

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



Bloody Fray and Bleeding Daughters in *Romeo and Juliet*

Lauren Weindling

Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto

lauren.weindling@utoronto.ca

‘Oh Wife, look how our daughter bleeds!’ – Lord Capulet (5.3.202)¹

The conclusion of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is not typically remembered as a gory spectacle. The Chorus might prepare the audience for Juliet’s death, but it does not obviously presage a bloodbath. Nonetheless, as made evident by Lord Capulet’s exclamation above, Juliet’s blood should be prominent at the play’s close. As Lucy Munro notes in her extensive catalogue of stage blood, the stage direction, ‘Fryer stoops and lookes on the blood and weapons’, in the quarto edition of 1597 indicates that stage blood was likely used.² Moreover, blood is mentioned several times in the dialogue in a

I am very grateful to Heather James, Rebecca Lemon, Megan Herrold, Amanda Ruud, and Betsy Sullivan for their generous feedback on this piece over many years. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer at *EMLS* for their helpful comments and suggestions.

¹ All quotations of *Romeo and Juliet* come from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin Books, 2002). This is the second quarto (Q2), though with many emendations mostly from Q1 but also from Q3, Q4, and the four folios. For my purposes in general, Q2 is bloodier than Q1, emphasizing the generational aspect of the blood feud. But much of my argument applies to the Q1 play-text as well. Moreover, as Wendy Wall notes, Q2 might be the more ideological of the two versions: ‘I think it possible to argue generally that parental, church, and state authority are more lavishly displayed in Q2 than in Q1’; see ‘De-generation: Editions, Offspring, and *Romeo and Juliet*’, in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. by Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 161-3 (p. 161). For more commentary on the frustrated relationship between competing quartos, see also Jonathan Goldberg, ‘What? in a names that which we call a Rose: The Desired Texts of *Romeo and Juliet*’, in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*, ed. by Randall McLeod (New York: AMS Press, 1994), pp. 37-64.

² Lucy Munro, ‘Proceedings and Conclusions: Stage Blood, A Roundtable’, in *Shakespeare’s Globe Theater History Seminar*, ed. by Farah Karim-Cooper and Ryan Nelson, 13 July 2006 (p. 30).

compressed time span. 'The ground is bloody', the Chief Watchman observes, just before he finds 'Juliet bleeding, warm and newly dead' (5.3.172, 175). And most strikingly, Lord Capulet gasping at the sight of his daughter's body bleeding. Capulet's exclamation should call the audience's attention to a shocking display, and it further asks them to remark not that she is dead but *that she bleeds*.

Yet the play's performance and scholarship often sterilize this aspect of the play, and disregard the textual suggestions of a bloodbath reminiscent of those in, say, *Titus Andronicus* or *The Spanish Tragedy*.³ Even Jennifer Low's work, which importantly calls attention to the placement of Juliet's body onstage, or Ramie Targoff's piece that comments on the inconvenient presence of Paris at the Capulet tomb, do not attend to Juliet's bleeding.⁴ This critical omission is particularly curious because in many of Shakespeare's sources for this plot, Juliet does not stab herself. Instead, she dies of leftover poison or even sadness (Bandello and da Porto). What's more, if Juliet stabs herself in these sources, the authors choose not to remark on the bloody result (Boaistuau and Brooke).⁵ Hence because the bloody language of Shakespeare's play text is likely a considered addition, I would like to accentuate the content of Capulet's exclamation: that there is something particularly horrible, noteworthy, and tragic about the spectacle of Juliet's bleeding body.⁶ Juliet's blood onstage emphasizes the tragic consequences of not only the blood feud but also the logic of blood and kinship beneath it. Her blood onstage foregrounds the violent consequences of the cultural investment in these beliefs of blood; it suggests that the characters' literal investment in these beliefs results in a literal answer: a purging of the families' bloody enmity.

³ For example, in Baz Luhrmann's popular *Romeo + Juliet* the presiding image is Juliet dressed in a pristine white shroud, surrounded by lit candles though there are minimal artfully placed bloodstains after she has shot herself in the head.

⁴ Jennifer A. Low, 'Bodied Forth': Spectator, Stage, and Actor in the Early Modern Theater', *Comparative Drama*, 39.1 (2005), 1-29; Ramie Targoff, 'Mortal Love: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and the Practice of Joint Burial', *Representations* 120 (2012), 17-38.

⁵ This is the case with Matteo Bandello's novella, *Le Novelle* (1554) and Luigi da Porto's *Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti...* (1530). Juliet stabbing herself with a dagger is actually one of Pierre Boaistuau's important revisions of the tale in his collection the *Historiques Tragiques*. Brooke's version, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), likely used Boaistuau as his model and thus he likewise has Juliet stab herself. However, in both cases the death's description is surprisingly bloodless for all that.

⁶ I am, in fact, reviving a very old intervention from Leo Kirschbaum on Shakespeare's use of stage blood, though he examines *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*. Kirschbaum argues that when blood does appear onstage we should take it seriously, as important as poetry, character or plot, and not write it off as spectacular, popular excess; see Leo Kirschbaum, 'Shakespeare's Stage Blood and its Critical Significance', *PMLA* 64.3 (1949), 517-29.

Prior *Romeo and Juliet* scholarship has treated the play's talk of blood mostly within the framework of the blood feud, which, thanks to historical studies like Edward Muir's examination of the vendetta in Friuli, can be glossed in socioeconomic terms. As Muir demonstrates, preserving aristocratic honor embodied in bloodlines was often an excuse for other, more practical disputes over property, feudal dues, taxes, political appointments, etc.⁷ When *Romeo and Juliet* scholarship addresses the blood feud in the context of these larger societal structures or pressures, it often loses sight of the emphasis on blood's materiality in the play. Paul Kottman, for instance, has recently evoked Hegel's proposal that the political setting subjects the lovers to violent chaos, and the lovers, either deservedly or undeservedly, reaped the unfortunate consequences of rejecting social confines and familial duties.⁸ Feminist critics have developed this line of interpretation, suggesting that the play highlights problems of masculine identity: violence and aggression is a necessary evil that allows men to prove themselves as men, and the lovers are simply caught in the crossfire of this social mandate (Coppélia Kahn, Marianne Novy, Robert Appelbaum).⁹ Alternatively, the blood feud's violence has been interpreted in light of contemporary political riots and class conflicts (Chris Fitter), or changing definitions of 'civility' in the early modern period (Glen Clark).¹⁰ Lastly, Susan Snyder holds that *Romeo and Juliet* condemns the social system of the blood feud by noting its similarities to Althusser's ideology, maintaining that the feud-system, like other ideologies, 'is not in fact predicated on any substantive difference between Montagues and Capulets'.¹¹

⁷ Edward Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

⁸ Paul Kottman, 'Defying the Stars: Tragic Love as the Struggle for Freedom in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63.1 (2012), 1-38. See also G.W.F. Hegel, 'Dramatic Poetry', in *Philosophers on Shakespeare*, ed. by Paul A. Kottman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 73, 80-1, and Jonathan Goldberg, *Shakespeare's Hand* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

⁹ Coppélia Kahn, 'Coming of Age in Verona', *Modern Language Studies* 8.1 (1977), 5-22, as well as her book *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). Marianne Novy, 'Violence, Love, and Gender in *Romeo and Juliet*', in *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), pp. 99-109. Robert Appelbaum, "'Standing to the wall": The Pressures of Masculinity in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.3 (1997), 251-72.

