may be important that, in a play where subtle and not-so-subtle references to syphilis abound (1.4.75; 2.4.30–31; 59–71; 2.5.26), Mercutio's curse on the Montague and Capulet households is changed from Q1's "A pox on both your houses" to Q2's "A plague o'both your houses" (3.1.83; 91; 97). "Pox," which refers generally to any pock-marks, had become connotative of syphilis since the disease entered England in 1518,[51] and by 1597, William Clowes notes that over half his patients at St. Bart's suffer from the disease.[52] The self-conscious change to "plague" and the added Biblical imagery in Q2 presumably recall the recent devastations of the 1590s plagues in England and the concurrent claims by Puritans that the disease was visited on Londoners as punishment for their sins. Syphilis had become partly treatable through Paracelsan science, but the plague was still resistant and doctors were ridiculed for leaving the city to preserve their own health. The plague, like melancholia, was untreatable.

But it is the Friar who makes the most important medical mistake when his counsel, so important to medical healing, is withdrawn. If Romeo becomes ill by becoming his "own affections' counsellor" (1.1.138), he is "cured" when he follows Benvolio's very Paracelsan counsel (1.2.44–9) to "Take thou some new infection to thy eye/ And the rank poison of the old will die" (48–9). He then finds counsel in Juliet (2.2.53; 82), and later in the Friar (2.3; 3.3.160). Similarly, with Q2's text rendering of the Nurse as silent in Juliet's presence after being rejected in 3.5 until her "deathbed" in 4.5, Juliet's predicament is deepened when she rejects the Nurse's counsel (3.5.208). Then, Juliet's predicament is supposedly resolved when she asks the Friar to "Give [her] some present counsel" (4.1.61). But Romeo also turns away from counsel toward the certainty of love in his relationships with both Juliet and Mercutio. When he expresses the love that binds him and Mercutio together, Mercutio is led to say "Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo, now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature" (2.4.72–4). Mercutio is here distinguishing, as did Juliet when she rejected the Petrarchan clichés, between natural love, which is to do only with passion, and rational love, which is a moral choice to do with virtue and beauty.[53] But when these two apparent certainties clash in 3.1, Romeo is left bereft, literally alone and without advice, and kills Tybalt. Finally, it is Romeo's insistence on the literal reading that signs refer to certainties and do not need the persuasive counsel of rhetoric that leads him to "misread" Juliet as actually dead.

The Friar explicitly tells the Prince and the audience onstage and off that he has brought about the deaths of Juliet and Romeo by failing to give counsel. He did send letters to Romeo in Mantua, counselling him to return to find Juliet in the tomb, but the letters never reached Romeo because their bearer was detained in a quarantined house due to the plague.[54] The Friar attributes this to heaven, but the offstage audience might attribute it to the Friar's forgetting that he had promised

Romeo that he would send his "man" with any news (3.3.169–72), rather than send a brother Friar. In Juliet's instance, having become her counsellor once she has rejected the Nurse (whom Q2 renders silent in Juliet's presence after 3.5 until her "deathbed" in 4.5), the Friar fails her because he abandons her in the tomb for fear of being caught (5.3.262). In both cases, he fails in his role of counselor, and therefore physician, and the young people make decisions on their own, in isolation, that lead to fatal actions. In the light of both Galenic and Paracelsan medicine, this is a profoundly serious error: he neither counsels nor acts on observation. It demonstrates the Friar's weaknesses as the central reason for the deaths of the young people. Simultaneously, it shows the Friar's initial impulse to be sound–it is just that he, as many physicians, fails.

If the Prince moves toward the position held by the Friar at the start, as the negotiator between the two families, he also assumes the Paraclesan centrality of Christian humanism. His final judgments are prefaced by a curious self-positioning: "then will I be general of your woes/ And lead you even to death" (5.3.219–20) are lines that echo the Bible's twenty-third psalm that situates the Prince as the "good shepherd" or Christ. Perhaps the most positive moment to be drawn out of the gloomy ending to the play is the Prince's forgiveness of the Friar as a "holy man" (270) and the subsequent hearing of the evidence, which recognizes that no person works in isolation. However, neither the Friar nor the Prince acknowledges the wide plague that besets their community. Both attribute the series of deaths that destroy an entire generation of young people (Benvolio dies in Q1 but only disappears in Q2) to the actions of the feuding families, and they remain completely oblivious to the melancholia whose only remedy appears, like that of the plague itself, to be death.

