

Tragedies of the Mind: Emotion, Cognition, and Motivation in
Four Early Modern Tragedies

by

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Abstract

This dissertation sets early modern tragedy in dialogue with current research in cognitive psychology in order to study the cognition and behavior of four tragic heroes of the greatest early modern tragedies: William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. These plays have been selected as objects of analysis because, as especially revealing examples of what I am calling *tragedies of the mind*, they dramatize fundamental characteristics and biases of human cognitive functioning in especially acute form. In each play, the playwright's interest in highlighting a protagonist's catastrophic errors in judgment leads to especially subtle and penetrating anatomizations of the interplay between emotion and cognition, motivation and decision-making, desire and action. More than most other plays of the period, these plays are preoccupied with exploring not just the mental and emotional states of the protagonists in the process of their downfall, but also with understanding the very nature of these operations. As I argue, the relation between emotion and cognition is perhaps the most important issue in the study of motivation and decision-making in early modern tragedy because a careful analysis of pertinent works by Shakespeare, Kyd, and Marlowe reveals that these tragedians produced dramatizations of human motivation and action that seem intuitively to anticipate a great deal about contemporary insights and approaches within cognitive psychology. Since an outstanding feature of these early modern tragedies is their preoccupation with human nature—that is, with the fundamental moral and intellectual capacities of the human being—a referential framework drawn from cognitive psychology offers a potentially illuminating way of further clarifying the dramatized thought and behaviors of these tragic heroes. Such an

approach to the study of literary personhood, I contend, holds the promise of revealing new insights into the drives and motivations of early modern protagonists.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Emotions and Cognition: Then and Now.....	4
1.2 The <i>Tragic Sense of Life</i> versus Tragedy of Fate.....	11
1.3 Methodology: A Cognitive Psychological Approach to Early Modern Tragedy.....	22
1.4 Tragic Inclination: The Role of Emotion in Cognition and Evaluative Judgement.....	34
1.5 Psychoanalytic Approaches versus Cognitive Psychological Approaches.....	48
1.6 Unfolding of the Plot.....	51
Chapter Two: <i>Othello</i> : When Jealousy Gains Control.....	54
2.1 Othello's Emotion-Provoked Imagination.....	64
2.2 Othello's Jealousy: Experienced, Expressed, but Unregulated.....	76
2.3 Othello's Psychological Layering of Jealousy.....	90
Chapter Three: Desire: Faustus's Eighth Deadly Sin and the Tragic Properties of an Imaginative Mind.....	107
3.1 Faustus's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Desires.....	116
3.2 Desires Evoke Cognitive Imagination and Delusion.....	128
3.3 <i>Doctor Faustus</i> : From Morality Play to Psychological Tragedy.....	147
Chapter Four: <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> and the Predilection for Revenge.....	154
4.1 Revenge as a Psychological Mechanism.....	159
4.2 Hieronimo's Formation of <i>Revenge Thoughts</i>	162
4.3 Hieronimo's Self-Deliberation before Perpetrating the Deeds.....	168
4.4 Hieronimo's Execution of <i>Revenge Acts</i>	185
4.5 Hieronimo's Suicidal Act.....	190
4.6 Hieronimo's Exaggerated Revenge Acts.....	193
Chapter Five: Titus's Aggression and the Sequence of Violent Actions and Events Leading to His Downfall.....	198
5.1 Forms of Aggression: Impulsive and Cognitive.....	204
5.2 Mutius's Killing Scene and Titus's Impulsive Aggression.....	208
5.3 Titus's Impulsive Aggression Supported by His Experiential Violence.....	217
5.4 Titus's Instrumental Aggression against Tamora's Two Sons.....	224
5.5 Mixed Motives and Multiple Deaths: Lavinia's and Titus's.....	229
5.6 Conclusion.....	237
Conclusion.....	241
Bibliography.....	246

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In Aristotle's classic formulation of tragedy as *catharsis*, downfall and death are closely linked to error. The tragic hero is "the sort of man who is not of outstanding virtue and judgment and who comes upon disaster not through wickedness or depravity but because of some mistake."¹ As tragedy's audience, therefore, we feel pity and fear for ourselves as much as for the hero, for we are as fallible and vulnerable as they.² In the wake of Aristotle's characterization of tragedy as a genre that posits emotional identification between spectator and hero, literary critics have continued to theorize the genre's interest in representing emotions and psychology, paying particular attention to the way tragedy dwells on the suffering and destruction of the protagonist during catastrophic events or situations. Because "writers of Tragedy treated Men in their Plays

¹ Aristotle, John Baxter, and Atherton, *Aristotle's Poetics: Translated and with a Commentary by George Whalley*, (Montreal: MQUP, 1997), 95.

² Amélie Oksenberg Rorty argues that the classical notion of catharsis can be understood from different perspectives because catharsis "combines several ideas: it is a medical term, referring to a therapeutic cleansing or purgation; it is a religious term, referring to a purification achieved by the formal and ritualized, bounded expression of powerful and often dangerous emotions; it is a cognitive term, referring to an intellectual resolution or clarification that involves directing emotions to their appropriate intentional objects." She believes that all these forms of catharsis are meant to help bring about the right operation of a "well-balanced soul." No matter how many scholars join the debate over whether tragic catharsis is "expressed as a resolution of the incidents of the plot or whether it is expressed in the psychology of the audience," Rorty claims that the debate can be set aside insofar as the psychological catharsis of the audience prevails "because of the catharsis of the dramatic action." In *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14.

as they are dealt with in the World, by making Virtue sometimes happy and sometimes miserable,”³ the genre has seemed remarkably suited to exploring the inclinations of the human mind in different emotional states, from misery to felicity.

A special attitude toward cognition, emotions, and inordinate passions is evident in the works of early modern tragedians. According to Thomas MacAlindon, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Kyd “offer an abundance of choric and, more important, of dramatically ironic commentary on the sheer folly of headlong passion, and are unflinching in their depiction of the self-loss and cruel injustices it occasions.”⁴ He also adds that the plays of the early modern tragedians “adumbrate deep sympathy for the view that passion (‘blood’) and change rather than reason and permanence are the marks of what is most valuable in character and experience.”⁵ These tragedians constantly endeavored to depict their tragic heroes as volatile creatures who

³ Blair Hoxby believes that the elevated art of tragedy “can teach us something that the clear light of reason cannot”; he argues that there is an extraordinary power behind our actions that threatens our freedom with complete destruction. We are certain of this conviction in our heart and mind, and we tend to fight against it in order to regain our will and freedom, but we “ought ‘thus to do down’” 16. Hoxby’s aim in this book is not to redefine tragedy in trans-historical terms, but rather to reconstructs “a horizon of expectations that flourished for two and a half centuries” and that merits to be examined on its own terms and against opposing concepts that have been established in other historical moments in *What Was Tragedy? Theory and the Early Modern Canon*, (Oxford: OUP, 2015), 14.

⁴ Thomas MacAlindon believes that the Renaissance dramatists remained convinced that the representation of the human greatness in characters resides in their psychic opposites: the force which destroys the noble self is passion, and the redemption involves the return of rationality or the recovery of rational understanding and control. MacAlindon further claims that passion itself was conceived as a ‘rebellious’ motivational force always pressing for change: “Any one of the passions which impel men and women to seek what is beyond them is likely in the tragedies to take on the complexion of worldly ambition and be so named... ‘the huge army of the world’s desires.’” In *Renaissance Tragedy*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986), 16.

⁵ MacAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy*, 16.

were promptly moved by their emotions, imagination, and blind will, as well as troubled by sadness, madness, and the extremes of wrath or grief in order to “show the transformational power of passion and to delineate precisely the physiological as well as the psychological changes it effects.”⁶ Blair Hoxby confirms this representation of passions and cognition in the early modern tragedy, while at the same time pointing out its continued salience for contemporary audiences. It is worth quoting his argument in full:

However far the social and political conditions of its genesis may seem to distance the early modern poetics of tragedy from us, early modern tragedy’s highly developed theory of passions, which recognizes the co-involvement of the theatrical passions with cognition, moral habits, and somatic responses, retains the potential to put modern audiences in tune with their own psychic and affective experiences and to train them to think with their emotions.⁷

The work of this dissertation proceeds from Hoxby’s provocative claim, but it inverts it. I agree with Hoxby that modern audiences have something to learn about cognition and emotion from early modern tragedy, but so too can new developments in psychology and brain science be mobilized by literary criticism to yield new insights into the psychological dramatizations of the plays themselves. Although contemporary brain science and Renaissance theories of emotion and cognition obviously differ, reflecting the understandings and conflicting ideas of different historical periods, my claim in what follows is that there are good reasons to set these historically removed approaches to cognition and emotion in conversation. Doing so, I will argue, suggests that a historicist analysis of the characters of the early modern tragedy in terms of the psychological theories of the time neither fully exhausts nor adequately explains their particular ways of

⁶ MacAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy*, 15.

⁷ Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy?*, 41.

dramatizing relations between emotion and cognition, for these tragic plays also contain cognitive and psychological insights that have only recently been conceptually defined.⁸

1.1 Emotion and Cognition: Then and Now

The understanding of emotions and cognition in the early modern period was highly speculative and presupposed different models from those of contemporary mental functioning. For example, in the study of passions, Thomas Wright's view was that "emotions could indeed come from nowhere," while Robert Burton's understanding of emotions was that they were caused by several factors, listing eight different causes, "from melancholy and impotence to a desire for sexual variety or simply opportune circumstances."⁹ In general, early modern theorists of the mind and passions agreed that

⁸ "Character" is one of the essential elements in every story in literature; Jonathan Crewe believes that character is an "extraordinarily robust category of literary cognition and analysis... [that] shows no sign of disappearing." Crewe considers the concept of character as a complex one, whether we look at it before or after theory; he confirms that character as a concept has uncertain pedigree, but Aristotle's source of the term helps to maintain its general circulation and admiration. This, however, does not mean that the ability to create a convincing character in plots is an easy process, Crewe argues, because "novelists and playwrights are frequently judged" on the basis of the adequacy of their characters. For him, Shakespeare's ability to create fascinating characters remains "one of the principal grounds of his preeminence in the public mind." He also believes that Shakespeare's success in this process stems from his effective imitation of life and real persons. Shakespeare's fascinating creation of characters is especially evident in tragedy "because the tragic subject of moral reflection is at once individually 'life like' and an idealized, exemplary prototype, unlike the subject of history." Crewe concludes by saying that, at present, recognizing "character" as a concept "of potential theoretical interest, incorporation, and transformation" is more prosperous than treating it as "beneath theoretical notice." "Reclaiming Character?" *Shakespeare Studies* 34 (2006): 35-39.

⁹ Marcus Nordlund's main argument in his article "Theorising Early Modern Jealousy: A Biocultural Perspective on Shakespeare's Othello" is that there has been a predominance of a single mode of explanation for sexual jealousy in English Renaissance literature: social constructivism. Most literary works on the subject begin with a confirmation that

the brain and the heart were the main two organs that moved individuals physically, mentally, and emotionally, and that these two organs were the origin of any action. Typically, these theorists saw the brain as ruling the behavior of the person: “the Brayne is a member continually moving and ruling al other members of the body, geving vnto them both feeling and moving; for if the Brayne be let [i.e., hindered] al other members be let.”¹⁰ Meanwhile, most considered the heart to be the primary organ responsible for passions and affections. Irving Edgar states, in his book *Shakespeare, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, that the physiological-psychological treatises popular in early modern period, especially the *Microcosmos* of Sir John Davies of Hereford, Nicholas Coeffeteau’s *A Table of Humane Passions* (1621), Thomas Wright’s *The Passions of the Minde in General* (1601), Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*, La Primaudaye’s *The French Academy* (1594), and Charron’s *Of Wisdom* (1601) all indicate that “the heart is the center of all human affections and emotions—joy, hope, anger, hate, fear, sorrow, despair, etc.”¹¹ David Hoeniger likewise confirms this early modern concept in his book *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, quoting Vicary in *the Anatomy of Man’s body* (1548, 1577):

... fyrst of the Hart, because he is the principal of al other members, as the

gender and sexuality are “constructions” and then they spend the rest of the discussion demonstrating the truth of the assertion. He argues that in order to arrive at a better understanding of early modern jealousy and its representation in literature, we must combine historical explanations with the biological ones because “we are biological as well as cultural creatures,” 147 in *Studia Neophilologica*, 74, no 2 (2002): 146-147.

¹⁰ David F. Hoeniger seeks to explain the medical theories and practices of the Renaissance era for nonmedical readers. He provides an intellectual context and a physiological or psychological vocabulary for the historical account of medical practice in Elizabethan England in *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, (Newark: University of Delaware PR. U.a., 1992), 135.

¹¹ Irving I. Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry: An Historical Study in Criticism and Interpretation*, (London: Vision, 1971), 58.

beginning of life: he is set in the midst of the brest seuerally by him selfe, as Lord and King ought to be serued of his subiectes that have their living of him, so are al other members of the body subiectes to the Hart, for they receyve their living of him, and they doo service many wayes unto him agayne.¹²

Edgar and Hoeniger maintain that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were well-versed in such theories and that they reflected them in their own writing. Hoeniger cites a passage in *Antony and Cleopatra* to illustrate Shakespeare's knowledge about the importance of the brain that "nourishes our nerves,"¹³ and another example from *The Tempest* when Prospero frees his enemies from their state of complete distraction: "A solemn air, and the best comforter / To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains."¹⁴ Edgar similarly provides many examples from Renaissance writing, especially drama, that reflects a physiological sense of the effects of the heart. Among the examples he gives are Othello's remark: "... my heart ... / The fountain from which my current runs / Or else dries up"¹⁵ and Macbeth's observation: "the *fountain* of your blood / Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped."¹⁶ Similarly, he quotes Marlowe who voices the physical effect of anger upon the heart:

May never spirit, vein or artier, feed
The cursed substance that cruel heart
But wanting moisture and remorseful blood,

¹² Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 135.