¹⁰ Chris Fitter, "'The quarrel is between our masters and us their men": *Romeo and Juliet*, Dearth, and the London Riots', *English Literary Renaissance* 30.2 (2000), 154-83. Glen Clark, 'The Civil Mutinies of *Romeo and Juliet*', *English Literary Renaissance* 41.2 (2011), 280-300.

¹¹ Susan Snyder, 'Ideology and the Feud in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Survey* 49 (1996), 87-96 (p. 88). Snyder details that ideology creates meaning by fabricating differences in *name* to solidify certain social imperatives. See Peter Holbrook, *Shakespeare's Individualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 217, for the most recent version of Snyder's argument. Dympna C. Callaghan likewise attends to ideology in her reading, that of desire and romantic love, though hers emphasizes the play's role in ideological production rather than its critique; see 'The Ideology of Romantic Love: The Case of *Romeo*

But while this treatment of the blood feud can explain a great deal about the play, it does not fully accommodate Romeo and Juliet's negotiations with blood, which not only pertain to familial enmity but also seemingly to love and their marriage. The lovers imagine that their marriage will end the blood feud due to its material component, namely mixing bloods upon becoming one flesh. I agree with Snyder that the play as a whole, especially using Juliet's voice, criticizes the blood feud by exposing its fundamentally discursive character; but I maintain that of great importance to the play's drama is the fact that most characters nevertheless invest in a substantive difference between them. To understand the play's critique of this blood discourse, we must reinvest the characters' ideology with its literal sense: their conception that blood embodies 'Montague-ness' or 'Capulet-ness'.¹² An ideology of blood – which I define in a rather ordinary, quotidian sense as a collection of generally un-questioned beliefs about how blood functions – assumes two things: first, that there *is* a material difference between bloodlines, and second, that blood has the agency to determine either enmity or affinity.¹³ These underlying assumptions beneath the blood feud require further analytic attention.

Even though, as David Crouch notes, the blood feud was exceptional in England even by the twelfth century, the logic of how blood functions beneath the feud-system persisted in Shakespeare's England.¹⁴ In *Romeo and Juliet* the characters invest in the still widely held assumptions of blood coming from a multitude of intertwined discourses – from treatises on nobility and marriage, to religious doctrine, to natural philosophy (especially Galenic humoralism), to myth and even magic or superstition – which inspire (and justify)

and Juliet', in *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), pp. 59-101.

¹² Matthew Spellberg counters that 'in Shakespeare's Verona, the means of understanding the world has been largely divorced from its material referentiality. Language itself has been lifted away from bodies and sensations; instead it hinges upon itself for definition'; see 'Feeling Dreams in *Romeo and Juliet*', *English Literary Renaissance* 43.1 (2013), 62-85 (p. 63). Like Snyder, I agree with Spellberg that 'language twists and manipulates nature... in a play that is tragically about the determinism of naming' (76). However, as I hope to show, the characters fail to realize this problem as such; if the problem was one of language, then like Juliet, they could acknowledge that names could be changed. However, the characters see their bodies acting upon these enmities beyond their control.

¹³ To elaborate, I especially like Patricia Canning's definition of ideology as, 'a particular social, political, or cultural story or collection of stories [...] a series of ideas that we make plausible in order to make sense of our conditions of existence, however obscure those conditions may seem to us, or indeed, others. That said, ideology is not only a mental phenomenon; it has very real manifestations because it is primarily a social *practice*... Thus one of the fundamental ways by which ideologies are constructed, perpetuated and even opposed is through discourse'. See *Style in the Renaissance: Language and Ideology in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ David Crouch, *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 144.

this feud. For them, shared blood corresponds with shared personality traits, shared responsibility for any crimes committed, and lastly, shared affinities. Blood here carries and embodies a distinct mark of character or personality with surprising literalness, and only a change in blood could produce a change in character or feeling.¹⁵ While there is no single early modern discourse that asserts all of these assumptions simultaneously, the cultural imaginary of the early modern period likely conflated assumptions about blood from a Galenic geohumoral framework with those assumptions related to identity and character, kinship and allegiance, the *commixtio sanguis* model of marriage,¹⁶ and both affine and romantic love.¹⁷ And all of these assumptions taken together would render the enmity from the blood feud one inheritable trait amongst others.

¹⁵ As Charles Taylor has argued about the Galenic framework, ‘black bile doesn’t just cause melancholy; melancholy somehow resides in it. The substance embodies the significance’; qtd. in Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 5. This framework also held that the blood found within a person’s veins contains all four humours, as Levinus Lemnius explains in *The Touchstone of Complexions* (c.1505-68), and thus corresponds to that individual’s complexion or temperament.

¹⁶ In the period, the saying that two persons would become ‘one flesh’ (*unitas carnis*) (*Gen. 2:24*), appears to have been taken literally, which, if not effected in the moment of marriage’s sacrament, was at least presumed to take place during the sexual intercourse of its consummation. This discussion of shared flesh changed to one of blood possibly due to Old Testament references that connect blood with the soul. In the fifteenth-century, people began to speak of lineages mixing their bloods when completing a marriage alliance. The vocabulary of sexual intercourse, moreover, changed from *copula carnalis* to *commixtio sanguinis* (the mixing of blood), and thus more treatises take interest in when and how substances merge during copulation. See Gerard Delille and Simon Teuscher’s chapters in *Blood and Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present*, ed. by Christopher H. Johnson, Bernhard Jussen, David Warren Sabean, and Simon Teuscher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

¹⁷ For information on Galenic geohumoralism see the works of Gail Kern Paster as well as Katherine Rowe, *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and the edited collection *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England*, ed. by Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett Sullivan (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). For information on blood in this framework see: Piero Camporesi, *Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood*, trans. by Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 1995); Eve Keller, “‘That Sublimest Juyce in our Body’”: Bloodletting and Ideas of the Individual in Early Modern England’, *Philological Quarterly* 86 (2007), 97-122; R.J. Hankinson, ‘Philosophy of Nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. by R.J. Hankinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jean E. Feerick, *Strangers in Blood: Relocating Race in the Renaissance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Catrien Santing, “‘For the Life of a Creature is in the Blood’” (Leviticus 17:11). Some Considerations on Blood as the Source of Life in Sixteenth-Century Religion and Medicine and Their Interconnections’, in *Blood, Sweat and Tears – The Changing Concepts of Physiology from Antiquity into Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Manfred Horstmanshoff, Helen King, and Claus Zittel (Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 415-41; and Ariane M. Balizet, *Blood and Home in Early Modern Drama*, (New York: Routledge, 2014) and “‘Enamoured of thy parts’”: Dismemberment and Domesticity in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Early Modern Literary*

The Montagues and Capulets hold that blood materially differentiates persons, substantiating both their identities and the perpetual enmity between their families.¹⁸ This investment, moreover, sustains violence by ascribing agency (and thus blame) to the blood that determines this enmity.¹⁹ In Shakespeare's Verona, this discourse only creates more bloodthirsty Tybalts who genuinely believe that their bodies cannot help but hate and destroy another family.²⁰ Moreover, the belief that blood determines one's person

Studies 12.19 (2009). For the connection between material blood, the soul, and kinship, as well as the concept of mixing bloods in marriage's consummation, see Uli Linke, *Blood and Nation: The European Aesthetics of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Richard Sugg, *The Smoke of the Soul: Medicine, Physiology and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and the work of historians in the edited collection *Blood and Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present*. For the connection between blood, affinity, and love, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); David Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *Past & Present* 113 (1986), 38-69; Ann Jennalie Cook, *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and his Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Patricia M. Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Longman, 2004). Word of warning, these categorizations aren't perfect and many of these sources will have information on multiple topics.