The Friar, as confessor to the Montagues and Capulets, is also their counselor, and political and social leaders were always advised to have one in their households. The Machiavellian prince, however, becomes his own counselor, and once he has done so, counsel becomes suspect. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we see Verona's Prince moving from this position to one where he turns to the institutional rhetoric of the law for guidance, but not before both Friar and Prince have been shown to have acted without counsel. What the texts leaves as an open question is the condition of medicine, which, deprived of any rhetoric, cannot cure. As a result, it cannot heal the state, and melancholia is a disease whose effects cannot be cured by the law.

Melancholia, with its attendant cynicism, despair and isolation, is apparently a recognized and problematic disease of the late sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries. The confusions and anxieties of Timothy Bright's *A Treatise on Melancholie* (1586) and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), among others, were to be capped by Cartesian philosophizing that led people to separate the mind from the body more cleanly. Perhaps this moment of unhinging was provoked by anatomy, by Paracelsan experimentalism, by Neoplatonism, or by the privacy induced by early capitalism and its family structure. Of course, it is not reducible to any of these, for none of the elements necessarily leads to isolating or subjecting the individual. But when they combine, as they do in *Romeo and Juliet*, to reinforce each other in their self-regarding aspects, new and problematic ways of thinking about self, health, and community result.

Notes

1 The play was first published in a short version (Q1) in 1597. This essay draws mainly on Q2, published in 1599, and at times, on the differences between the two where they appear significant. The edition being prepared by me and Peter Lichtenfeld for the Arden Shakespeare third series will not be in print until 2004, so all line references are from *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

2 I am indebted to the plenary address made by Nancy Streuver, "The Discourse of Cure: Rhetoric and Medicine in the Late Renaissance," The International Society for the History of Rhetoric Conference, Gottingen: University of Gottingen, July 1988 for many conceptual insights into the relationship between medicine and rhetoric. Citations from this paper refer to the copy sent by private correspondence.

3 One of the most important rhetorical treatises from the classical period, Plato's *Phaedrus*, was widely read in the sixteenth century. Its analogy of the philosophical love made possible by good rhetoric is figured in the image of the doctor or gardener, influencing the Neoplatonists through Ficino.

4 See F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (London: Associated University Presses, 1992) 224.

5 See Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 8ff.

6 See Streuver 6.

7 Galenic medicine has received extensive treatment by a number of recent commentators, so I will keep reference to it here focused on aspects relevant to my argument.

8 Nearly any medical receipt book from the period will offer this evidence; see, for example, Thomas Moulton, *This is the myrour of glasse of helthe* (London, 1530); Thomas Phayre, *The regiment of life* (London, 1544); the manuscript No. 3547 at the Worthing Country Museum; or the many Wellcome Institute's manuscripts from the period 1550–1640.

9 Nicholas Culpeper's published work illustrates this interconnection with surprising subtlety as he finds English equivalents for continental remedies, following astrological guidance that is basically advising him about the best relevant times and places for gathering, preserving and storing appropriate herbs, plants and other ingredients. See, for example, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal: A book of natural remedies for ancient ills* (1653; Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995).

10 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 234.

11 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 120–21.

12 See Walter Pagel and Pyareli Rattansi, "Vesalius and Paracelsus," *Paracelsus to Van Helmont: Studies in Renaissance Medicine and Science* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).