¹³ William Shakespeare and John Dover Wilson, *Antony and Cleopatra: The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare Volume 2*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.8.22; Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 136.

¹⁴ William Shakespeare, Burton Raffel, and Harold Bloom, *The Tempest*, (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 5.1.49; Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 136.

¹⁵ William Shakespeare and A. N. Jeffares, *Othello*, (York: York Press, 2005), 4.2.65, 67-68; Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 58.

¹⁶ William Shakespeare and A. N. Jeffares, *Macbeth*, (London: York Press, 2009), 2.3.76-77; Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 58.

Dry up with anger, and consume with heat!¹⁷

In general, the relation between emotions and action was perceived mostly in terms of the expansion of the heart: “When aroused by a concupiscible emotion, the heart expands rather than contracts, and instead of gathering humors around itself, it propels them outward to the rest of the body to ready it for action.”¹⁸ As for the connection between emotions and the mind, this was limited to the arousal of mental images at the experience of emotions: “Because emotions were embodied in humors (blood, choler, melancholy, phlegm), when a mental image aroused in the heart a particular emotion, that image literally became saturated with its associated humor before being sent back to the brain.”¹⁹

Developing such assumptions, the early modern political philosopher Thomas Hobbes claimed that the life of man was a continuous experience of fear and described it as a “terrible living-out of passions,” while this living-out of passions and fear balance each other to make rational decisions possible.²⁰ Hobbes argued that this equilibrium was the only means for humankind to escape their emotions.²¹ However, he restricted his definition of emotions to bodily manifestations that were connected to the will and

¹⁷ Christopher Marlowe and Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), Part Two, 4.1.180-3; Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 61-62.

¹⁸ Zackariah C. Long, “The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet: Infernal Memory in English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy,” *English Literary Renaissance* 44, no. 2 (2014): pp. 164.

¹⁹ Long, “The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet,” 62.

²⁰ Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, translation by Keith Tribe, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21-22; although Hobbes never wrote on emotions in a separate text, he constantly referred to the concept of emotions in his writing.

²¹ Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 21-22.

directed at external objects: “There were only two directions of such movements: towards an object, appetite; or away from an object, aversion. If we neither desire nor are averse to an object we despise it and keep our body (our heart) in between the two movements.”²²

It is clear that the main interest of these philosophers of the mind and emotions was to develop a conception of human nature that would explain human action. Such a concern with motivation was also central to early modern tragedy, which frequently focused on meticulously dramatizing the complex interaction of cognition, emotion, and behavior in its protagonists. Early modern theories of mind and emotion undeniably contribute to the understanding of psychology in the period’s tragic drama;²³ however, modern insights and vocabularies from cognitive psychology make it possible for us now to see more about the plays than the period’s own vocabularies are able to show because they explain the psychological processes behind each of these protagonists’ behaviors and actions in more precise and analytical terms. Such is particularly the case with regard to the dynamics of motivation, which contemporary cognitive approaches explore in terms of cognition, emotion, and the influence of emotions on both mental states and their related actions.

As we shall see in the following chapters, the examination of these characters

²² Plamper, *The History of Emotions*, 22.

²³ Blakey Vermeule argues that the tools that literary artists use to stimulate us (as audience) to care about the characters they create “run along the grain of our minds.” This means that the psychological tools that the playwrights use in their representation of human characteristics must be similar to our cognitive processes, because “if these tools did not—if they ran counter to our mental lives—they would not survive for long.” *Why Do We Care about Literary Characters?*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), x.

through the lens of cognitive psychology allows us to see them from a new perspective, one that gives us better access to their mental processes, behaviors, and emotional systems than the early modern audiences would have had. For instance, delving into contemporary insights on emotions, we begin to sympathize more with Othello than we might when we deal with his jealousy from a humoral perspective because, as I shall demonstrate in chapter two, contemporary insights on how jealousy is processed through the amygdala provide a new interpretation of mental and emotional obligations that some scholars ignore when they claim that his actions are freely chosen. In chapter three, we begin to see Faustus from a new perspective too because in his episode of “desire thinking” about necromancy, he becomes a victim of his own imagination, fixating on his imaginative craving for omnipotence. Contemporary cognitive psychological insights, in other words, furnish a deeper understanding of Faustus’s imagination than the early moderns maintained because imagination is actually motivated by a number of cognitive and complex constructs that work simultaneously, including emotions, desire, memory, and belief. Similarly, as I argue in chapter four, whereas Kyd’s dramatization of anger as an emotional force behind Hieronimo’s vengeful action in *The Spanish Tragedy* is seen as merely destructive by both early modern theorists and contemporary critics who recognize it as an adaptation of Senecan tragedy and its theory of anger-driven impulse, contemporary cognitive psychology shows us something new with respect to how Hieronimo’s anger drives him to perform certain actions. By seeking revenge, he seeks not destruction per se, but mental equilibrium that is beneficial for his psyche. In the last chapter, cognitive psychology helps set out a number of explanations that trace and illuminate Titus’s “psychological coherence”—an elusive “coherence” that some scholars

consider a challenge to identify because of his inconsistent actions.

One thing that all of these re-readings will emphasize is the way contemporary cognitive scientists and psychologists regard the brain as responsible for human cognition, emotion, and behavior, a finding that diverges significantly from the early modern doctrines that regarded “the heart as swelling with the emotion.”²⁴ Today’s cognitivist approaches to human motivation and action work with an understanding of the brain as divided into two parts: the emotional brain and the perceptual brain. Cognitive psychology links these two brains by a major pathway that underlies “hedonic” elements—that is, pleasant and unpleasant sensations.²⁵ This pathway allows emotions, which are meant for self-preservation and survival—such as the sense of fear that drives people to run from death, danger, or potential threats—to trigger immediate responses that influence the formation of thoughts and override any sound evaluation due to cognitive fatigue.²⁶ In other words, the emotional brain generates emotions that influence people’s evaluations and determine their thoughts and actions.

As I will argue, this potential intersection or anticipation makes these plays a fruitful testing ground for modern theories because a careful analysis of pertinent works by Shakespeare, Kyd, and Marlowe reveals that these tragedians produced dramatizations of human motivation and action that seem intuitively to anticipate a great deal about these contemporary insights and approaches. Despite having had no access to contemporary scientific approaches to the role of emotion in motivating action (which I discuss in more

²⁴ Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 62.

²⁵ Victor S. Johnson, *Why We Feel: The Science of Human Emotions*, (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1999), 115.

²⁶ Johnson, *Why We Feel*, 118.

detail below), the protagonists of Renaissance tragedy come remarkably close to today's cognitive psychology in explaining how emotions can trigger a large variety of beliefs and actions, relating to others or to oneself, and to the past, present, or future. Just as contemporary cognitive psychology confirms that emotions "can shape cognition" and that emotion "can itself be the object of cognition,"²⁷ so too did Renaissance playwrights suggest that "...passion, having my best judgement collid, / Assays to lead the way,"²⁸ and that emotions are "enough / to put [heroes] to ill thinking."²⁹

1.2 The *Tragic Sense of Life* versus Tragedy of Fate

Historically, tragedy has often been theorized in relation to fate because of the prominence of this theme in the Greek tragedies that influenced many early modern tragedians. Generally, these tragedies are about individuals of great potential who are singled out for destruction by imponderable forces that they cannot control. In such tragedies, protagonists are less consciously responsible for the choices they make that lead to their downfall. Plots of fate arise chiefly from situations outside the heroes' own desires or emotional responses; unfortunate events befall them and challenge all their resources to escape undesired destinies.³⁰ Thus, we are inclined to think about everything

²⁷ Johnson, *Why We Feel*, 31.

²⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 2.3.220-221.

²⁹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.4.29-30.

³⁰ George Steiner argues that the theme of tragedy has long been ascribed to the Greek period. Whether tragic sentiments belong to Homeric epics or whether "the epithet characteriz[ing] lyric poetry is not known... [tragedy] will pertain habitually to narratives of grief and of death in Ovid or Virgil." Steiner adds that the "myths which underlie tragic drama, notably the Homeric substratum" are dark happenings which "are informed

the protagonists do, in these particular fate tragedies, as *reactive* to the changes of their situations.

Even though tragedies of fate, such as Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*—whose tragedy “is governed by the fate and stars”³¹—do dramatize cognitions and choices that have deleterious effects, they are not the primary concern of this dissertation, which is principally interested in those plays that present heroes who are *proactive* in trying to secure a better situation for themselves, heroes who face dilemmas that arise from their own emotional systems, ambitions, and desires. These tragedies do not follow the logic of fate, but rather conform to the exigencies of the tragic mind—as it is dramatized in certain kinds of tragedies—in its focus on human choices rooted in fallible cognition and judgment; these tragedies of the mind are focally concerned with

by the intuition... that fate... selects for its victims *personae* of condign stature.” “‘Tragedy,’ Reconsidered.” *New Literary History* 35, no. 1 (224): 1, 9; A. C. Bradley likewise tackles the issue of fate that has a great power in destining characters to their downfall in their tragic world. Bradley begins his discussion by posing the question: What is “fate” that leads us to regard as the ultimate power in the tragic world? His answer is that fate “appears to be a mythological expression for the whole system or order, of which the individual characters form an inconsiderable and feeble part; which seems to determine, far more than they, their native dispositions and their circumstances, and, through these, their action; which is so vast and complex that they can scarcely at all understand it or control its workings; and which has a nature so definite and fixed that whatever changes take place in it produce other changes inevitably and without regard to men’s desires and regrets.” Bradley believes that “fate” occurs in conversations and books about Renaissance tragedy, but he doubts “whether it would be so if Greek Tragedy had never been written.” *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*, 3rd edition (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd., 1992), 24.

³¹ Goran V. Stanivukovic and John Cameron believe that *Romeo and Juliet* is a fate tragedy, which is “suggested by the Chorus’s reference to ‘A pair of star-crossed lovers’ (line 6) and which is alluded to in Capulet’s line ‘Earth-treading stars that make heaven light’ (1.2.25).” Stanivukovic and Cameron further argue that the audience of the Renaissance period would have expected such fate tragedy “because they lived in an age that believed in fate and astrology’s ability to direct the course of human life: ‘As Romeo says when he unsuccessfully fights against that fare, ‘I deny you stars!’ (5.1.24).” *Tragedies of the English Renaissance: An Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 66.

critically dramatizing an inherent human nature—a structuration of human cognition and emotion—which induces characters, under the circumstances of their lives to make decisions that ultimately lead to tragic consequences. Among the many kinds of tensions within the huge range of texts known as tragedies, we can discern some kind of interplay between characters acted upon, as agents who are subjected to divine power and fate, and characters who represent the *tragic sense of life* because they determine their actions and steer the plot according to their own mind and behavior.

The term *tragic sense of life* represents the condition of becoming trapped by human nature, a universal species-typical set or “array of behavioral and cognitive characteristics”³² that under the generic conditions of the tragedies chosen for this dissertation lead strong protagonists into situations where they are so seized by hesitation, doubt, or even the tricks and deceptions of other individuals, that they become tragically trapped by their own cognitive processes. In other words, for the purposes of this dissertation, *tragic sense of life* designates a configuration or formation of destinies in which exceptional but representative individuals cannot really win because their thinking is unable to survive or overcome the situation it gets itself into.

Characters who represent the *tragic sense of life* are routinely shown reacting to awful and tragic accidents, imminent dangers and traumatic ordeals, as well as to difficult circumstances that could be destructive. Reacting to such events, their minds produce

³² The human mind and the human motivational and behavioral systems display complex functional structure that is genetically constrained: “these constraints are mediated through anatomical features and physiological processes, including the neurological and hormonal systems that directly regulate perception, thought, and feeling.” Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Literature and the Human Animal*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), vi.

emotional responses that mislead their thinking and guide them into situations that are inevitably destructive. This *tragic sense of life* not only constitutes the failure of one particular person, but also includes the potential failure of any individual because those who fail in tragedy are not afflicted individuals who suffer from a brain disease or malfunction. They might be individuals who possess astounding capabilities and capacities, but the arrangement of the events of the play makes it impossible for them to survive or successfully overcome their predicaments. In such situations, the *tragic sense of life* emerges out of this configuration of human capacities and cognitive predispositions that an earlier generation of humanist criticism referred to as weaknesses. Daniel Thero refers to this kind of weakness as “weakness of will and moral incontinence,” basing his work on Aristotle who “recognizes that there exists a real phenomenon that people commonly call moral weakness or ‘being overcome by pleasure.’”³³

In his book *The Spirit of Tragedy*, Herbert Muller briefly mentions this concept of the *tragic sense of life*, but he frames it within the notion of social and political injustice, in particular within the story of human beings’ inhumanity to others. He considers the *tragic sense of life* the result of one person’s inhumanity to another person and not the fault or injustice of a particular society. For him, it is a sense of tragedy that human beings cannot change or eliminate, but one that they will always have to suffer without remedy because this is how human beings are mysteriously programmed to behave.³⁴

³³ Daniel P. Thero, *Understanding Moral Weakness*, (New York: Rodopi B.V., 2006), vii, 47.

³⁴ Herbert J. Muller, *The Spirit of Tragedy*, (New York: Knopf, 1956), 17. For more on the nature of tragedy and its art form, Muller gives an excellent introduction to tragedy by

Muller's concept is accurate when it comes to the individual's inevitable, yet mysterious, suffering because the protagonists chosen for closer study feel entrapped by their situations; they reach a point at which whatever decision they make is going to destroy them. However, I argue in this dissertation that their tragic experiences are shown to be the results of universal, even biological characteristics that cognitive psychology has only recently identified as innate features of the brain.