¹⁸ Recently Bonnie Johnson has made a similar appeal to study blood literally; she holds that the lovers' problem is one of bad weaning, resulting in corrupted blood and thus green-sickness; see 'Blood, Milk, Poison: Romeo and Juliet's Tragedy of "Green" Desire and Corrupted Blood', in *Blood Matters: Studies in European Literature and Thought, 1400-1700*, ed. by Bonnie Lander Johnson and Eleanor Decamp (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), pp. 134-48. This application of Galenic theory to this play, however, doesn't really accommodate our sympathy for the protagonists or their attempted rebellion; their bodies on this view are to blame for their tragic end, and intuitively it seems that Veronese society is to blame.

¹⁹ Other scholars have explored this bloody enmity in the context of early modern discourses of plague or contagion. See Mary Floyd-Wilson, "'Angry Mab with Blisters Plague": The Pre-Modern Science of Contagion in *Romeo and Juliet*', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Early Modern Literature and Science*, ed. by Howard Marchitello and Evelyn Tribble (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 401-22; Kathryn Schwarz, 'Held in common: *Romeo and Juliet* and the promiscuous seductions of plague', in *Queer Shakespeare: Desire and Sexuality*, ed. by Goran Stanivukovic (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2017), pp. 245-61; and Lynette Hunter, 'Cankers in *Romeo and Juliet*: Sixteenth-Century Medicine at a Figural/Literal Cusp', in *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. by Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 171-85.

²⁰ For as David Crouch notes, it was through the medium of blood that one expected the qualities of ancestors to be reproduced in their offspring, one which included being the '*mortels ennemis*' of a rival house; see *The Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), pp. 127, 141. Additionally, as historian Lawrence Stone underlines, living members of a house or lineage were regarded as simply 'trustees' or vessels of this blood; see *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 29. This belief gives further justification for Tybalt's anger, which doesn't view Romeo as an individual agent but merely as a vessel for Montague blood.

and affinities has bloody consequences *regardless* of whether or not the person citing it has good, non-violent intentions. Romeo and Friar Laurence hope to end the violence of the blood feud, but they do so within the existing ideological framework.²¹ They embrace the belief that blood determines affinity and simply hope that a new blood admixture – effected by the process of becoming ‘one flesh’ in marriage, and the mixed blood generation to follow – will forge peace between the two families by establishing new kinship ties.²² And although their scheme ‘works’ since the final bloody spectacle prompts the two patriarchs to forge peace, its success is highly problematic.²³

Hence rather than attribute this tragedy to the inevitable workings of Fate,²⁴ Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* alludes to the dramatic tradition of tragic sacrifice as catharsis; here presented

²¹ I would be willing to add Lord Capulet to this list based on Robert Watson’s work ‘Lord Capulet’s Lost Compromise: A Tragic Emendation and the Binary Dynamics of *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Renaissance Drama* 43.1 (2015), 53-84. According to Watson, Capulet likely comes to Romeo’s defense even after his murder of Tybalt (3.1.184-88 in Q2), though this line is ignored in most editions. But, of course, Lord Capulet’s compromise, like the Friar’s, might be well-intentioned but it does not escape society’s existing, flawed discourse as his daughter Juliet’s speech attempts. In some ways, Watson’s project and my own are complementary, as Watson agrees that ‘Shakespeare was inviting mistrust of the formative consciousness underlying the feud and its analogues by provoking mistrust of, and impatience with, the rhetorical antitheses used to express it’ (80).

²² Ariane Balizet interestingly glosses this marriage similarly, although her concern is with an ideology of domesticity as it pertains to kinship and larger social structures. Balizet reads the marriage of Romeo and Juliet as an effort to join (pun joint-ure) and heal dismembered physical, domestic, political bodies (i.e. the blood feud), and in effect this marriage is concluded after the lovers’ death with the two patriarchs joining hands in a second marriage ritual. Yet as she notes, ‘Romeo and Juliet’s dead bodies, however, underscore the fundamental fallibility and very real dangers presented by fantasies of early modern domestic order’. Namely, if the man is the head of the house and the household is a unified functioning body then dismemberment figures an anxiety about the dissolution or disorderliness of the domestic space, the man’s loss of authority in his household.

²³ Wendy Wall has pointed to other aspects that might trouble a person’s satisfaction with the closing reconciliation. She remarks that in both Q1 and Q2 this ‘passage concerns competitive expenditure, each ratifies the protagonists’ marriage after the fact, and each asserts fatherly control in a moment of grieving chaos. In each, the fathers turn to the task of rehabilitating *degenerates*, those unruly teens refusing to bear the proper marker of the ancestral mold’ (p. 162). While I agree with some of these observations, I disagree with the nature of the lovers’ failure. Namely, I believe that the problem is their investment in a faulty ideology.

²⁴ For an example of the argument that attributes the tragic plot to the workings of Fate as a cosmic force, emphasizing dreams, portents, etc., see D. Douglas Waters, ‘Fate and Fortune in *Romeo and Juliet*’, *The Upstart Crow* 12 (1992), 74-90. For formalist scholarship which views the lovers pulled by their tragic genre, see William C. Carroll, ‘“We were born to die”: *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Comparative Drama* 15.1 (1981), 54-71; Martha Tuck Rozett, ‘The Comic Structures of Tragic Endings: The Suicide Scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3.2 (1985), 152-64; and Harry Levin, ‘Form and Formality in *Romeo and Juliet*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 11.1 (1960), 3-11.

as the bloodletting of a young girl, this catharsis recalls, as Catherine Belling has shown, the spectacular bloodletting of Lucrece in Shakespeare's narrative poem.²⁵ This conclusion illustrates that the persistence of this bloody logic requires violence and, in this case, blood sacrifice.²⁶ For as with the classical example of Euripides's *Iphigenia*,²⁷ though the tragic hero (here the tragic couple) makes the 'correct' choice given the ideological framework at hand, the nature of the sacrifice made calls the larger value system into question. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* thus plays out the Galenic terms of the blood feud in order to demonstrate the violent cost of this belief system wherein blood secures kinship and social structures. In short, the familial enmity that contaminates the bloodlines of these two houses must be violently purged, let out of the family body via the bloodletting of Juliet, sacrificed to this very belief system.²⁸

And yet, in the famous balcony scene of Shakespeare's play, Juliet establishes herself as a tragic heroine capable of interrogating and resisting the terms in which her family and society see the blood feud: she recasts it as a game of names. Blood, she speculates, is not

²⁵ Catherine Belling, 'Infectious Rape, Therapeutic Revenge: Bloodletting and the Health of Rome's Body', in *Disease, Diagnosis, and Cure on the Early Modern Stage*, ed. by Stephanie Moss and Kaara L. Peterson (Vermont: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 113-132.