13 Andrew Boorde, *The Breviary of Helthe* (London, 1547) esp. Aii^{r}–Aiv^{r}.

14 See Harris, *Foreign* 42 and Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 214.

15 See Harris, *Foreign* 24.

16 See Streuver 5–6.
17 Harris, *Foreign* 51.
18 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 121.
19 Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 120.
20 John Hester worked as a Paracelsan apothecary in London 1570–93; see Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 123.
21 Thomas Mouffet wrote a Latin rationale of Paracelsus in 1584 and worked with Mary and Philip Sidney in her laboratory during the 1580s.
22 John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes, Gathered by John Gerarde of London Master in Chirugerie* (London, 1596) A2^{r}.
23 Gerard B4^{r}.
24 See Lynette Hunter, "Women and Domestic Medicine: Lady Experimenters 1570–1620," *Women, Science and Medicine, 1500–1700*, ed. Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1997) 102.
25 These are documented in my forthcoming article, "Sisters of England's Royal Society: Difficulties with the Social Practice of Science," *Metaphysics into Science*, ed. Maggie Osler and Judith Zinsser.
26 See John Partridge, *The treasurie of commodious conceits* (London, 1584), which is dedicated to Rich. Wistow, Barber Surgeon.
27 See Jonathan Sanderson, "Nicolas Culpeper and 'The London Pharmacopoeia,'" diss., University of Leeds (1999), which explores the background to this publication and the moratorium on new vernacular books of medicine that held until Culpeper broke the College's hold with his 1649 translation of the *Pharmacopoeia*.
28 The distinction may have been made necessary by a current fashion to present friars in league with the devil, for example in Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (London, 1589).
29 See Alexis of Piedmont, *The secrets of Alexis of Piedmont* (London, 1557).
30 Compare Tarquin, in *The Rape of Lucrece*, *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 530–32.
31 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 163.
32 Streuver 12.
33 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 164.
34 Streuver 12.
35 See, for example, this volume's essay by Catherine Belling, "Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body" (Chapter 7) and Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 93.
36 Benvolio dies in Q1, but simply disappears in Q2.
37 See Francis Bacon, *The Essaies of Sir Francis Bacon* (London, 1612) 239; see also Richard Robinson, *A Morale Methode of Civille Policie, trans of Francis Patrizzi* (London, 1576).
38 See Jill Levenson, "'Alla Stoccado carries it away': Codes of Violence in *Romeo and Juliet*," *Shakespeare's* Romeo and Juliet*: Texts, Contexts, and Interpretation*, ed. Jay L. Halio (London: Associated University Presses, 1995) 83–98, for an illuminating background to swordsmanship in the period in which the play was written.
39 Thomas Newton, *The Touchstone of Complexions* (London, 1576) 18.
40 Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde* (London, 1601) lix.
41 See Wright, *Passions* (1601) 90ff.
42 Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 197–8.
43 Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 189ff.

44 Lynette Hunter, "The Eye, the Mouth, the Heart: Guarantors of Trust?", Seminar on "Facial Gesture," Shakespeare Association of America, Le Reine Elisabeth Hotel, Montréal, 7 April 2000.
45 See, for example, Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995).
46 See John Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson and Shakespeare* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989) 30.
47 Thomas Overbury's *A Wife now the Widdow of Sir Thomas Overburye* (London, 1614) was probably inspired by the brief character sketches added by Ben Jonson to *Every Man out of his Humour* (London, 1600); for an example of the use of humors as a figure for caricature, see "The Amorist" C8^{v}in Overbury.
48 Both Thomas Hoby, trans., *The Book of the Courtier*, by Baldesar Castiglione (1561; London: Dent, 1928) and George Pettie and Bartholomew Young, *The civile conversation*, trans. Stephen Guazzo, intro. Edward Sullivan (1581; London: Constable and Co., 1925), spend considerable time relating love to beauty, truth and rhetoric.
49 From Descartes's *Les Passions de l'Ame*, as qtd. in Streuver 16.
50 Although probably anachronistic, the experience is possibly on the "vertiginous edge" of the metaphysical horror that unlinks body and mind as discussed by Leszek Kolakowski, *Metaphysical Horror* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987) qtd. in Streuver 14.
51 See William Kerwin, "Taking the Countenance at Face Value: Surgical Visions and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," Seminar on "Facial Gesture," Shakespeare Association of America, Le Reine Elisabeth Hotel, Montréal, 7 April 2000, 2ff.
52 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 219.
53 See Hoeniger, *Medicine* (London) 172–3.
54 Quarantine had been common since the early sixteenth century. See Paul Slack, *The Impact of the Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985) and *Epidemics and Ideas*, ed. Paul Slack and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).