Two other scholars who provide suggestive definitions of the *tragic sense of life* are Richard L. Rubens and Richard Sewall. Rubens explains the term through the "tremendous value placed on the attempt to find answers and to understand one's experience rationally," while recognizing the existence of an irrationality that is innate.³⁵ In other words, he defines the characteristics of tragedy in the tension between that individual's struggle to achieve a balance between rationality and irrationality. For Sewall, meanwhile, the *tragic sense of life* is "primal or primitive," and related to the question of existence, the terror and anxiety over the nature and future of being, and the awareness that all humans must die.³⁶ Although these approaches move the discussion of tragedy from social causes to innate, even biological ones, neither highlights the capacity

first defining it historically and psychologically and then proceeding to do a historical survey of the art form as it expresses the spirit of tragedy.

³⁵ Richard L. Rubens, "Psychoanalysis and the Tragic sense of life," *Pergamon Press Ltd* 10, no. 3 (1992), pp. 348. Rubens claims that psychoanalysis explains how in tragedy one can fail to recognize the truth that he cannot change, but he is exhorted to confront and accept it.

³⁶ Richard Sewall, "The Vision of Tragedy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 10, no. 2 (1956), pp. 197. An overview of the tragic form, vision, and characteristics based on Unamuno's insights (probably the first scholar who used the term "the tragic sense of life," and who extended the concept of the tragic beyond anything the Greeks had thought of and connected it with his religious convictions about the meaning of life) can be found in this article.

of the human mind to generate the circumstances of anxiety through its own instincts: ambition, sexual jealousy, fantastic dreams, or the imperative of revenge that will rise up from the basic architectures of the human brain. Nor do they convey a nuanced sense of tragedy's relation to the inherited qualities, traits, and drives that predestine our species to suffering—what this thesis ventures to summarize by the term human nature and which is represented in each of the chosen protagonists—because the brain is the repository of all our latent inclinations to react to the ever-changing circumstances of life. Those tragic heroes who fall victim to their human nature have run up against the wall of the *tragic sense of life*.

One of the reasons this historical shift from classical tragedies of fate to early modern tragedies of mind occurred stems from Christianity's focus on Salvation as a concept that interrupts the implacability of Fate. Many critics, such as Elizabeth Tingle, Peter Marshall, and Peter Sherlock, believe that the Christian concept of fate related to the theology of the Church as the time underwent a change with the emergence of the Reformation's advocacy of personal salvation through good deeds. In his book *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, Marshall argues that throughout the early modern period, "the fate of the dead in the afterlife was the hub around which the theology of the Church revolved."³⁷ However, this conception of fate was revisited and received much attention from the literary writers of the period, as a response to the movement of the Reformation. Tingle argues that "when salvation through good works was privileged – in the early sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth

³⁷ Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 104.

century,”³⁸ fate ceased to be predestined, and individuals began to believe that their good works in life will determine their own fate. Similarly, Sherlock contends that “[people] began to proclaim a new confidence in their fate based upon their virtues and achievements in life.”³⁹ All these claims allow us to perceive the theological changes of the period as one of the reasons to this shift in literary representation from fate to mind. This shift is especially evident in the tragedies of the period in which the Renaissance playwrights were able to highlight the theological conflicts, as well as the consequences of the choices people could make.

In order to clarify the generic features of the tragedies I have in mind, I shall compare Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* and William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Both depict the death of a tragic hero and both display prominent instances of thinking, including planning and decision-making, but one has fate playing a substantial role in the death of the hero, whereas the other has the very constitution of the brain and its capacity to generate intentional thoughts and perform intentional actions as the principal causal components of his death. The distinction between Tragedy of Fate and Tragedy of the Mind is not that the protagonist who is destined to fall or die by fate does not use his cognition in order to perform a devastating action. The distinction between these two plays is that Tragedy of Fate does not depend on the “intentional action” of the protagonist, but on the action that fate/destiny and the outside world drive the protagonist to perform. Conversely, in the tragedies I chose for this dissertation and consider examples of Tragedy of the Mind, “intention” plays a crucial role in the protagonist’s

³⁸ Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany 1480-1720*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 266.

³⁹ Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 249.

action and downfall. According to contemporary cognitive psychology, intentional action depends on the “complex process of gathering knowledge that allows our mental intentions to influence our actions.”⁴⁰ Each of Macbeth, Othello, Hieronimo, and Titus gathers information in order to perform “intentional actions” that lead to their destruction. In other words, the main difference between the actions performed by a protagonist in a Tragedy of Fate and the ones performed by a hero in a Tragedy of the Mind is the psychological element: intention. This distinction will be made clearer if we compare Oedipus’ and Macbeth’s actions in their plays. Although *Oedipus* is a Greek tragedy, I am using it here only to show the difference between the two types of actions and the two types of tragedy structures.

Oedipus’s case is a typical tragedy of fate because his downfall is not the outcome of his intentional actions. Throughout the play, Oedipus is faced with cognitive choices, but the operation of fate means that he is doomed even when he mentally processes his actions. The actions he performs are not intended to kill his father or bring about a marriage with his mother. Rather, they originate from his circumstances, fate, and destiny. From the outset of the play, Oedipus is presented as a character scared of the

⁴⁰ Henry P. Stapp argues that mental intentions affect our physical future and the foundation of our lives. Although there is a strong correlation between every day mental intentions when it comes to performing “a simple bodily action, such raising an arm or a finger, and subsequent perception of the intended bodily action,” intention has a bigger role when we seek to achieve a goal or a desire: “Our minds thus have a natural reason to exist, which is to help us to achieve what we value.” Stapp makes a wonderful distinction between possible actions that the future has made for us, and are “mechanically predetermined to ‘happen’... precluding any possibility that our mental intentions and efforts can make any difference in what happens to our physical bodies [I call this fate]” and the intentional actions that we strive to perform by collecting information that will allow our mind to process intentional thoughts to express in intentional actions, in *Quantum Theory and Free Will: How Mental Intentions Translate into Bodily Actions*, (Berkeley: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 37.

destiny that has been foretold for him. Despite every effort he makes to outwit fate, to avoid allowing the prophecy to happen, he ends up accidentally doing exactly what the prophecy has anticipated. In this play, Oedipus represents the man who is caught in a merciless trap and there is nothing he can do about it, because on his way to Thebes, he unintentionally kills his father Laius, and upon his arrival he unintentionally marries his mother, queen Iocaste, as a reward for having liberated the city from the Sphinx. It all becomes clear to him when the Shepherd admits that he saved the child he was supposed to kill and that Oedipus's wife is the mother of that child.⁴¹ Since his deeds are unintentional, the whole play is built up to present the implacable power of fate by mocking the hero's *proactive* attempts to avoid it; in spite of Oedipus's acts and investigations, their climax is simply for him that moment of *anagnorisis*, when he realizes, in a tragic way, that the irreversible damage has already been done.

If we were to approach *Macbeth* only for examples of fate, we would find what we were looking for, but we would also fail to identify the total meaning structure of the play, especially when it comes to intentionality. To identify this structure, we have to ascertain what kind of psychological and emotional functions the play fulfills. Macbeth does not die because his actions were coincidentally fated to happen. Shakespeare depicts him with motives and intentional actions that are clearly recognizable within the framework of cognitive psychology. He yearns for power and seeks to become a king, and he is driven to perform intentional actions not only in relation to a normative model of human desire, but also of male dominance. According to cognitive psychologists who

⁴¹ Sophocles, Ruth Fainlight, and Robert J. Littman, *The Theban Plays: Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), Antistrophe A. 1171-1185.

emphasize evolutionary development of brain function, it is part of our mental makeup to gain control over and materialize our place in the world. Throughout the years, the human race developed to its present state because of this dominant mentality. In his book *What is Emotion*, Jerome Kagan asserts that in addition to cultural gender norms that initiate men into validating particular hierarchies of emotions, biological factors also play a role:

“boys and men are concerned more with differences in status and relative power with peers,” Kagan suggest, especially when it comes to their potency, “whether this quality is defined by the ability to dominate an interaction, strength, intellectual talent, athletic skill, sexual prowess, the control of fear, or the ability to defend self against coercion.”⁴²

Macbeth’s tragic failure is rooted in his being uxorious and in his obsession to achieve this dominance. His ambition in the world is further shaped by the humiliation that he endures at the hands of his wife when she attempts to inflame his desire, leading to Macbeth’s becoming fully indifferent to moral concerns or even patience. At first, he waits for the crown to fall in his way, but Lady Macbeth’s humiliating words—“live a coward in thine own esteem, / Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’ / Like the poor cat i’ the adage”⁴³—help maneuver Macbeth into an emotional state that causes mental pain until he intentionally acts to satisfy his ambitious wish. Macbeth succumbs to the psychological pressure of his wife and the humiliation of his masculinity for failing to

⁴² Jerome Kagan stresses the differences between genders when he argues that, on the one hand, “men with large increases in [their] hormone reported an intense desire to win in order to feel more potent with their friends.” On the other hand, “women with equally large increases in cortisol wanted to win in order to strengthen their emotional bonds with their teammates. For women, loss of a close, gratifying relationship is more likely than a loss in status to create sadness.” *What Is Emotion?: History, Measures, and Meanings*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 152-153.

⁴³ *Macbeth*, (Jeffares), 1.7.3-5.

pursue the kingship that would secure his dominance. More pertinently, however, he becomes the victim of an intrinsic mental disposition that determines his mental state and leads him to take an intentional action against the king; this action, in turn, triggers a new mind-state for a new action. He kills Duncan, then Banquo and the Duchess's family. In all these actions, he is represented with awareness and intentional choices he is making, in contrast to Oedipus's choices that he makes without knowing the identity of the person he kills or the one he marries. This series of actions produces the deterioration of Macbeth's condition and destroys him by the end of the play. This happens because his mind works *reactively* to every one of these acts throughout the plot. He takes terrifying risks in his decisions and moves toward an end point he believes he anticipates, but soon he comes to recognize as false and destructive, "not because of ignorance, but because of limitations that are insurmountable *human* limitations."⁴⁴ What we see in Macbeth is a protagonist who represents a tragedy of the mind because he follows what his mind is inclined to do; yet, at the same time he represents a tragic fate for which his mind is responsible. Such a play, then, accentuates the complexity of the relation between the *tragedy of mind* and the *tragedy of fate* because, in such representation, we have a new kind of tragedy of fate in which the mind, including its predispositions, has become destiny for the hero.

⁴⁴ Richard Kuhns, *Tragedy: Contradiction and Repression*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 72. Kuhns touches on the tragic art of creating plots with hidden destinies, which implies that "the making of tragic art is itself a denial of the tragic content of the art work," performed in tragedy. He also suggests that coping with the strong feelings that the tragedy generates require two different attitudes, which he explains further under the Freudian terms "split" and "splitting."

1.3 Methodology: A Cognitive Psychological Approach to Early Modern Tragedy

This dissertation devotes individual chapters to four early modern tragedies: William Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Titus Andronicus*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. These plays have been selected as objects of analysis because, as especially revealing examples of what I am calling *tragedies of the mind*, they dramatize fundamental characteristics and biases of human cognitive functioning in especially acute form. In each play, the playwright's interest in highlighting a protagonist's catastrophic decisions and actions leads to especially subtle and penetrating anatomizations of the interplay between emotion and cognition, motivation and decision-making, desire and action.

I am considering the plays of these playwrights because, more than most other plays of the period, they are preoccupied with exploring not just the mental and emotional states of the protagonists in the process of their downfall, but also with understanding the very nature of these operations. According to Thomas MacAlindon, these tragedians discovered important features of the art of creative writing employed during their time that they quickly borrowed from each other's work and adapted to their own: themes and concepts.⁴⁵ One particular thing they all aimed for was evoking powerful images of actions triggered by emotions.⁴⁶ They depicted human beings as

⁴⁵ MacAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy*, 3.

⁴⁶ Andrea Rizzi argues that emotions are natural reactions of how people judge impressions or images; he believes that emotions can be elicited by eloquent writing in order to affect and move audiences toward a reaction (affective reaction), which is not controlled rationally and can develop into passions. "Humanism," in *Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, edited by Susan Broomhall, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 249.

volatile creatures who are “rapidly undone by passion, imagination, and blind will,”⁴⁷ and they did so by highlighting the physiological and psychological changes that human beings experience in limited circumstances. Most noticeably, they are portrayed as afflicted by motivational and behavioral mechanisms like anger, sexual jealousy, desire, grief, humiliation, revenge, and ambition. For example, in *Othello*, Shakespeare places emphasis on sexual jealousy as an innate and biological element that influences Othello’s thinking and behavior: “But jealous souls will be answered so. / They are not ever jealous for the cause, / But jealous for they’re jealous. It is a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself.”⁴⁸ In these verses, Shakespeare implies that jealousy has a biological origin in the sense that it is natural and innate in each individual rather than is learned. Marlowe also makes a clear reference to Faustus’s brain guiding his desire and his quest for mental gratification: “here Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity.”⁴⁹ Many other references to the mind and its material complexity, as well as its mutability, are evident in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. For example, in *Titus Andronicus*, a reference to the mind can be noticed in Tamora’s words when she is disguised before Titus’s house: “I am Revenge, sent from th’infernal kingdom / To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind / By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes.”⁵⁰ Likewise, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, the mutability of the mind can be discerned in Viceroy’s speech: “mind more mutable then

⁴⁷ MacAlindon, *English Renaissance Tragedy*, 15.

⁴⁸ *Othello*, (Jeffares), 3.4.152-155.