²⁶ As Catherine Belling tells us, 'Metaphors of social or political bleeding were underpinned by the sense in which blood was a literally continuous link between individual human bodies and public states or hereditary bloodlines. The humoral system as it was understood in the Renaissance was a coherent part of the Neoplatonic paradigm in which the matter of each human person – each microcosm – was continuous with the matter of both social and wider, natural macrocosms. Individual and social bodies could be analogous because of a quite literal interpermeability of bodies across different scales in a humoral cosmology'; see *Acts of Flesh and Blood: Anatomy and Physiology in English Renaissance Drama*, Dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 2000 (UMI, 2001), p. 84.

²⁷ This play was available to early moderns via Erasmus's Latin translation where it was published alongside *Hecuba* with the title *Hecuba et Iphigenia in Aulis* (1509). Although not in dramatic form, the story was likewise available in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Book 12).

²⁸ Douglas Trevor's work aims to expose the problems with a strictly humoral analysis of the play, 'Love, Humoralism and "Soft" Psychoanalysis', *Shakespeare Studies* 33 (2005), 87-94. Wolter Seuntjens like myself favors interpreting references to humoralism *literally*, 'Vapours and fumes, damp and qualms: Windy passions in the early modern age (1600-1800)', *English Studies* 87.1 (2006), 35-52. Although a historical overview of this scientific framework and its connection to theories of passion constitutes the bulk of his article, he uses Romeo's description of love as smoke as his inroads to this discussion. For a completely different take on the body's symbolism as a 'grotesque body' see Roland Knowles, 'Carnival and Death in *Romeo and Juliet*: A Bakhtinian Reading', *Shakespeare Survey* 49 (1996), 69-84. Or, for an examination of the competing forces of medicine in the play, see William Kerwin's reading in *Beyond the Body: The Boundaries of Medicine and English Renaissance Drama* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), pp. 16-61. Finally, for an interesting reading of the affordance of objects and environments, as opposed to bodies, see Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Making Room, Affording Hospitality: Environments of Entertainment in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43.1 (2013), 145-72.

a defining substance but rather a rhetorical tool, one used to perpetuate hostilities that continue to endanger the lives of both Capulets and Montagues. Juliet thus emerges as a figure who, by virtue of her youth and desire to love, can see beyond the assumptions of her society.²⁹ And yet Juliet's iconoclastic voice is eventually overwhelmed by Verona's bloody discourse. At the end of Shakespeare's play, the spectacle of Juliet's stabbed, bleeding body in the Capulet tomb drives this point home viscerally: Juliet as well as the alternative viewpoint she represents are sacrificed to an ideology of blood that she so poignantly discredited. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* does not close with a celebration of social reintegration. Rather, evoking the tradition of tragic sacrifice with Juliet's body encourages its viewers to interrogate the means of the play's closure. This belief-system, when played out to the letter, appears to demand either the blood feud's violence into perpetuity or this manner of sacrifice. And this sacrifice is especially tragic because it might have been avoided by entertaining Juliet's suggestion to doff a name.

'Mad Blood Stirring'

The play's opening chorus at first appears to utilize the sonnet structure to formally mirror a tidy closure, one that would redeem the deaths of the 'star-crossed lovers' with the families' reconciliation.³⁰ Yet the chorus simultaneously hints at the bloody purge to come and the sacrificial nature of this tragic narrative:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whole misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,

²⁹ Jean Howard's *The Stage and Social Struggle* (Florence: Routledge, 1993) has greatly influenced my understanding of theater's role not only in ideological production, but also in a critical capacity, giving voice to marginalized groups.

³⁰ As Tiffany Stern notes, opening choruses were, more often than not, designed for the early runs of a performance. They told the audience the play's plot in case the actors faltered. Most of them, therefore, were cut upon publishing. Consequently, the fact that this chorus survives merits attention; see 'A Small-Beer Health to his Second Day': Playwrights, Prologues, and First Performances in Early Modern Theater', *Studies in Philology* 101.2 (2004), 172-99.

Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Since both families are 'alike in dignity', and thus have similarly worthy noble lineages, Romeo and Juliet could be deemed an appropriate match. In fact, the existence of a feud itself speaks to this appropriateness, since feuds ordinarily stem from similarities in socio-economic status leading to competition. These two households, however, insist upon their differences, especially as embodied in their blood, which substantiate and perpetuate their feud. The prologue swiftly establishes the literally bloody atmosphere by calling attention to the 'unclean' hands covered in 'civil blood'.³¹ The use of 'civil' here, defined by the *OED* as 'of or relating to citizens or people who live together in a community; relating or belonging to members of a body politic', underlines that which unifies all of the familial bloodshed, namely that it belongs to the larger community of Verona. Yet immediately after this reminder of community, the prologue connects the physical blood spilt to the principle of inheritance along bloodlines, the 'fatal loins' which here prove 'fatal' to the lovers.³² Moreover, rather than concluding with the notion that the families ended the blood feud solely on account of the lovers' death – 'do with their death bury their parents' strife' – the prologue restates this plot point. The break in the otherwise regular iambic pentameter with the spondee 'which, but' further calls attention to this rephrasing. The lovers' death is not a simple 'wake-up call' that this blood feud has lasted too long, but it is the *only* means by which the 'rage' could be 'removed', as if the death literally purges this familial hatred. 'Nought [nothing] could remove' this rage except this particular circumstance, much like a leech might draw out a choleric humor. This figure of speech thus subtly figures the lovers' death as a humoral blood-letting, dispelling the familial violence once and for all by shedding blood that is both Capulet and Montague at once. Shakespeare's Galenic end, determined from the play's outset, demonstrates that to take on these assumptions about blood – as that which determines characters, kinship, loyalties, and love – means to assume all of the violent, material consequences of its logic.

This logic of blood can only result in a world of Tybalts: persons who feel licensed to engage in violence since they are supposedly provoked by their bodies. The addition of

³¹ The Oxford English Dictionary's entry for 'civil' actually cites this line from *Romeo and Juliet* under this definition. Yet, interestingly, its citation substitutes 'civil warre' for 'civil blood'. It is unclear from which version this substitution originates, since even the recent Folger digital edition does not gloss 'blood' as a word that varies across the many versions of the play-text. But if, in fact, 'warre' was at some point changed to 'blood', then the word should carry greater weight, encouraging the audience to envision blood literally covering the families' hands, rather than treating the blood feud abstractly. For a longer consideration of early modern civility, see Glen Clark.