⁴⁹ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, edited by A.N. Jeffares, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 1.1.62.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, William, *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Eugene M. Waith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.4.152-155.

fickle winds.”⁵¹ Thus do these four plays offer extraordinarily rich and textured examples of the extent to which early modern tragedy intuitively and realistically represents the human mind’s characteristics and properties. In so doing, they provide suggestive ground for exploring how it might be feasible to approach them in terms of more recent discoveries about minds and emotions rather than following the route of more traditional literary schools that view character as symbol or moral exemplum.

Since an outstanding feature of these early modern tragedies is their preoccupation with human nature—that is, with the fundamental moral and intellectual capacities of the human being—a referential framework drawn from *cognitive psychology* offers a potentially illuminating way of further clarifying the dramatized thought and behaviors of these tragic heroes. Such an approach to the study of literary personhood, I contend, holds the promise of revealing new insights into the drives and motivations of early modern protagonists. As I employ it throughout this dissertation, the term *cognitive psychology* refers to the collective enterprise of several related, often overlapping disciplines, all concerned with “the scientific study of the human mind and how it processes information”:⁵² consciousness studies, the phenomenology of language and the emotions, abnormal psychology, and evolutionary theory, as well as to the grounding

⁵¹ Kyd, Thomas, *The Spanish Tragedy*, edited by Michael Neill, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2014), 1.3.30.

⁵² Daniel J. Levitin confirms that the mind “is an enormously complex system holding a unique position in science”; although science has brought many answers to the ambitious questions humans had about the mind, many mysteries still remain, and therefore, Levitin believes that in order to understand the mind, we need to understand much about the “fundamental laws of chemistry, biology, and physics; the structure of space-time, the origins of the universe,” in *Foundations of Cognitive Psychology: Core Readings*, (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002), xiii.

studies in neuroscience upon which cognitive studies are based.⁵³ This interdisciplinary constellation of fields is at the core of empirical investigations into the “mental *systems* within individual brains.”⁵⁴ More precisely, it theorizes the roles of emotion and reason in motivating human behavior by conjoining biology and neuroscience to “explicate the mechanism by which neurons communicate with each other and eventually form our thoughts, memories, emotions, and desires.”⁵⁵ *Cognitive psychology* is also “concerned with the internal processes involved in making sense of the environment, and deciding what action might be appropriate.”⁵⁶ Since these three important elements—cognition, emotion, and action—are central to early modern tragedy and its representation of “human nature,” especially as embodied in its protagonists, I am relying on cognitive psychology in order to introduce new interpretations to these protagonists’ actions that register the ways in which cognitive and emotional systems operate within the human mind.

The approach I am taking is not entirely new. Increasingly since the 1990s, scholars in the humanities have taken account of the conceptual frameworks and terminology of cognitive psychology and have sought ways to apply the resulting insights to their own disciplines, including literary studies. From an initially narrow conception, captured in

⁵³ Levitin, *Foundations of Cognitive Psychology*, xiii.

⁵⁴ Levitin, *Foundations of Cognitive Psychology*, xiii.

⁵⁵ Levitin, *Foundations of Cognitive Psychology*, xiii.

⁵⁶ These processes include “attention, perception, learning, memory, language, problem solving, reasoning, and thinking.” Cognitive psychology involves the attempt to comprehend human cognition by observation; more precisely, it involves the observation of people’s behavior when performing various cognitive tasks, in Michael W. Eysenck and Mark T. Keane, *Cognitive Psychology: A Students Handbook*, (Hove: Psychology Press, 2015), 1.

the OED definition of “cognition” as “the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses,”⁵⁷ work in cognitive literary studies has begun to expand and to concern itself with the ways in which human brains—their structures, systems, and functions—participate in the processes of writing, reading, observation, imagination, and many other faculties of cognition. Engagement with this emergent field of literary study is growing, and many scholars have been involved in shaping this trajectory of cognitive approaches to literature over the two last decades.⁵⁸ Foremost among these scholars are Nicholas Helms, Donald Beecher, and Joseph Carroll. Helms’s approach in *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare’s Characters* (2019) brings cognitive psychology to Shakespeare, applying contemporary theories of *mindreading* to Shakespeare’s construction of character. For him, “the analysis of the minds of others is known as *mindreading* or *theory of mind*.”⁵⁹ His emphasis on mindreading and other cognitive insights and paradigms reveals how cognitive psychology “is the source of [Shakespeare’s] dramatic energy.”⁶⁰ Building on the work of the philosopher Alvin Goldman and cognitive literary critics such as Lisa Zunshine, Helms investigates the

⁵⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “cognition.”

⁵⁸ Lisa Zunshine, *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1. According to Zunshine, many cognitive literary scholars have actively been seeking professional venues to solidify their work. She shows that the growth in discussion among cognitive literary scholars is increasing, resulting in a body of published scholarship, conference activity, and other forms of professional recognition. She presents statistics on the expansion of membership in the Modern Language Association official discussion group on cognitive approaches to literature which has increased from 250 in 1999 to 2000 in 2013.

⁵⁹ Nicholas R. Helms, *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare’s Characters*, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1.

⁶⁰ Helms, *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare’s Characters*, 2.

ways in which Shakespeare's characters can both corroborate and challenge contemporary cognitive theories of the human mind. His close readings of Shakespeare's plays—*King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet*—provide a fresh and valuable approach to character criticism.

In his book, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds: Cognitive Science and the Literature of the Renaissance* (2016), Beecher treats fictional characters as real people, actualizing them in order to examine and explore their minds in action through cognitive theories. More precisely, he studies the traits of the brain that writers use as devices in the constructions of fictional minds. For example, he studies the role of cognition in describing emotions and the role of behavior descriptions in conveying motivation and intention. He believes that cognitive studies should not be limited to real people as they can be great tools for understanding literary characters and their behaviors: "If cognitive explanations of human nature are cogent in themselves, they should, in qualified ways, be valuable as explanatory tools for the assessment of character, literary, or real, in all ages."⁶¹ For instance, in his chapter on *Doctor Faustus*, he draws on cognitive psychology to explain how Faustus's self is guided toward desire emotionally and obsessively—emotionally because desire is influenced by hedonic terms (pleasantness and unpleasantness) and obsessively through Faustus's determination to achieve his ultimate goal. In another chapter on *The Yorkshire Tragedy* by Thomas Middleton, he investigates the protagonist's behavior and thinking based on scientific insights around emotionality and criminality to prove that he is a victim of his own folly, as well as a victim of the devastating change in his social and material environment.

⁶¹ Donald Beecher, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds: Cognitive Science and the Literature of the Renaissance*, (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2016), 116.

In *Literary Darwinism: Literature and the Human Animal* (2004), Carroll believes that the representations of cognition, emotion, and action in a literary work lead it to reproduce certain inevitable characteristics, such as the biological and psychological inclinations of an individual toward its own survival, the drive toward dominance, the urge to avenge someone's death, the desire for sexual intimacy, sexual jealousy, familial relationships, and social interactions because "all behavioral norms consist in some particular organization of elemental biological dispositions."⁶² He further argues that throughout the major part of our history, writers and playwrights were the only specialists in recording and transmitting human psychology; literature itself has been, until recently, the only prominent and valuable repository of information about human nature, because many literary authors have intuitively perceived the work of literature as a complex representation of human experience.⁶³ He demonstrates this claim by analyzing the work of many authors belonging to different periods, from the early modern play *Hamlet* to the nineteenth and early twentieth century novels—Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!*, Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. He also acknowledges that the most explicit reference to the human mind and experience is to be found in tragedy that deals with individuals' inner experiences, thoughts, feelings, emotions and introspections.⁶⁴ For him, tragedy has always been an attempt to imitate human nature, reflecting our deeper drives, and recording how humans think and behave.

⁶² Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 130. Carroll's book is on the adaptive function of literature. He focuses on the imagination, which, for him, is considered a functional part of the adapted mind, part of a systematic structure of species-typical adaptations.

⁶³ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 108.

⁶⁴ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 108.

Although the work of Helms, Beecher, and Carroll provide methodological justification for bringing the insights of contemporary cognitive psychology to bear on the analysis of fictional characters, many other literary scholars are inclined to see characters exclusively as verbal constructs that do not possess any psychological substance. This, in turn, raises the twin specters of anthropomorphism and anachronism. On the one hand, those who treat characters as verbal constructs consider them merely an effect of language and a functional element within fictional representations whose role is the generation of plots. On the other hand, critics who agree with Helms, Beecher, and Carroll believe that readers only engage with characters to the extent that they reflect empathy, emotions, and concerns, precisely as individuals whose experiences are indistinguishable from those of real people. In support of the former view, Stephen Orgel argues, in his book *The Authentic Shakespeare: and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage*, that characters are not representations of real people. Rather “they are elements of a linguistic structure, lines in a drama, and more basically, words on a page.”⁶⁵ Orgel acknowledges that it is difficult to remove the psychological contents from characters entirely, especially when words from texts are being embodied in actors in theaters and on stages. However, he maintains that it is difficult to credit psychologized interpretation of character merely because actors read and recite lines and scripts, given that characters are nothing except these lines and scripts.⁶⁶ In fact, the endeavor to understand characters through psychology, stimuli, and childhood trauma is defeated from the outset, Orgel

⁶⁵ Stephen Orgel, *Authentic Shakespeare and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage*, (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 8. Orgel’s argument on the concept of character in drama stems from the idea that the text is nothing but a script that does not require true, final, accurate, or authentic representations. This argument, in turn, has controversial implications for the concept of character, viewing it simply as part of the text.

⁶⁶ Orgel, *Authentic Shakespeare*, 9.

insists, because as *dramatis personae* constituted only by their names speculations about the childhood development of these characters is irrelevant.⁶⁷

Although superficially compelling, Orgel's commonsense view simplifies what is, in fact, a more complex and dynamic situation. In her article "Fictional Characters and Literary Practices," Amie L. Thomasson details two different approaches to examining fictional characters. The first is called the *realist theory* of fiction, which identifies fictional characters as merely possible human beings, without physical existence in real life, but holding person-like properties within the story.⁶⁸ The second, Thomasson calls *artefactual theory*, which more fully embraces the idea that fictive characters are created on the model of psychologically nuanced people in the actual world, and further notes that characters may appear and reappear in several sequential texts, since their identities develop from one story to another and from one play to another,⁶⁹ giving them dynamic properties similar to human beings. Artefactual theory, thus, leads us to the latter side of the debate where scholars regard characters as having psychological consistency that is adequate to real psychology and cognitive functioning. In fact, such artefactual approaches provide the foundational support and tools for the framework of character representations adopted by critics working through firm theoretical and practical perspectives on theory of mind and folk psychology.

Alan Palmer exemplifies an approach to literary character rooted in the logic of folk psychology by saying that despite the fact that fictive minds are created through the

⁶⁷ Orgel, *Authentic Shakespeare*, 9.

⁶⁸ Amie L. Thomasson, "Fictional Characters and Literary Practices," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43, no. 2 (April 2003): pp. 139.

⁶⁹ Thomasson, "Fictional Characters and Literary Practices," pp. 141.

artifice of authors, they do not differ from real human beings because out of necessity authors create characters according to their own understanding and assumptions about personhood, largely through the examination and observation of their own mental and emotional processes.⁷⁰ From this perspective, characters in tragedy invite psychological study because they are conceived through the psychological faculties that tragedians themselves share with their readers. What Palmer describes is what other critics call “folk psychology,” a term that refers to the human capacity to “attribute mental states to self and others and to interpret, predict, and explain behaviour in terms of mental states such as intentions, beliefs, and desires.”⁷¹ This concept of folk psychology allows people in general, and writers in particular, to explain and describe emotional and mental states of others without formal training in the fields of science, cognition, or psychology. As a matter of fact, Helms’s approach to Shakespeare’s characters substantially revolves around folk psychological beliefs and a simulation theory of mindreading (as stated

⁷⁰ Beecher, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds*, 27. See also Alan Palmer’s *Fictional Minds*, a very interesting book in which Palmer presents an overview about the constructions of the minds of fictional characters and how the analysis of these characters as units or functions within the structure of the plot creates fragmentation of understandings. He argues that what is required is “a holistic view of the whole of the social mind in action” because in real life “the individual constructs the minds of others from their behavior and speech, so the reader infers the working of fictional minds and sees these minds in action from observation of characters’ behavior and speech... the working of our minds are perfectly visible to others in our actions, and the working of fictional minds are perfectly visible to readers from characters’ actions,” 12.

⁷¹ One of the most significant powers of the human mind is considered to “conceive of and think about itself and other minds.” The mental states of others can only ever be inferred because they are completely hidden from the senses. We are able to understand the minds of others because we simply use our own minds as a model: “Our understanding of the minds of others would be grounded in our introspective access to our own mind.” More precisely, our understanding of others is rooted in our ability to project cognitively and imaginatively into their situations, in Dan Zahavi, “Expression and Empathy,” *Folk Psychology Re-Assessed*, edited by Daniel Hutto and Matthew Ratcliffe, (Dordrecht Springer, 2007), pp. 25.

previously, the analysis of the minds of others) based on imagination that Shakespeare invokes and complicates in his plays. Helms believes that dramatists are “attributors” who can attribute “decision-making, emotion, sensation, and any other type of mental state [they] can experience” to others by placing themselves in the imagined position of characters and then running their own cognitive processes “offline,” in order to duplicate their mental states or similar ones in their characters.⁷²

Folk psychology is not a topic that cognitive philosophers referred to in their work; it is a pure cognitive psychology topic through which we understand other human beings’ thinking and behavior. Folk psychology is the concept of trying to read other people’s mind and understand their behavior. More precisely, it is the process of imagining what other people are experiencing and thinking, and how they are behaving based on our own observation of our thinking and behavior. What folk psychology argues is that we believe that all people are fundamentally the same, and therefore, we seek to understand other people’s actions through their beliefs, desires, fears, preferences, and hopes. This is part of the operation of human minds which cognitive psychologists are compelled to acknowledge in their discipline. Given the way our mind is programmed to function, we may never be able to think about human behavior in terms other than folk psychology. Therefore, we will always talk about characters in terms of their beliefs, desires, emotions, obsessions, and intentions. This is precisely what makes characters real to us. We relate to literary characters when we read novels or plays the same way we relate to another person in real life: by attributing to them all the conditions of personhood. Our minds automatically do that; otherwise, we would have no interest in these literary

⁷² Helms, *Cognition, Mindreading, and Shakespeare’s Characters*, 26.

characters as representations of persons. We are interested in these fictive characters because they are representations of an equivalent reality that is meaningful for us; we try to understand them as social representations with same values given to real people in life.