³² I might likewise proffer that 'loins', taking the adjective 'fatal', assume responsibility for this fatality rather than the 'stars' of the following line. This complicates the picture for those who would argue for Fate's agency in this tragedy.

Tybalt's dialogue with Lord Capulet to the masque scene – for Tybalt doesn't make an appearance in the sources of Bandello, Boaistuau, or Brooke – highlights the force and impact of this vocabulary in Verona. While one could argue that this addition simply heightens the dramatic tension between Tybalt and Romeo, its conspicuous absence in prior versions and its emphasis on the role of the body in the family feud encourages closer consideration. Tybalt believes that his choler is not simply a feeling of anger but is the product of a material within his flesh that carries the same name. As Galen notes in *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body*, the body's constitution and a person's humour mutually reinforce each other as 'people who become sharp-spirited because of the hot mixture then fire up their innate heat by their sharpness of spirit'.³³ Moreover, this isn't simply a matter of a fleeting disposition, but tells something of a person's soul as stated in Galen's treatise *Character Traits*: 'the knowledge of the soul, however, from which comes its fineness, knows the elements of which the body is composed and from which the affections of the soul are generated, composed and increased'.³⁴ Within this framework, Tybalt's anger towards the Montagues reinforces itself, further provoking his choleric innate heat then prompting more anger; but his choler is likewise an element of his body and part of his Capulet character. Lord Capulet demands that Tybalt not quarrel with Romeo, but Tybalt insists that his body demands differently: 'Patience perforce with willful choler meeting / Makes my flesh tremble in their diff'rent greeting' (1.4.206-7). Tybalt deems his choler 'willful' and hence will dictate his actions; his blood's enmity for that of Montague is insatiable and enduring, over which he supposedly has little control. For otherwise Tybalt has no independent reason to dislike Romeo in particular since Romeo was not involved in the opening brawl (1.1).

The opening of the third act then explicitly connects the physiological experience of choler with blood's matter that provokes anger and violence. Benvolio, looking to avoid a quarrel with the Capulets, asks Mercutio if they can leave since 'if we meet we shall not scape a brawl, / For now these hot days is the mad blood stirring' (3.1.3-4). Benvolio's speech invokes the Galenic precept that the physical environment will only further aggravate the 'mad blood', inevitably provoking fighting between the two already antagonistic bloodlines.³⁵ These moments contain seemingly innocuous references to Galenic geohumoralism, used so casually that they are practically evacuated of any

³³ Galen, *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body*, trans. by P.N. Singer in *Galen: Psychological Writings*, ed. P.N. Singer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 374-424 (p. 408).

³⁴ Galen, *Character Traits*, trans. by Daniel Davies in *Galen: Psychological Writings*, ed. by P.N. Singer. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 135-201 (p. 162).

³⁵ Mercutio's response likewise toys with this assumption by highlighting Benvolio's own 'hotness' that makes him so eager leave: 'Come, come, thou art as hot a Jack in thy mood as any in Italy, and as soon moved to be moody and as soon moody to be moved' (3.1.12-4). Of course, Benvolio's warning is not unfounded because the feuding families act on these beliefs.

genuine literal significance. These passing remarks, however, reinforce an ideology that absolves the individual actors of personal responsibility, invoked to excuse acting upon this blood feud. Throughout the play, therefore, this notion that blood has agency paves the way for the bloodletting via Juliet's body, wherein the blood that is supposedly responsible for familial enmity must be removed.

The staging of bloodshed thus emphasizes the intensely visceral way in which the blood feud operates. When blood assumes the blame for perpetuating the cycle of violence as opposed to individual actors, this logic both permits and enables Juliet's blood sacrifice. From the play's outset, Prince Escalus calls for the end of Verona's blood feud by threatening, 'On pain of torture, from those bloody hands / Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground' (1.1.89-90). Of course the weapons themselves are not 'mistemper'd', but rather, this adjective extends metonymically to the blood within the bloody hands, which, contaminated by familial enmity, theoretically has a choleric character that instigates violent action. The characters ceaselessly appeal to blood and its demands especially after the 'bloody fray' resulting in Tybalt's death. As the call of the Capulet family 'blood for blood' illustrates, blood is here the agent of these demands not the individual persons or actors (3.1.152-3, 155). Moreover, since no individual agent need take responsibility for this demand, bloodlines will continue to demand violence indiscriminately. The Prince laments this feature of the blood feud in his response to Lady Capulet, asking who should answer for Mercutio's blood: 'Romeo slew him [Tybalt], he slew Mercutio. / Who now the price of his dear blood doth owe?' (3.1.186-7).³⁶ His rhetorical question highlights the fact that the blood feud obscures personal responsibility; and once the individual agents responsible are re-inserted in the discussion, the question remains about who should pay. This question has no clear answer, however, for clearly no individual can be held entirely responsible when they conceive of themselves as vessels for a collective identity. To take on this responsibility, as Juliet does in the conclusion, has a plainly tragic result.

Romeo and Juliet accentuates the degree to which this belief system remains fundamental to Veronese society (and Shakespeare's), since it cannot be divorced from the basic assumption that kinship is based in consanguinity. Moreover, the foundational nature of this assumption means that it remains extremely difficult to extricate oneself from this ideological system, as Juliet will try, though fail, to do. Even the most vocal opponent of the blood feud's violence, Prince Escalus, struggles with relinquishing its underlying

³⁶ The Prince's use of the word 'price' could also refer to the law of the *wergild* or 'man-price' as a means to control and limit revenge killings. This law required that the offending party pay a price for the man killed in order to satisfy the victim's family without blood for blood. However, the Prince does not expressly establish this practice within the play's context; and certainly, the call of blood for blood by the Capulet family means that such a custom is not already in place.

logic – the very personal, physical connection between those who share blood – when his own blood is at stake.³⁷ He mourns for his kinsman Mercutio, ‘My blood for your rude brawls doth lie a-bleeding’ (3.1.193). In addition to highlighting the blood of Mercutio’s dead body onstage, *his* blood, marked by the possessive pronoun ‘my’, is not simply metaphorical but physical due to the prince’s consanguinity with the victim. The general obsession with possessives, which insists that a person’s blood is shared with his/her entire bloodline, clearly permits this perpetual enmity. The prince’s remark is structurally no different than the Capulet call for vengeance: ‘Prince as thou art true, / For blood of ours shed blood of Montague’ (3.1.152-3). In other words, an individual’s blood requires the protection of his kinsmen since it is his own blood spilt and this logic functions across generations; as a result, individual actors need not take any measure of responsibility for the continuation of the blood feud. While the Prince’s resolve to exile Romeo rather than kill him marks a superficial rejection of the blood feud, his language betrays the logic that undergirds this system. Moreover, Mercutio’s blood (his blood) has been avenged by Romeo; consequently, the leniency of exile could be read as an expression of appreciation, since Romeo absolved the Prince of having to avenge the death himself. In sum, Prince Escalus’s claim that *his* blood issues from Mercutio’s body compromises his removed position above the bloody fray, and renders it difficult for him to insist that the feuding families abandon their convictions. According to this system wherein consanguinity defines kin, a person’s blood determines this course, thereby foreclosing the potential for change. This ideology of blood does have a mechanism for establishing affinity and likeness in marriage: mixing bloods when becoming one flesh. Yet even here, the belief that love has a material foundation has the potential for unforeseen, gory consequences. Shakespeare’s play suggests that this violence is not a mere abuse of a logic or ideology, but is rather an unavoidable byproduct or consequence of it.

Marriage as ‘Holy Physic’

While typically the love and marriage of Romeo and Juliet has been read as wholly oppositional to the families’ blood feud, Shakespeare’s play demonstrates that their marriage when understood as the blood feud’s solution (termed a ‘holy physic’) rests on the same logic. Namely, this solution concocted by Friar Laurence and Romeo is equally dependent on the assumption that blood has agency, thus remaining squarely within the existing framework. The only difference between the two camps is that Romeo and the Friar hope that blood could determine affinity rather than enmity. And it is precisely because blood does not operate literally but only discursively – though with unfortunately literal consequences – that the sacrifice of Romeo and Juliet to this ideology is so tragic.

³⁷ As Dymphna C. Callaghan suggests, Escalus might not wish to eliminate blood altogether but rather ‘to control the flow of blood, a metonym for lineage, class, and succession – the very essence of the patriarchal imperative’ (p. 75).

Creating new consanguineous ties would theoretically dictate new affine relationships between the two families to overturn the familial enmity, and Romeo embraces the dominant discourse albeit towards a different end.

Romeo calls marriage a ‘holy physic’ to cure his wound of love (2.3.47-8). But Friar Laurence takes up this vocabulary and endows it with a different, more literal sense not as a cure for love but a cure for the families’ hatred: ‘In one respect I’ll thy assistant be’, he promises Romeo, ‘for this alliance may so happy prove / To turn your households’ rancor to pure love’ (2.3.86-8). According to early modern thinking, in the act of marriage – when ‘Holy Church incorporate two in one’ (2.5.37) – husband and wife become one and their bloods mix. Galenic natural philosophy, outlined in the treatise *On Seed*, held that both the man and woman contributed ‘blood’ to a child’s conception, sperm as a purified blood and menses respectively. Catholic scholars and authors of *arbores consanguinitatis* (‘trees of consanguinity’ or texts pertaining to incest prohibitions) extended this thinking; they posited that a woman might also need to ejaculate blood of sorts to foster this new admixture of bloods in marriage’s consummation.³⁸ Unsurprisingly then, Verona’s Friar assumes that the consummation of Romeo and Juliet’s marriage will create a new Montague-Capulet bloodline, thereby forging new consanguineous connections and pacifying the households’ rancor.³⁹ He holds to this belief even after Tybalt has been slain and Romeo banished, assuring Romeo in his bout of despair that he need only ‘blaze [his] marriage’ to ‘reconcile [his] friends’ (3.3.151).

Encouraged by the Friar, Romeo accepts the premise upon which the blood feud is based: that he and Juliet are defined by their bloodlines, an embodied Montague or Capulet character, and that this blood has agency.⁴⁰ However, he believes that this blood could incite love just as easily as it could provoke hatred and violence. Romeo has certainly always been susceptible to believing in a material basis for love. When expressing his love for Rosalind, Petrarchan tropes take on a humoral color: ‘Love is a smoke made with the fume of sighs, / Being purg’d a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes, / Being vex’d a sea nourished with loving tears’ (1.1.193-5). Embodied love has become a bodily humor with

³⁸ See Simon Teuscher’s discussion of the *Arbor consanguinitatis* of Ioannes Andreae glossed by Henricus Greve (c.1492) in ‘Flesh and Blood in the Treatises on the *Arbor Consanguinitatis* (Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)’, in *Blood and Kinship: Matter for Metaphor from Ancient Rome to the Present*, ed. By Christopher H. Johnson, Bernhard Jussen, David Warren Sabean, and Simon Teuscher (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 83-104.

³⁹ Todd Pettigrew’s recent work on medical practice in Shakespeare demonstrates that Friar Laurence would have been read as a particularly irresponsible and incapable medical practitioner; see *Shakespeare and the Practice of Physic: Medical Narratives on the Early Modern Stage* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), pp. 109-10. I agree with Pettigrew’s reading in that the Friar certainly fails to fully understand the consequences of the discourse that he cites.

⁴⁰ Arguably, the background belief that blood marks the change in Juliet’s identity – from girl to woman in Lord Capulet’s mention of her ‘green sickness’ (3.5.156) – contributes to the larger ideological framework.

several physical states; love likewise assumes agency in this formulation. Nothing much has changed after his marriage to Juliet, except that love becomes material as blood instead of smoke. Romeo's appeal to 'holy physic' thus represents the struggle to end the violence of the blood feud without forfeiting the existing vocabulary for understanding kinship and affinity. Yet what the Friar and Romeo do not anticipate is that by this logic, the enmity of the blood feud cannot simply disappear by establishing new consanguineous ties; instead, the blood that embodies and determines the enmity must be purged.

In this light, the conflict between Romeo and Tybalt is not simply another eruption of the blood feud, it is rather a conflict over how to understand or interpret the 'agency' of blood: does blood incite hatred or love? For Romeo, this newly forged mixture of Montague and Capulet blood should, in theory, incite Tybalt to abandon his quarrel due to their new consanguinity. Romeo pleads with him,

Tybalt, the reason that I have to love thee
Doth much excuse the appertaining rage
To such a greeting. Villain I am none,
Therefore farewell, I see thou know'st me not. (3.1.63-6)

Romeo here hints that his 'reason' to love Tybalt is his new blood bond with Juliet; and his new Capulet kinship, fights against the 'rage' which he would otherwise feel. He concludes that Tybalt must not 'know' him as anything other than a villain, certainly not as his new family member.⁴¹ But just as Romeo and Juliet's bodies did not act as they should have during the masque – i.e. by provoking immediate enmity as it supposedly did with Tybalt – neither does Tybalt's body recognize his newfound (spiritual if not yet material) consanguinity with Romeo.⁴²

⁴¹ Paul Siegel maintains that the sexual love between Romeo and Juliet is one instance of love's larger cosmic force which will ultimately expel the hatred and disorder in Verona's society in 'Christianity and the Religion of Love in *Romeo and Juliet*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 12.4 (1961), 371-92. For him, Romeo's attempt to make peace with Tybalt can be explained by this Christian, cosmic love emanating from his relationship with Juliet. However, Romeo's insistence that Tybalt recognize or 'know' him seems to support my gloss above.

⁴² Romeo seems to assume that recognition would be prompted by a *cri du sang*. This 'cry of blood', an established commonplace of the romance genre, presupposed that this natural affinity would be so strong between consanguineous kin that one could miraculously identify long-lost relatives. Pomponazzi in his *De Incantationibus* (1556) describes the physiological basis for this phenomenon whereby the blood from one person emits vapors which then enter the bloodstream of the other person through their pores; see Clifton Cherpak, *The Call of Blood in French Classical Tragedy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958), p. 11.