Given the dramatized complexity of these playwrights' tragic protagonists, it is reasonable to think that Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd were devising their characters in relation to their own acute understanding of human nature and through their own psychological insights into human behaviors, mental states, motivations, passions, and compulsive reactions to changing social conditions. We might, therefore, look with some justice upon their creations as representations of the common mental designs of real people, a view already implicit in the work of literary scholars, such as Dorrit Cohn, who argues that we read tragedy because it presents to us the privacy and mental operations of a character's mind,⁷³ and Parvini Neema, who argues further that early modern tragedians create characters with internal realities, giving us recognizable human characters similar, if not identical, to living subjects with all the faculties of their minds.⁷⁴

1.4 Tragic Inclination: The Role of Emotion in Cognition and Evaluative Judgment

⁷³ Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction*, (Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 23.

⁷⁴ Shakespeare portrays an internal reality, "which, though often fantastical, gives us recognizably human characters who appear to think, feel and act in way that is at least analogous to what we see in everyday life," says Neema Parvini. She believes that because Shakespeare creates characters with human verisimilitude, we see "Hamlet's procrastination, Othello's gullibility, Macbeth's ambition, Lear's foolishness, Shylock's rigidity." Parvini argues that we, as audience, apply the conceptual apparatus of human motivation and characteristics to these figures, hoping to make sense of what we witness. "Why Characters Matter in Shakespeare's Plays," in *Shakespeare and Cognition: Thinking Fast and Slow through Character*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5.

According to Carroll, emotions are the product of our evolution; they are essential components of evolutionary psychology because they are behind the most important or frequent behavioral patterns that are meant for survival, and therefore, he believes that “emotions have to be understood within the framework of evolutionary psychology.”⁷⁵ He argues that the behavioral patterns induced by emotions aim to promote *inclusive fitness*, that is the ability of an individual organism to pass on its genes to the next generation, taking into account the shared genes passed on by the organism’s close relatives.⁷⁶ This conveyance of genes depends on the survival of the organism to reproduce, and when it comes to human beings, it also involves parenting, mating, and the successful negotiation of a social environment.⁷⁷ These basic requirements result in a behavioral mechanism designed and directed toward solving problems within a narrow scope of evolutionary concerns.⁷⁸ Michael McGuire and Alfonso Troisi categorize this narrowly-oriented mechanism under four basic behavioral systems: survival (defending the self), reproduction (selecting a mate and reproducing), kin assistance (investing in their offspring and collateral kin), and reciprocation (developing reciprocal relationships).⁷⁹ The majority of human behavior patterns, McGuire and Troisi maintain,

⁷⁵ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 113.

⁷⁶ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 107.

⁷⁷ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 107.

⁷⁸ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 107.

⁷⁹ Michael McGuire and Alfonso Troisi, *Darwinian Psychiatry*, (Nueva York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61. The authors provide an essential framework for understanding both everyday human behavior and a range of mental disorders, not only for health professionals, but also for general readers interested in human psychology and behavior.

can be understood within these systems.⁸⁰

The behavior patterns of interest to cognitive and evolutionary psychology are also those that animate the characters and plots of early modern tragedy, for in the latter, the most prominent and frequently dramatized behavioral patterns are those related to an individual's survival, power and authority, sexual jealousy, and familial relationships. In the representations of such behavioral patterns, Carroll confirms that "elementary human motives and basic emotions" become the foundation for the structures of the plots because literary characters are depicted driven by their emotional inclinations.⁸¹ The survival pattern is probably the most foundational of the four because it feeds most of the other patterns: power and authority are based on the survival of the most powerful or authoritative; sexual jealousy is about the survival of the dominant male and his attempts to select and retain the female. As regards the relation between survival and familial relationships, Robin Fox argues that the baseline of this constant struggle to gain dominance has gradually changed with time and evolved into "a system of kinship and alliances," wherein males become less disposed to brute force and increasingly encouraged to adopt their norms and customs of the groups in which they operate.⁸² My own study takes its cue from these four basic behavioral systems; each tragic hero it considers is driven by one of them: the representation of jealousy and mating is foregrounded in *Othello*; *Faustus* presents the pattern of high ambition for ultimate

⁸⁰ David Buss, *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind*, 3rd edition, (Austin: University of Texas Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 71, 105, 197, 263. Buss tellingly surveys these four crucial aspects in the field of evolutionary psychology in his book, and he dedicates a complete section for each, discussing them in this order: human survival, sex and mating, parenting and kinship, and finally group living.

⁸¹ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 113.

⁸² Robin Fox, "Sexual Conflict in the Epics," *Human Nature* 6, no. 2 (1995): pp. 136.

power, selling his own soul to the Devil in exchange for it; Hieronimo and Titus embody the pattern of parenting when they helplessly try to avenge their own children.

In the course of figuring these fundamental behavioral systems, these four tragic heroes give us a sense of interiority, by appearing to do what comes naturally: following fundamental evolutionary inclinations toward survival, success, and happiness. As tragedies, however, they present the dark side of these pursuits—the moments when the evaluative process becomes corrupted and the pursuit of survival, success, and happiness breaks down. These corrupted evaluations, Carroll asserts, are “modulated through emotions,”⁸³ and typically, this capacity of emotions to corrupt moral judgment and to undermine self-preservation and self-perpetuation is what such plays relentlessly illustrate: Othello, Faustus, Hieronimo, and Titus are driven by their emotions, making decisions or performing actions in order to get pleasant feelings or, in some cases, get rid of unpleasant feelings. Carroll maintains that these heroes follow “a primary emotional trajectory” that serves as a motivational force behind their actions: “the saga of revenge, the drama of jealousy—all have their place in the structure of elemental human motives, and they each have their characteristic set of emotions.”⁸⁴ For instance, to ward off the pain that stems from jealousy, Othello pursues a program of vengeful acts, even as his jealousy can itself be seen as an emotional reaction that has led to his misreading of evidence. This slippery scenario exemplifies the way that individuals make catastrophic choices when their cognitions are influenced by the very negative emotions they are trying to avoid.

⁸³ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 114.

⁸⁴ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 113-114.

Although evolutionary psychology deeply informs my work, it does not function as the complete framework for my analysis of these protagonists because the tragedies considered in this project reflect more than just biological dispositions that determine individuals' behavior. They also reflect internal psychological processes that are important for the tragic inclinations of the heroes, and that require particular investigations into the faculties of the mind—faculties which may include imagination, perception, thinking, judgement, and memory. Grappling with such internal psychological processes requires a thorough understanding of some key concepts in cognitive psychology as a whole; these key concepts inform how the inclinations of these heroes also depend on a level of cognition that is explicable by exploring other areas within the conceptual framework of cognitive psychology.

According to cognitive psychology, the emotional system is considered the prime driving force behind human behavior. This emotional system generates emotional states which can be very compelling and insistent, either to seek positive sensations (pleasant) or to avoid negative sensations (unpleasant), including emotional states attached to frustration, jealousy, anger, ambition, envy, revenge, and love. Such emotional states greatly influence our cognition, decision-making, and mental operations because the link between cognition and emotions is inevitable, and mental states are a proper example of the effect of emotions on cognition because a mental state is a kind of hypothetical state that corresponds to thinking and feeling.⁸⁵ Cognitive psychology defines a mental state as

⁸⁵ According to psychologists, they point out that psychological theories could be formulated in two ways: “one described behavioral dispositions and physiological mechanisms, the other described ‘mental states’ and ‘impressions.’” Then, they suggest that these psychological theories can be formulated and described through physiological mechanisms and dispositions, such as emotions, in Gualtiero Piccinini, “Functionalism,

a configuration of thoughts that connects the individual with a proposition; it shapes the whole circuitry of thinking, including decision-makings, beliefs, desires, obsessions, intentions, frustrations, and disappointments,⁸⁶ and in all these states, emotions play a crucial part. It is implausible to identify even one brain pattern that accurately separates or distinguishes emotions from any mental states.⁸⁷ Similarly, Carroll emphasizes this crucial role of emotion in the behavior and judgement of the heroes of tragedy: “by engaging in goal-oriented behavior, and by making moral judgements, tragic protagonists disrupt the blissful quietude of the natural order and make themselves vulnerable to ‘strong emotions.’”⁸⁸ To do justice to thoroughly studying what these tragedies represent of emotions, mental states, evaluative judgments, and the interaction between them, I need to rely on insights stemming from the cognitive faculties of the mind.

Having indicated that cognitive psychology, as a whole, provides the complete framework to my study, I want to further clarify the relation between evolutionary psychology—which is more biological and survival-based—and the rest of the disciplines within cognitive psychology—which are more attuned to human reason and agency. There is no doubt that the main concern of all the disciplines within cognitive psychology, including evolutionary psychology, is to understand the human mind and

Computationalism, and Mental States,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 35 (2004): pp. 827.

⁸⁶ Lisa Lee, Kate L. Harkness, Mark A. Sabbagh, and Jill A. Jacobson, “Mental State Decoding Abilities in Clinical Depression,” *Journal of Affective Disorders* 86, no. 2 (2005): pp. 248.

⁸⁷ Suzanne Oosterwijk, Alexandra Touroutoglou, and Kristen A. Lindquist, “The Neuroscience of Construction: What Neuroimaging Approaches Can Tell Us about How the Brain Creates the Mind,” in *The Psychological Construction of Emotion*, eds., Lisa Feldman Barrett, and James A. Russell, (New York: Guilford Press, 2015), 114.

⁸⁸ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 88.

how it processes information that influences behavior. However, evolutionary psychological ideas mainly revolve around our emotional responses to assure survival and reproduction; they give us a universal “human nature” that functions as a foundation for our behavioral patterns only; culture, experience, and chance also influence our behavioral patterns such that we become different individuals in society. Cognitive psychology is concerned with understanding human behavior beyond the scope of evolutionary psychology and beyond biologically deterministic factors. This is especially true when approaching early modern characters who are profoundly embedded within chains of horizontal and vertical connectedness defined by their relation to social rank, to God, to family, etc. Because of this tension between biological foundationalism and social and psychological approaches, cognitive psychology as a whole constitutes a complete and supple framework for exploring the role of cognition in decision-making and action that goes beyond the biological role in accounting for the manifestation of behavior.

The argument I am making for the way these tragedies ground themselves in elemental motives and emotions suggests a cognitive psychological approach that is able to explain cognition, emotion, and action in all their processes. For instance, when evaluating judgements, there are other mental operations taking place before an action is finally performed. Self-deception and self-address (soliloquies) are two examples of these cognitive processes that require insights beyond the ones provided by the framework of evolutionary psychology. There is no doubt that self-deception and self-addressing are two cognitive activities that are influenced or triggered by emotions. But the technicalities of these processes can be explained in terms beyond biological dispositions.

Othello's self-deception when he shifts his motivational beliefs from jealousy to set of values involving the morality of the camp in order to proceed with killing Desdemona is explained as an attempt to deceive himself by false belief in order to mitigate his mental pain. Hieronimo's practice of self-address wherein he pushes himself to avenge his son's death and perform vengeful acts against the killers can also be interpreted, in cognitive terms, as an action to improve his emotional prospects by promoting better-informed action-guidance.

It is important that I define and explain the function and purpose of the early modern soliloquy in this introductory chapter before I extend my analysis on it under the rubric of cognition in chapter four on *The Spanish Tragedy*. Soliloquy is defined as an act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play. In his book *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, Wolfgang Clemen presents the importance of soliloquies and their functionalities, which have noticeably changed with time. Clemen argues that the importance of soliloquy lies in what reveals to the audience about the character's hidden self:

The soliloquy expresses something which has all the appearance of inevitability and credibility. In many cases we become aware of the fundamental truth that in seeing one character in conversation with another we only gain a partial and inadequate knowledge of each; we long to know the real person hidden beneath this shell. Or again, we may recognize that something which has been building up over several scenes, without the exact details and intricacies having become quite clear, must be aired and cleared in soliloquy.⁸⁹

As for the functionalities of soliloquy, Clemen claims that a character speaks soliloquies either to "make himself and his plans known" to the public/audience or to "introduce a

⁸⁹ Clemen Wolfgang, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, (London: Methuen, 1987), 7.

character who was not to appear on stage until later.”⁹⁰ However, this conceptual trajectory generally resulted in a deeper and more meaningful motive by the late sixteenth century, particularly in Shakespeare’s era, marking a shift from narrative and descriptive purposes to the expressive exploration of emotions and psychological complexities. Likewise, James Hirsh, in his book *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, arrives at three definitions of soliloquies after careful analysis of a wide array of dramatic works and performance practices. Like Clemen, Hirsh begins with soliloquy as *Audience-addressed speech* in which “the character is aware of and speaks to playgoers.” Then, he gives another definition to soliloquy as *Self-addressed speech* in which “the character is unaware of playgoers and speaks only to himself.” The third definition, *Interior monologue*, is the most intriguing one because it does “not represent words spoken by the character but words passing through the mind of the character.”⁹¹ In chapter four, I rely on contemporary cognitive psychological insights to illuminate the two types, self-addressed speech and inner dialogue, in order to arrive at a better understanding of Hieronimo’s internal processes influencing his course of action.

Imagination is another cognitive activity that Faustus employs to gratify his emotions; his strong desire for power and authority generates mental images of things he strives for. Cognitive psychology maintains that this type of mental imaging has a strong connection with emotions insofar as “thoughts and mental images refer to emotionally significant events, either positive situations that we strive to achieve or negative

⁹⁰ Wolfgang, *Shakespeare’s Soliloquies*, 4.

⁹¹ James Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, (Madison, N.J: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 13.

situations that we would rather avoid.”⁹² Nevertheless, it operates as a separate entity within the faculty of imagination: “it is remarkable, that the imagination and affections have close union together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter.”⁹³ Such examples point to the necessity of examining the mental and emotional activities of these heroes using the fullest range of insights that cognitive psychology currently offers. To best study the inclinations of the heroes’ minds, I will take a specific cognitive psychosocial approach that focuses not only on the biological inclinations of the brain, of which evolutionary psychology is well-informed, but also on the cognitive operations and faculties of the mind to further enhance our understanding of the internal processes of these tragic heroes.

The four tragedies I consider in this dissertation present heroes who are inclined to perform actions and make decisions influenced by their emotions because it is common for human beings to naturally follow their emotional promptings in the process of reading a particular environment. Their actions and decisions are inclined to respond to their emotions because they operate through the limbic system of the human brain. This limbic system is a network that is dedicated to linking emotion to cognition, motivation, and

⁹² When we think of future events, we may experience intense emotional reactions that influence our motivation, behavioral intentions, and ultimately our actions. Therefore, the emotional element orients our thoughts and “is a key aspect of prospection that probably plays critical roles in goal pursuit.” Catherine Barsics, Martial Van Der Linden, and Arnaud D’Argembeau, “Frequency, Characteristics, and Perceived Functions of Emotional Future Thinking in Daily Life,” *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 69, no. 2 (2016): pp. 218.

⁹³ Margherita Arcangeli claims that emotional responses are present in our imagination, even though our imagination is directed toward fictional entities and scenes. She further argues that emotional responses may also be present when we imagine possible things and unrealistic things too. “Interacting with Emotions: Imagination and Supposition,” *The Philosophical Quarterly* 67, no. 269 (2017): pp. 730.

behavior,⁹⁴ and it has been crucial to the life of human beings because it controls behaviors that are essential for survival, such as finding food, self-preservation, sexuality, defense from predators, and establishment of social hierarchy, all of which ensure the survival of individuals and the reproduction of the species.⁹⁵ This is most evident in Carroll's work, which considers literary characters and structures as representing behaviors that are "somehow coded in our nervous systems (including the limbic system)."⁹⁶ Human beings, to this day, are still inclined to perform these innate or inborn behaviors, even though a fair amount of our behavior and cognition have been enhanced through experiential learning and reinforcement.⁹⁷

In these four plays, the emotional system has substantial influences on cognition, especially when making decisions and performing actions because it affects the thinking,

⁹⁴ The limbic system allows the frontal lobes to link sensorial aspects of external events with the visceral (deep inward feelings) and emotional states they elicit. Such linkages, in turn, allow the original visceral state to be "reactivated upon the recurrence or even anticipation of a similar event. The anticipatory induction of such a visceral state could then generate a positive or negative valence [the intrinsic attractiveness/goodness (positive valence) or averseness/badness (negative valence) or an event or situation] that biases the choice of subsequent behaviors" 45-46, in M-Marsel Mesulam, *Principles of Behavioral and Cognitive Neurology*, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 64-66.

⁹⁵ The limbic system connects external cues holding "emotional, social, or motivational relevance to a specified set of contextual and species-specific appropriate behavioral outputs." Although many of our behaviors have been enhanced through experiential learning and positive and negative reinforcements, a number of our behaviors are "innate or inborn, meaning that they manifest without prior learning" 1. Katie Sokolowski, and Joshua G. Corbin, "Wired for Behaviors: From Development to Function of Innate Limbic System Circuitry," *Frontiers in Molecular Neuroscience* 5 (2012): pp. 1.

⁹⁶ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 55.

⁹⁷ Sokolowski, and Corbin, "Wired for Behaviors," pp. 1.

perception, reasoning, and problem solving of individuals.⁹⁸ In fact, the emotional system generates emotions functioning as motivational forces because they direct and guide our behavior and move our action. In his book *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, Johnmarshall Reeve explains the relation between emotions and motivation, and he presents the work of several emotion researchers who agree that emotions function as a motivational drive: “emotions constitute the *primary* motivational system.”⁹⁹ Reeve further argues that individuals find themselves striving toward a set of objectives or goals they have assigned to themselves because there are meaningful thoughts and significant emotions attached to them, and much of their behavior, motivation, and action are in the service of the attainment of those goals: “Positive emotions signal that ‘all is well,’ reflect the involvement and satisfaction of our motivational states... negative emotions act as a warning signal that ‘all is not well,’ reflect the neglect and frustration of our

⁹⁸ Cognitive psychologists describe emotions as a complex set of interactions between “subjective and objective variables that are mediated by neural and hormonal systems,” which can give rise to emotional experiences, such as pleasure and displeasure, emotional arousal, as well as the generation of cognitive processes that are influenced and triggered by emotional perceptions and appraisals that activate “psychological and physiological changes... and motivate behavior that is often but not always expressive, goal-directed and adaptive” 2, in Chai M. Tyng, Haffez U. Amin, Mohamad N. M. Saad, and Aamir S. Malik, “The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): pp. 1.

⁹⁹ Johnmarshall Reeve believes that emotions relate to motivation in two ways. First, he says, emotions are one type of motive; like any other motives (needs or cognitive ones), emotions “energize and direct behavior.” He gives anger as an example of such emotional motive that energizes behavior to achieve a particular goal or purpose, either to overcome an obstacle or to right an injustice. Second, he argues that emotions serve as a continuous “readout” system to indicate our position and personal adaptation in social life: “Joy, for instance, signals social inclusion and progress toward goals, whereas distress signals social exclusion and failure” 302-303, in *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 5th edition, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2009), 302.

motivational states.”¹⁰⁰ In this regard, Reeve confirms that emotions are so powerful that they determine the inclination of our behavior, as well as influence our motivational system, actions, and future goals. By thus plausibly dramatizing the inclinations and tendencies of the protagonists’ minds, *Othello*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Titus Andronicus* function as a folk-psychological treatise on cognition, emotion, action, and motivation that instantiates a theory of human nature with many resonances to contemporary theories and insights from cognitive psychology, especially about the unique network and interaction between the emotional system and mental events and the outside world being experienced.

Today, we are able to understand the behavior and inclination of the heroes of tragedy because we now have these empirical insights that further clarify the complex interrelation between emotion, cognition, and environment. Emotions play a vital (if not determining) role in heroes’ cognition, as is evident from the way humans generate many different hypotheses about ways to avoid an expected consequence or obtain an expected reward only because emotions involve judgments or appraisals in relation to their environments and their own goals.¹⁰¹ Situations in which the tragic heroes are presented falling victims to their own decisions exemplify, to a great extent, what happens when human cognition is unable to strongly anticipate the consequences of its decisions and

¹⁰⁰ Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 303.

¹⁰¹ P. A Schutz, P. D Quijada, S de Vries, and M Lynde believe that affective experiences are organized into three interrelated constructs: affective tendencies (predispositions toward certain ways of being in the world, including individual’s beliefs, temperament, approach/avoidance motives, and personality), core affects (how we feel at any particular point in time—Mood is one example of core affect), and emotional experiences (achieved via appraisal of what is happening in relation to goals, values, and beliefs. “Emotion in Educational Contexts,” in *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning*, edited by Sanna Jarvela, (Oxford: Elsevier, 2011), pp. 64.

actions because, among the large variety of possible strategies, the human actor implements only those actions that evoke a positive feeling or reduce a negative one. Carroll's evolutionary account concurs that the satisfaction of our emotional impulses is a powerful motivator: "We make decisions as the consequence of the relative weight of emotional force behind alternative scenarios, and this emotional force is not wholly available to conscious thought."¹⁰² Likewise, in explaining the influences of emotions in cognitive operations and their dominance in the conscious mind, Johnson argues: "we can generate innumerable variations of hypotheses until our emotional value system deems a particular outcome to be favorable."¹⁰³

The work of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd aligns with Carroll's and Johnson's claims because these playwrights represent emotions that incline their heroes to think and behave in certain way until they are gratified. Their understanding of emotions and decision-making is out of step with those of their contemporaries because they were able to take a special route to mental and emotional depiction in their characters, supplying them with dispositional emotions and mental operations designed to bring about the tragic dimensions of their experience. Tragedy as a mode would seem to be a way of registering the internal human conflict between emotions and reason because in order to best reflect the human predicament, there must be a sequence of "constantly turning and enclosing, looking back and then moving forwards in a labyrinth of emotional struggles and reasoning."¹⁰⁴ This is one thing that drives these four plots: the internal conflict that

¹⁰² Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 77.

¹⁰³ Johnson, *Why We Feel*, 118.

¹⁰⁴ Robyn Bolam, "The Heart of the Labyrinth: Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in *Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed.

the heroes experience between their emotional inclinations that they strive to meet and the series of events taking place in the outside world that impinge upon the conflicted hero. The series of events are the creation of the playwrights, and they reflect situations that can be explained in evolutionary survival terms. In Carroll's words, they depict "particularities of time and place—of cultural context, individual circumstance, and personal character,"¹⁰⁵ which are integrated with the elemental structures of human concerns. Othello's situation, when he is told about the excessive amount of time that Cassio and his wife are spending together and he becomes filled with jealousy, concerns the behavioral system of reproduction; the two scenarios of Hieronimo, who cannot bring about justice for his son's death through official channels, and Titus, whose daughter is kidnapped by the emperor's brother, evoke their emotions to avenge their family members, following the behavioral system of kin assistance (investing in offspring). Finally, Faustus's religious constraints that push him to desire in order to survive the tyranny of the Christian World follows the behavioral system of survival.

In all these representations, emotions have the power to stimulate the minds of the heroes and pressure them with mental pain or annoyance until they are satisfied. This hedonic motivation, which is characterized by pleasant or unpleasant sensation,¹⁰⁶ can last as long as it takes until the tragic heroes endeavor to fix it. In evolutionary

Michael Hattaway, (Madlen, Ma: Blackwell, 2003), 263. In this book chapter, Bolam studies the work of Lady Mary Wroth, the first Englishwoman to publish an extended work of fiction and a complete sonnet sequence. He reads her *Pamphilia* from an emotional perspective to confirm the finest aspects of art, self, and divine power of love, which are all related to the struggle between emotions and reason.

¹⁰⁵ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ Kagan, *What Is Emotion?*, 18; Mark Kelman, "Hedonic Psychology and the Ambiguities of 'Welfare,'" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 33, no.4 (2005): pp. 391.

psychology theory, humans have a universal need to make “this sort of order, and satisfying that need provides a distinct form of pleasure and fulfillment.”¹⁰⁷ This satisfaction of emotional needs is innate, and it is programmed to push individuals to perform certain actions in order achieve equilibrium. In this case, the heroes’ minds become desperate in trying to stop this cognitive inharmoniousness (the hurtful conflict) and bring themselves back to a state of equilibrium or a state of neutrality.

1.5 Psychoanalytic Approaches versus Cognitive Psychological Approaches

In order to further distinguish the cognitive psychological framework of my study, it is worth exploring and acknowledging other psychological approaches that have been used in the study of early modern drama, as well as understanding their differences and similarities to my own approach. More than 50 years ago, psychoanalytic theories and approaches began to provide compelling readings of literary texts, especially works of the early modern period, by addressing their “problematical characters and helping to offer solutions to puzzles that have vexed readers for centuries.”¹⁰⁸ The main concern of this school of psychology is to study the unconscious of the characters, a method that differs completely from cognitive psychological approaches. The main difference between psychoanalysis and cognitive psychology is that psychoanalysis believes that individuals should be examined and understood in terms of the operations of their unconscious. Such an approach posits that the conscious mind is only a tiny piece of who we are, and the

¹⁰⁷ Carroll, *Literary Darwinism*, 196.

¹⁰⁸ Carolyn E. Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*, (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), 3.

unconscious mind—which has been shaped by early experiences and relationships—contributes considerably to our mental issues. In *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*, for example, Carolyn Brown argues that the problem with early modern characters is that they “explain their behaviour by articulating conscious motives, but their explanations are often contradictory and inadequate, compelling us to suspect latent motivations lurk behind their actions – an interior space to which psychoanalytic critics devote much of their attention.”¹⁰⁹ Brown goes further to explain that although psychoanalytic literary theory is concerned with understanding the motivations and representations of consciousness, “the most intriguing concern is the unconscious.”¹¹⁰

When Brown and other psychoanalytic critics refer to the unconsciousness, they relate the concept to three main elements: id, ego, and superego. Id “is the unconscious component that includes repressed matter... the ego is a development of the id that tries to control the id’s impulses... by repressing unacceptable urges... the superego is the moral arbiter... that suppresses inappropriate desires and tries to channel the ego into acting idealistically rather than realistically.”¹¹¹ Psychoanalytic approaches tend to focus on the conflicts between these three elements to provide explanations for the individual’s mental issues.

Like psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology is concerned with understanding both the conscious motivations of the individuals and additional motivations that lurk behind their actions. However, there is also an important difference. When approaching an early

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*,12.

¹¹⁰ Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*,12.

¹¹¹ Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*,13.

modern text, the psychoanalytic study of the unconscious of the characters requires a deep understanding of the past—knowledge of past experiences and relationships—that is often unavailable in the text because only a small portion of the characters’ lives are dramatized, making it very difficult to explore the origins and qualities of the unconsciousness on which psychoanalysis bases its study. Although cognitive psychology touches on previous experiences and some unconscious factors that influence the characters’ behavior and their actions, it is mainly concerned with understanding characters’ mental processes and their actions through their consciousness.