Romeo's persistent conviction in this ideology of blood further helps to explain his histrionics as he struggles with how to relate to Juliet after killing her cousin. Despite the clear failings of this blood system, Romeo's assumptions – both that blood determines sentiment and that his actions have infected the material blood he shares with Juliet – are key to reading this scene. His appeal to violence to fix his current situation with Juliet, moreover, evidences the degree to which his logic resembles Tybalt's. As he sees it, now that he is responsible for the murder of her kinsman, Juliet's love for himself, solidified by their 'one flesh', conflicts with her affinity for her kin, likewise determined by consanguinity. The two sentiments are seemingly unable to coexist in the same body and she might no longer love him, as he says 'Now I have stained the childhood of our joy / with blood remov'd but little from her own?' (3.3.94-5). Juliet should have lost blood in the form of her maidenhead upon the consummation of their marriage, but she has lost her kin instead. Juliet's blood has been removed by proxy of Tybalt's death. Romeo subsequently offers to purge his own blood in an attempt to remedy this conflict, and in retribution for his crime against her. On hearing that his name has hurt her, he exclaims,

as that name's cursed hand
Murder'd her kinsman. O tell me, Friar, tell me
In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth that name lodge? tell me, I may sack
The hateful mansion. (3.3.104-8)

The stage direction immediately follows: 'He offers to stab himself, and Nurse snatches the dagger away' (3.3).⁴³ Romeo intends to stab himself, 'the hateful mansion', because he believes that his name lodges *somewhere*. The answer to his rhetorical question about the part of his anatomy that houses his name is undoubtedly blood; thus he immediately undertakes to spill this blood as reparation since he has caused his blood to act against hers. It is precisely this manner of thinking that then governs the logic behind Juliet's bleeding body at the play's close: the enmity is in the blood which cannot be assuaged unless removed. In Romeo's struggle, the play illustrates the violent consequences of viewing one's blood as the material that contains hatred and sins committed. One cannot assign blood this kind of agency, even in the hopes to foster love, since this logic permits the blood feud in the first place. In other words, giving blood agency means that blood can call for blood. The play thus encourages the audience to interrogate these bloody assumptions as the foundation for kinship and existing social structures when it can only foster and apparently justify violence.

⁴³ This stage direction, one of the most detailed in the play, exists even in the first quarto edition.

A Problem of Names

Although Juliet inevitably comes to accept Romeo's blood-inflected terms, she is the first, and truly only, critic of blood discourses in the play. Certainly, to call Romeo something other than a Montague would solve the problem of her family's resistance to her desired match, but her speech likewise suggests an alternative, non-naturalized conception of identity and sentiments, one *not* determined by the blood running through one's veins or anything other than names. Juliet first wrestles with the existing vocabulary of the blood feud, one of innate sentiments, upon first discovering Romeo's identity: 'My only love sprung from my only hate! / Too early seen unknown, and known too late!' (1.4.255-6). One might easily gloss this moment as typical Petrarchan fare, but her grief likewise makes sense in the context of the traditional assumption that like should like its like, reflecting the conundrum of her love for Romeo. If blood indeed worked according to this assumed affinity mechanism, then she should not have fallen in love with Romeo at first sight. Her Capulet blood would have negatively reacted to his Montague blood even if it could not precisely report his identity. In short, it should not have been 'unknown'. Juliet should have intuitively hated Romeo, but she didn't. While Romeo seeks to accommodate this love that defies natural philosophy within the existing system, Juliet flirts with an unconventional outlook that abandons these terms altogether.

Shakespeare's play uses Juliet's voice to offer the iconoclastic alternative to, and potential escape from, the existing violent system of blood. This is not altogether surprising because Juliet is young, and not yet fully indoctrinated. Moreover, she is a woman, and consequently remains outside of the predominantly male realm of the blood feud. From this vantage point then, Juliet can suggest that the problem might merely be one of naming. She and Romeo may *not* actually differ in blood or body, dictating how they feel and act, but rather their difference might be an arbitrariness of signifiers. As she imagines herself speaking to Romeo, she casts family belonging not in terms of consanguinity which cannot be changed, but rather in terms of the choice to either assume or deny a name: 'Deny thy father and refuse thy name; / Or if thou wilt not be but sworn my love / And I'll no longer be a Capulet' (2.1.76-8). This suggestion contradicts the tenets of kinship based in consanguinity, according to which it is impossible for her to be anything other than a Capulet. But if one can deny the responsibilities of kinship by refusing a name, then this, as the play suggests, is the only mechanism to refuse the call of blood for blood: refuse membership and thus responsibility on the basis of consanguinity. Juliet makes this point even more explicitly:

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy,
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is not hand nor foot
Nor arm nor face, O be some other name
Belonging to man. (2.1.80-4)

According to Juliet, the young lovers have no reason to be separated by this familial rancor: it is not Romeo's blood, but only his name, 'Montague', that is her enemy. Juliet's speech aims to reject the premise that bodies, or their parts (with blood implied), dictate identity, sentiment, and thus violent action. While Peter Holbrook sees in Juliet's balcony speech the ability to divorce one's familial identity from oneself, Juliet's iconoclasm consists in not only the suggestion that one can discard one's social identity, but in the very notion that this identity is social, is a *name* in the first place rather than something predetermined by bodily substance.⁴⁴ Unlike Romeo who appeals to his 'vile anatomy', Juliet proposes that the name does not lodge anywhere. She thus begins to fashion a belief system wherein a person can act according to her individual will and desires, rather than be destined to act in accordance with the demands of bloodlines. Yet developing an alternative picture faces one issue: the difficulty to know how *else* to define Romeo. Juliet says simply, 'Thou art thyself', a circular definition. This 'thou' could take on some other name, but who or what is 'thou'? Who is Romeo if not a Montague? She may not know. Juliet's monologue at her balcony thus illustrates the struggle to establish a new belief system when inundated and restricted by the vocabulary of a dominant ideology. After all, there does not appear to be space in the play for alternative ways of thinking or speaking beyond the level of suggestion. Certainly, when Juliet attempts to use language creatively in order to reject her father's proposal to marry Paris, she meets with sound and even violent punishment from him.⁴⁵ And Juliet's inability to fully complete an alternative picture for what constitutes identity, lacking both the resources and vocabulary, results in the sacrifice of Juliet's possible world to Verona's existing bloody system, and her body with it.

Unsurprisingly, there is no receptive audience for her alternative suggestion of names; Romeo does not take up Juliet's suggestion to doff his name but rather will marry her *as* a Montague in an attempt to quell the blood feud. We thus come to Juliet's acceptance of the Friar and Romeo's solution when she presumes an affective connection marked by consanguinity with both her kinsman and her new husband. Juliet's exchange with her nurse after the altercation between Tybalt and Romeo exposes Juliet's investment in her newly shared blood. The Nurse cries about the blood from Tybalt's body, 'I saw the wound [...] A piteous corse, a bloody piteous corse, / Pale, pale as ashes, all bedaub'd in blood, / All in gore blood, I sounded at the sight' (3.2.52-6). Although this moment should call Juliet's attention to her cousin's blood spilt, Juliet misattributes the wound to Romeo. She proclaims that if Romeo has died, 'I am not I if there be such an "Ay"' (3.2.48). The proclamation 'I am not I' sounds like nonsense, but it acutely identifies her imagined

⁴⁴ Holbrook, *Shakespeare's Individualism*, pp. 216-17.