What is common to these two schools of psychology, though, especially when applying them to early modern drama, is that they both treat characters as real people. Brown argues that one of the reasons psychoanalysis so often treats early modern characters as real people “is they have so much psychological authenticity that they seem like living beings, just like us. This makes us want to know about their lives before the plays begin, prompting some critics to hypothesize about childhood experiences not supplied in the text.”¹¹² This speculation about childhood experiences is epitomized by Sigmund Freud’s collaborator, psychoanalyst Wilhelm Fliess, who classically argues that Hamlet is not able to avenge his father’s murder because his uncle Claudius “represents the realization of his unconscious childhood phantasies; rather than hating Claudius, with whom he identifies, he hates himself for being like his uncle.”¹¹³ Conversely, contemporary cognitive psychological theories are mostly based on observations about how characters employ conscious thought as a tool to overcome emotions and manage

¹¹² Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*, 5.

¹¹³ Brown, *Shakespeare and Psychoanalytic Theory*, 15.

behavior, rather than speculating about past experiences or imagined childhood histories to solve problems about ambiguous behavior in the present.

1.6 Unfolding of the Plot

In these four plays, the deeds of the protagonists may seem like developing events that create a complete plot, but in fact, it is the unfolding of the protagonists' minds, their emotional responses, thinking, decision-making, and subsequent actions that determine the unfolding of the plot. Aristotle argues that the plot should be an imitation of the action performed by agents who possess two distinctive qualities of character and thought, which cause actions to spring forth and to be the foundation of further success or failure.¹¹⁴ But, how do these characters represent a creation of thoughts? Thoughts emerge from the mind and they are formed by emotional responses: "The full experience of emotions normally includes three fused components: thoughts, action impulses, and somatic disturbances."¹¹⁵ In this regard, the unfolding of the plot depends greatly on the unfolding of the psychological and emotional stages of these protagonists, especially in relation to the actions that their authors themselves depict in them, modified by past events in relation to future goals.

The plots of these four early modern tragedies profile tragic heroes driven by their mental and emotional dispositions, dispositions which I will read in this dissertation as

¹¹⁴ Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, 25.

¹¹⁵ According to Richard S. Lazarus, emotional responses are elicited by an evaluative perception and by a complex cognitive appraisal of the significance of events for one's well-being, in "Thoughts on the Relations between Emotion and Cognition," *American Psychologist* 37, no. 9 (1982): pp. 1019.

psychologically coherent and consonant with real people's dispositions. In the plays, these dispositions motivate the heroes' actions toward survival and success, but, because of the plays' tragic frame, these dispositions have become pernicious, and the heroes are compelled by their mental images to follow destinies they did not anticipate. In these cases, we are dealing with problems generated by emergent tendencies that the minds of these tragic heroes are unable to solve. Their interactions with their environments induce these emergent tendencies, which could be emotional or computational, and they steer them in directions in which they begin searching for possible solutions that push them to engage in tragic actions or reactions. This is the world of plotting; it aims to unfold and arrange the discovery and cost of individuals' deeds, and therefore, the progression of the plot and the deterioration of events happen because tragedians represent the minds of these protagonists reacting to a series of actions or situations that have taken place or about to take place, creating a driven plot that is tragic.

To help better understand these tragic plots and appreciate the prominence of these tragedies, there are two different ways in which we can approach them. The first is through the literature and language, but this method indicates that the primacy of these tragedians is only "a cultural phenomenon, produced by sociopolitical urgencies,"¹¹⁶ because this view implies that the actual writers of these plays are the social, political, and economic energies of their age, rather than Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd themselves. The second method, however, is to explore their work empirically and

¹¹⁶ Fictive characters are an imitation of human characters, says Harold Bloom. He believes that we attribute values and meanings, and our ideas of persons to literary and dramatic characters in order to reinforce our ideas of persons in life. Bloom gives a special appreciation to Shakespeare because he believes that our "ideas as to what makes the self authentically human owe more to Shakespeare than ought to be possible." *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, (London: Fourth Estate, 2010), 16.

psychologically on the grounds that Marlowe and Kyd are known for their meaningful representation of the human complexity and actions,¹¹⁷ and Shakespeare as the “great portrayer of the complexity of human action who is also a pioneer in the representation of deep selfhood.”¹¹⁸ My approach in this dissertation leans toward the latter in order to validate their representations of the tragic mind in their characters and tragedies. In this project, I am further explaining these tragedians to themselves, in the psychological terms or traits in which people recognize as fact because they are universal to the human race: rage, desire, revenge, ambition, sexual jealousy, and so on. These are fundamental to the cognition of any individual in society and these are the most reasoned backstories that explain the kind of archetypal truth of these stories.

¹¹⁷ Lars Engle, “Oedipal Marlowe, Mimetic Middleton,” *Modern Philology* 105, no. 3 (February 2008): pp. 418; Peter Sacks, “Where Words Prevail Not: Grief, Revenge, and Language in Kyd and Shakespeare,” *ELH* 49, no. 3 (1982): pp. 576.

¹¹⁸ Engle, “Oedipal Marlowe, Mimetic Middleton,” pp. 418.

CHAPTER TWO

Othello: When Jealousy Gains Control

Shakespeare's *Othello* is famously an exploration of the effects of sexual jealousy to which all human beings can be subject. But what is sexual jealousy, and how are we to understand Shakespeare's treatment of it in this play? Many critics believe that Othello's jealousy is non-biological, but rather an emotional experience that is enforced by cultural structure. For instance, Camille Wells Slight, William Empson, and Steve Cassal argue that culture somehow contributes to the way Othello experiences jealousy and deals with his emotional states. Slight believes that Shakespeare sets his play by identifying "his hero as a 'Moor of Venice,' and then, [drawing] on the humanist myth of Venice... a free society that in turn protects and nurtures the honor and freedom of its members."¹¹⁹ Slight further argues that the play unfolds Othello's degeneration "from honorable and honored member of Venetian society to a dishonorable slave, a monstrous outsider, and the tragedy lies in the potential for monstrosity within honor."¹²⁰ Likewise, Empson suggests that Othello's social system holds men responsible for defending honor, and that the images of jealousy in the play reflect how Othello's culture influences the way he

¹¹⁹ Camille Wells Slight, "Slaves and Subjects in Othello," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1997): pp. 380.

¹²⁰ Slight, "Slaves and Subjects in Othello," pp. 383.

perceives his emotional experiences.¹²¹ Cassal specifically claims that the whole play revolves around the idea of “honor” and that Othello’s jealousy is associated with this term due to several references in the play: “the play’s many references to ‘honor’ almost always associate the term with Othello, and ‘the effect has been to make Othello the personification of honor.’”¹²²

Such a picture anticipates many of the findings of contemporary cognitive psychologists for whom jealousy is considered powerful enough to motivate any action an individual performs because it can perfectly shape cognition and can by itself be the object of his cognition.¹²³ It affects individuals’ thinking and changes their cognitive processing by promoting the consideration of drastic, even violent options to mitigate emotional misery and ease their inner turmoil. Othello becomes such an individual who concedes to the power of jealousy. He follows the dictates of his emotional brain in the absence of rational reflection; he does not reason suspiciously enough to seriously entertain the possibility that Iago might have ulterior motives for relaying the information that dooms Desdemona. It is evident that Shakespeare wants to present Othello as a man of passion whose inadequate reliance on rationality causes him to succumb to his morbid emotions. Meanwhile, through Iago, Shakespeare conveys the importance of the rational

¹²¹ William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*, (London: Hogarth, 1985), 228-229.

¹²² Steve Cassal, “Shakespeare’s Othello,” *The Explicator* 61, no. 3 (2003): pp. 131.

¹²³ Jon Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction and Human Behavior*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 31. The relation between emotion and cognition is perhaps the most important and central issue in the study of human emotion. Emotions can be triggered by a large variety of beliefs, relating to others or to oneself, and relating to the past, present, or future. They can also be probable, certain, or merely possible. Moreover, emotion “can shape cognition, for example, by wishful thinking, and it can itself be the object of cognition,” 31.

calculus that he never depicts in Othello. In a conversation that takes place between Iago and Roderigo, Iago explains the importance of reason to counterbalance emotions and desires for not letting our bodily urges take over:

Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. So that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many—either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts.¹²⁴

Iago's speech in this passage illustrates the emotional theories of passion from the Renaissance period. When Iago refers to the "body" and the "will" that gardens the body, he acknowledges Thomas Hobbes's claim that human beings continuously experience emotions that can only be balanced by the "will" and a rational brain that guides all individual's movements and actions: "the Brayne is a member continually moving and ruling al other members of the body, giving vnto them both feeling and moving."¹²⁵ This balance that reason can achieve when subduing emotions is not depicted in Othello's own character. Othello does not enjoy this rationality because he is an emotionally driven man who just wants relief from his emotional pain; his cognitions are inherently imbedded within the ongoing flow of his emotional motivation that guides, constrains, and overwhelms his cognitive processes.¹²⁶ What is tragic about Othello is that he is entrapped by the emotional faculties of his mind that control all his experiences,

¹²⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.3.317-328.

¹²⁵ Hoeniger *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, 135; Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, translation by Keith Tribe, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 21-22.

¹²⁶ Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 41.

expressions, and actions.

In relation to the entrapment of Othello in his own mind that drives him to perform excessive and violent actions, many critics have debated over whether Othello has chosen to kill Desdemona because of jealousy or because he is a “savage” and “barbarous” moor whose race and blackness dispose him to violence. On the one hand, we have critics who believe in the race impact, and they make a connection between Othello’s race and his action against Desdemona. For instance, Ania Loomba, in her book *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, argues that the portrayal of Othello as the Moor of Venice—a “black-skinned... ‘absolutely barbarous’... [belonging to] ‘another kind of civility, different from ours’”¹²⁷—stands at the complicated crux of views about Othello’s actions. Loomba claims that the “Moor,” had various connotations in early modern period; whether it meant black or Muslim, both were “regarded as given to unnatural sexual and domestic practices, as highly emotional and even irrational, and prone to anger and jealousy.”¹²⁸ She believes that Shakespeare portrays Othello according to this type of images of “blackamoors... giving us a black Moor who has... a slave past... a black skin and thick lips as well as great military skill... as well as a propensity to violence.”¹²⁹ She also concludes that Shakespeare’s protagonist may represent the tragedian’s effort to complicate the “pictures of Moors that circulated in his culture... but each of Othello’s characteristics as a husband, as a man, as a soldier, [and as a killer] is always traced to his

¹²⁷ Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 91.

¹²⁸ Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 91.

¹²⁹ Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 92.

racial identity.”¹³⁰ Similarly, Peter Erickson, in his book *Citing Shakespeare: The Reinterpretation of Race in Contemporary Literature and Art*, claims that Othello’s race plays an essential role in murdering Desdemona. Erickson refers to a particular scene where he draws a picture of a color contrast between Othello and Desdemona and interpret it as the cause behind Othello’s action: [Othello] “puts Desdemona’s white hand next to his brown one and then speaks, ‘It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.’”¹³¹ In support of Loomba and Erickson, Dympna Callaghan argues that Shakespeare presents the play with a particular focus on the issues of miscegenation to explore the violent side of jealousy through an instance of race: “*Othello* dramatizes the possible consequences of not excluding the racial other from the community and so presents the dazzling spectacle of someone who is... both monster and man.”¹³²

On the other hand, we have critics who deny race as the cause or tendency behind Othello’s violence simply because race is a social construct, rather than a biological factor. Rebecca Olson argues that it is true that some in the Renaissance period “believed that people from warm climates... were more vulnerable to jealousy’s torments... [but] according to this logic, nearly every character in *Othello* would be at risk”¹³³—a counterfactual that leads her to disregard Othello’s race as a motive behind his awful deed. In her article “‘Not a Moor Exactly’: Shakespeare, Serial and Modern

¹³⁰ Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*, 111.

¹³¹ Peter Erickson, *Citing Shakespeare: The Reinterpretation of Race in Contemporary Literature and Art*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 81.

¹³² Dympna, Callaghan, *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 96.

¹³³ Rebecca Olson, “‘Too Gentle’: Jealousy and Class in Othello.” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): pp. 6.

Constructions of Race,” Vanessa Corredera contends, quoting Kim F. Hall, that “Race was then (as it is now) a social construct that is fundamentally more about power and culture than about biological difference.”¹³⁴ Similarly, Ian Smith engages with the debate in *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*, claiming that Othello’s race is not the motive behind his action because race is “defined as the social and political outcome of an admittedly... imperial self-interest.”¹³⁵ Other scholarly voices, such as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, likewise challenge the view that the play invites us to see Othello’s race as disposing him towards violent behavior; through their social construction theory, Delgado and Stefancic demonstrate that “race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient.”¹³⁶

My cognitive-psychological argument in this chapter does not adhere to either of these stands completely. My interpretation of Othello’s deeds is not related to race, as it is clear from the above debate that race is not biological, but rather a social construct. However, my cognitive argument stems from the biological disposition and psychological process of Othello as a “non-color-related” character who represents the human characteristics that Shakespeare himself assigned to him according to his own

¹³⁴ Vanessa Corredera, “‘Not a Moor Exactly’: Shakespeare, Serial and Modern Constructions of Race,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2016): pp. 31-32; Michael Banton also asserts that “race... is a *social construct* and not a biological category” 94. Michael Banton, “Race Relations,” in *Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*, edited by Goldberg and Solomos, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002): pp. 94.

¹³⁵ Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11.