⁴⁵ As Capulet cries, 'How, how, how, how, chopt-logic? What is this? / 'Proud' and 'I thank you' and 'I thank you not' / And yet 'not proud'? Mistress minion you, / Thank me no thankings nor proud me no prouds' (3.5.149-52).

conundrum since she would have lost half of her newly married, fused self upon Romeo's death. The Nurse corrects her that the 'bloody, piteous corse' belongs to Tybalt, and hereafter, Juliet struggles between which is the greater sorrow: her cousin's death or her husband's banishment. Juliet wrestles as Romeo did within blood's conceptual framework. Her loyalties are quite literally split down the middle because she now shares blood with both the perpetrator and the victim. If 'Romeo's hand shed Tybalt's blood', then her blood has turned against itself – a conundrum not altogether different than her response, the litany of oxymora: 'Beautiful tyrant, fiend angelical' and so on (3.2.71, 75). However, viewing her own struggle as a bodily one has violent implications for it suggests a bodily solution, i.e., purgation. Tybalt's blood, his piteous *corpse*, determines the bloody and piteous *course* of the plot to follow: Juliet's blood sacrificed to this bloody discourse at the Capulet tomb.

Purging the Familial Enmity

Romeo and Juliet's acceptance of the existing terms of blood, therefore, explains why the lovers continue to reference blood throughout the play though they oppose the blood feud. And with the lovers' bloody language, the play presages the bloodletting to come. Juliet foresees calamity and death before Romeo leaves Verona: 'Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low, / As one dead in the bottom of a tomb. / Either my eyesight fails or thou look'st pale' (3.5.55-7). Romeo responds with a physiological explanation, that she too looks pale because 'dry sorrow drinks our blood' (3.5.59). Highlighting this pallor as a loss of blood, it turns out, prefigures her loss of blood via purgation, tragically sacrificed to purge the families' choler. The blood being consumed or 'drunk', moreover, alludes to Juliet's status as a kind of sacrificial animal, a scapegoat to be consumed in this ritual purging. Later, Juliet even offers to spill her blood as a solution to her impending marriage to Paris, proclaiming,

this bloody knife
Shall play the umpeer, arbitrating that
Which the commission of thy years and art
Could to no issue of true honor bring. (4.1.62-5)

One can easily cast Juliet's threat of suicide as merely indicative of her desperation, but Juliet here invokes a long tradition of suicide for honor beginning with Lucrece, purging one's family honor of sexual shame or, as will be the case with Juliet, their enmity in a tragic sacrifice. In addition, Juliet's re-staging of Romeo's prior threat to stab himself reflects her final adoption of the parameters of blood. She has finally succumbed to (or become overwhelmed by) this discourse to which she – and the possibility for an alternative, non-naturalized conception of identity and social structures – must be slaughtered. For, as the play dramatizes, if Veronese society maintains the assumptions

of blood's workings, especially that blood materially embodies familial hatred, then only by spilling the newly mixed blood of Capulet and Montague could the enmity of the two bloodlines be cleansed.

The death and blood of Paris onstage at the Capulet tomb, whose presence is otherwise inconvenient, renders visible the necessity of this bloody purge due to the omnipresent and inescapable nature of this system. Rather than mourn Paris as a mere innocent bystander, one should note that the altercation in front of the Capulet tomb occurs as a result of Paris's mistaken belief that Romeo has come to do 'some villainous shame' to the bodies, pursuing vengeance beyond death (5.3.52-5). Accordingly, Paris's blood marks just how embroiled Verona is in this logic such that Juliet's alternative is untenable. Although Paris is neither a Montague nor a Capulet, he sincerely believes in the strength of these bloody ties such that Romeo would continue to pursue vengeance on the bodies of the dead. His belief is so entrenched that he will not listen to Romeo's protests – 'By heaven, I love thee better than myself; / For I come hither arm'd against myself' (5.3.64-5) – and Paris rather responds, 'I do defy thy conjurations, / And apprehend thee for a felon here' (5.3.68-9). Paris thus violently pays for this limited lens. According to Friar Laurence, this is no small amount of bloodshed given its prominence in his language:

Alack alack, what blood is this which stains
The stony entrance of this sepulcher?
What means these masterless and gory swords
To lie discolor'd by this place of peace?
Romeo, O pale? What else? what! Paris too?
All steep'd in blood? (5.3.140-5)

Paris's blood here stains the stony entrance to the sepulcher, but this blood merely mirrors the figural blood which has already stained the Capulet tomb: the collection of this family's perpetuation of these bloody assumptions.

Thus to return to Capulet's otherwise odd lament, 'Oh Wife, look how our daughter bleeds!' denotes the gruesome consequence of this bloody framework. The scheme of Friar Laurence has worked since the purging of Juliet's blood upon her suicide seemingly ends the familial enmity. The disappearance of blood from the language of the last scene after Capulet's exclamation further supports this reading. After all, the omission of the word blood from the remainder of the play is otherwise remarkable because the Friar must summarize the entire plot for the grieving families, and the Prince proclaims once and for all that this event must end the blood feud, both of which could easily mention blood. But Juliet's bleeding apparently removes all of the play's bad blood. Ironically, she does 'die with a restorative' as she says (5.3.166).

All told, the final scene of purgation effectively realizes Juliet's nightmarish vision of the Capulet tomb, symbolizing Veronese society and the oppressive force of bloodlines. Before taking Friar Laurence's potion, she envisions this tomb as follows:

As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
Where for this many hundred years the bones
Of all my bury'd ancestors are pack'd,
Where bloody Tybalt yet but green in earth
Lies festering in his shroud... (4.3.39-43)

This 'ancient receptacle' is packed with the bones of her ancestors and the blood of Tybalt, who in life wholeheartedly demanded that Capulet blood be honored by vengeance. This image of Juliet suffocated by bloody Tybalt's 'festering' aptly figures and encapsulates a Juliet overtaken by the demands of her bloodline and her blood-obsessed society. For although Juliet's bloody sacrifice 'purges' the familial enmity, the visual impression of the bloody, tangled mess of the Capulet tomb thwarts any clean sense of closure for the audience.⁴⁶ Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* rather than encourage the audience to celebrate the peace-making patriarchs and social reintegration, prompts them to question the means of this closure that depends on faulty, bloody assumptions. This ideology, of course, proffers a solution but it also created the problem. Endowing bodies and blood with this kind of agency and power means failing to recognize the role that human actors play in constructing the discourse and, therefore, in their capacity to change it. And these beliefs apply to Shakespeare's England as much as they do to Romeo and Juliet's Verona. *Romeo and Juliet* thus stages Juliet's bloody nightmare, but, in so doing, it calls on the audience to consider instead Juliet's imagined alternative dream, wherein one might call a rose by another name.

⁴⁶ This closure could be manufactured, of course, by stagings that render Juliet's death more palatable, if not aesthetic.