¹³⁶ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Introduction to Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, (New York: New York UP, 2012), 8.

sense of folk psychology. My examination of Othello's disposition to jealousy and suspicion about his wife's putative disloyalty is further illustrated by insights from some cognitive psychologists around the inclination of the mind to seek information and to believe only what will validate an already adopted opinion.

As a point of departure for this chapter, I am going to present two critics—Marcus Nordlund and Gayle Allan—who complicate the concept of Othello's jealousy even further because they believe that his jealousy is more of a hybrid concept, rather than a one element cause. In his article "Theorising Early Modern Jealousy: A Biocultural Perspective on Shakespeare's *Othello*," Nordlund does acknowledge that people in different cultures have different emotions because they are raised in proximity to different social pressures that provide the contexts in which particular emotions emerge: "Societies can shape, mold, or construct as many different emotions as are functional with the social system."¹³⁷ But he also stresses the biological grounding of Othello's jealousy, arguing: "to avoid circular arguments [, we] must at some point concede that human behavior is both an expression of, and a response to, biological realities."¹³⁸ He explains the indispensability of adopting a scientific framework when analyzing Othello as a character on the grounds that, in spite of the historical and cultural gap between

¹³⁷ Marcus Nordlund, "Theorising Early Modern Jealousy. A Biocultural Perspective on Shakespeare's *Othello*," *Studia Neophilologica*, 74, no 2 (2002): pp. 148. In this article, Nordlund focuses on male jealousy, in particular, throughout his discussion because he believes this affliction is not experienced in exactly the same way, or even for the same reasons, by men and women.

¹³⁸ Nordlund, "Theorising Early Modern Jealousy," pp. 152.

ourselves and Shakespeare, human beings have been equipped with the same brains and have the same genetic dispositions throughout our evolutionary history.¹³⁹

Likewise, Allan, in her book chapter “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster’; Old and New Theories of Jealousy in *Othello*,” shares Nordlund’s view that Othello’s jealousy is partly biological, but she also maintains that his jealousy is partly psychological. She argues that *Othello* as a play actually presents us with a “hybrid” theory of jealousy: partly humoral and partly psychological. Allan argues that in the play “we glimpse a psychological study of jealousy that has resonance with the more advanced theories... as well as the older humoral theories” of the early modern period.¹⁴⁰ She gives an overview of the traditional humoral theory which maintains that jealousy for early modern theorists stemmed from humoral theories about melancholy:

Melancholy, or black bile, was one of the four basic humors (fluids within the body) which maintained life and health... Each humor had specific properties.... If a complete balance of humors was maintained, a person enjoyed perfect health. If one or more humors predominated, or was deficient then the person became physically ill or mentally unbalanced... The theory held that a person with an imbalance of the humor melancholy, or a person naturally disposed to melancholy, would be more likely to experience jealousy.¹⁴¹

She further explains that beyond the theory of humor—which maintains that one, in moments of jealousy, is biologically programmed to act beyond his control—the early modern period witnessed a shift “from the biological determinism of the classical

¹³⁹ Nordlund, “Theorising Early Modern Jealousy,” 152.

¹⁴⁰ Gayle Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster’; Old and New Theories of Jealousy in *Othello*,” in *Rapt in Secret Studies: Emerging Shakespeare*, edited by Darryl Chalk and Laurie Johnson, (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2010), pp. 34.

¹⁴¹ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 32.

humoral theories to more contextual, psychological theories.”¹⁴² She argues that these new psychological theories “are best exemplified by Italian historian and poet Benedetto Varchi and English theologian Robert Burton.”¹⁴³ For her, Varchi introduces a new concept of jealousy beyond humors because he viewed jealousy as a “product of love,” which includes “individual subjectivity and circumstances” that increase susceptibility to jealousy, one thing the old theory of humor did not allow.¹⁴⁴ Likewise, Burton investigates “experiential/contextual explanations of jealousy, rather than purely physical ones... [he] contends that the root causes of jealousy are a desire for love and beauty, but it is desire distorted by fear and suspicion, and a basic misogyny.”¹⁴⁵ However, for Allan, the psychological part of jealousy is deemed nonessentialist, or at least less essentialist than strictly humoral theory because she argues that “the emerging psychological theories did not displace or replace the old humoral theories, but coexisted alongside them, producing a peculiar hybridity in the theories of jealousy.”¹⁴⁶

Departing from this premise, this chapter goes on to provide a new understanding of jealousy relying on modern cognitive psychology to help us see the play in a new way that the early modern period’s own faculty psychology does not give us. Modern cognitive psychology is more suited to explaining the play’s depiction of jealousy than simple humoral theory because contemporary cognitive psychology is itself “hybrid”—drawing both from biology and psychology. This hybridity is evident in *Othello*, where

¹⁴² Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 33.

¹⁴³ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 33.

¹⁴⁴ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 33.

¹⁴⁵ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 33.

¹⁴⁶ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 33.

the biological and psychological elements coincide, and cognitive psychology provides empirical explanations to them beyond Allan's historicist approach that involves simple concepts of "melancholy" and "love." In this chapter, I will investigate Othello's emotions to better understand how Shakespeare's depiction of violent sexual jealousy dramatizes an understanding of jealousy that is every bit as hybrid and complex as contemporary cognitive-psychological accounts even if it departs from them in some ways as a result of its historical precocity. As I will argue, Shakespeare presents Othello's actions as rooted in innate "passion, [which has his] best judgment collied" and "plucks out [his] brains and all,"¹⁴⁷ which can be further illuminated by insights drawn from contemporary cognitive psychology that permit to sympathize with this tragic hero more than when we analyze his passion through the humoral lens of the early modern period. Central to my analysis is that way Othello falls victim to his own mind, suffering an intense emotional crisis that is so intolerable to him he finds himself obliged to resolve it before it drives him mad and reveals the monster inside of him: "A horned man's a monster and a beast."¹⁴⁸ Through the evidence of Othello's body language, gestures, soliloquies, and actions, Shakespeare presents a dramatic case study and implicit theorization of the various phases of the mental crisis of murderous sexual jealousy, from provocation to execution.

In the following sections, I will begin my discussion by presenting early modern theories of imagination along with Suparna Roychoudhury's argument that Shakespeare was knowledgeable about such theories but did not strictly represent them because he

¹⁴⁷ *Othello*, (Jeffares), 2.3.190; 2.1.125.

¹⁴⁸ *Othello*, (Jeffares), 4.1.63.

went beyond their scope, anticipating and adapting “before his time points that would gain greater visibility in later decades.”¹⁴⁹ Having established the early modern theories of imagination and Roychoudhury’s claim about Shakespeare’s anticipation of advanced knowledge of imagination in his plays, I then turn to examine Othello’s imagination in conjunction with contemporary insights drawn from cognitive psychology because the play seems to anticipate similar insights in terms of Othello’s imagination as an emotion-inducing factor. I will investigate two important components that help form his imagination: *background knowledge* and *mindset*. Following this, I will perform an elaborative reading of the way Othello experiences and expresses jealousy in order to suggest that the play is amenable to illustrating contemporary theories of jealousy and its evocation. Throughout my discussion, I will focus specifically on Othello as a victim of his own mind—a mind that constantly generates emotional states and responses that lead to his downfall. In the last section, I will dwell on his cognitive move from one mental state (jealousy) to another mental state (justice); this move, I argue, helps him rationalize his murderous decision by reimagining his own role from that of killer to that of victim.

2.1 Othello’s Emotion-Provoked Imagination

The early modern period had a peculiar understanding of the imagination and its function within the individual’s mind and body. According to early modern conceptions of imagination, it was believed that “all that was perceived by the external senses was transferred, as it were, to the internal senses, in particular to the medium of the

¹⁴⁹ Suparna Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare: Imagination in the Age of Early Modern Science*, (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 50.

imagination.”¹⁵⁰ In his book *Phantasmatic Shakespeare: Imagination in the Age of Early Modern Science*, Roychoudhury argues that during the Middle Ages, Aristotle used the term phantasia to refer to “the power of the sensitive soul that forms the necessary bridge between sensation and judgment. The cognitive interface between world and mind, imagination is ‘the process by which we say that an image [phantasma] is presented to us.’”¹⁵¹ Roychoudhury believes that Aristotle’s theory of the imagination was developed by other theorists “into a full-fledged cognitive theory, culminating in the system of faculty psychology that was inherited by the early moderns.”¹⁵² This faculty psychology “is a theory of cognition that supposes that all mental activity comprises the production and examination of mental representations... [and] the cognitive function of imagination... is of central importance: sensing, conceiving, thinking, and remembering are contingent on its proper operation.”¹⁵³

Other philosophers and scientists of the period added more voices to the concept of imagination. For instance, Thomas Fienus, a professor of medicine of that time, published a small treatise *De viribus imaginationis*, in 1608, fully discussing the powers of the imagination. Fienus covered many topics in relation to imagination, but he was particularly interested in the connection between imagination and the body, inquiring whether imagination is able to move a body; “he considers the imagination to be one of the ‘internal senses’ of the sensitive soul... [that] may act indirectly, through the

¹⁵⁰ Christoph Lüthy, Claudia Swan, Paul Bakker, and Claus Zittel, *Image, Imagination, and Cognition: Medieval and Early Modern Theory and Practice*, (Boston: Brill, 2018), 1.

¹⁵¹ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 24.

¹⁵² Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 24.

¹⁵³ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 26.

appetitive power, or through the emotions (which have an impact on the movement of the heart and on the movement of humours and spirits, possibly causing bodily alterations).”¹⁵⁴ Another philosopher and natural scientist of the period, Bernardino Telesio, argued that the operations of the imagination are based on the physiological structure of the organism “and do not imply internal representations or mental images”: “imagination [is] the result of the spirit’s active response to alterations caused in the physiological structure of the organism by external stimuli.”¹⁵⁵ In light of these historicists’ insights, we can deduce that the old theories of imagination, even though they sometimes conflict, were important to the early moderns, including playwrights such as Shakespeare because Roychoudhury confirms Shakespeare’s knowledge of such theories.

Roychoudhury believes that Shakespeare knew the principles of faculty psychology, “phantasms, imagination, along with the other faculties of understanding and memory [that] carries out essential functions of mental cognition.” However, Roychoudhury argues, Shakespeare’s representations of imagination do not only follow strictly those principles because he foregrounded his plays in the “portrayal of imagination [that] draws on the uniquely idiosyncratic discourse” that connects with the work of contemporary science.¹⁵⁶ Roychoudhury further argues—despite his assertion that he has no intention to suggest that “Shakespeare had firsthand knowledge of the new

¹⁵⁴ Lüthy, Swan, Bakker, and Zittel, *Image, Imagination, and Cognition*, 191.

¹⁵⁵ Lüthy, Swan, Bakker, and Zittel, *Image, Imagination, and Cognition*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 13.

science”¹⁵⁷—that Shakespeare’s “thinking goes beyond the original purview of faculty psychology; it rises, rather, to the challenge of adapting that psychology to evolving scientific epistemes and grapples with difficulties and lacunae in scientific knowledge.”¹⁵⁸ He supports his argument by examining many Shakespeare’s plays such as *Macbeth* (“Macbeth’s [pathology,] reaching a dagger that is not there”)¹⁵⁹; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (the brief exchange between Theseus and Hippolyta near the end of the play, contending that it is a “reading of Shakespeare’s best-known pronouncement on imagination... the power of the mind to create”)¹⁶⁰; *King Lear* (the exploration of “traumatic severing of eye and mind’s eye, [dismantling] the age-old association of blindness and wisdom”)¹⁶¹; and the *Tempest* (“with its motif of ‘shape,’” “underlines imagination’s basic involvement in ordinary perception.”)¹⁶²

In order to convey the scope of Shakespeare’s interest in mental representation in these plays, Roychoudhury examines different sides of imagination in conjunction with different scientific discourses. He does so because he believes that Shakespeare thought and conveyed imagination in a number of senses: “as a part of the human organism, a type of disorder, a principle in nature, a method, and a metaphor.”¹⁶³ My examination of Shakespeare’s representation of imagination in *Othello* differs from Roychoudhury’s by conjoining the play with contemporary cognitive psychological insights. Building upon

¹⁵⁷ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 45.

¹⁵⁸ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 45.

¹⁵⁹ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 12.

¹⁶⁰ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 13.

¹⁶¹ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 57.

¹⁶² Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 281.

¹⁶³ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 281.

Roychoudhury's stimulating claims, I argue that the play also demonstrates psychological and emotional interactions that seem to anticipate cognitive psychological theories of imagination beyond the conception of the early modern theories on imagination that revolve around the range of thoughts that belong to faculty psychology. This examination is significant to the interpretation of Othello because it allows us to see this hero from a new perspective; we become aware of the power of the biological factors that influence his decisions and drive him toward his destruction.

Cognitive psychologists confirm that imagination and emotions are intimately connected and that what affects our imagination certainly affects our emotions. For instance, Margherita Arcangeli states that imagination is connected to the affective mechanisms that produce emotional responses.¹⁶⁴ David Hume also confirms this link between imagination and emotions when he argues: "it is remarkable, that the imagination and affections have close union together, and that nothing, which affects the former, can be entirely indifferent to the latter."¹⁶⁵ Many literary scholars infer this imagination-emotion connection in their studies of Othello. In his book *With What Persuasion: An Essay on Shakespeare and the Ethics of Rhetoric*, Scott Crider claims that "Othello's use of the word 'jealous/jealousy'... arouses the emotion." Having Othello's emotions aroused, Iago, in turn, "persuades Othello to observe the suspects... ensuring

¹⁶⁴ Arcangeli, "Interacting with Emotions: Imagination and Supposition," pp. 730. See more on the difference between imagination and supposition in this article, particularly, on the connection of the imagination to the affect system that produces emotional responses that supposition lacks. Arcangeli argues that supposition is mainly defined in a negative way by stressing the features that imagination possesses and supposition lacks, and that among these features is emotionality because supposition has been commonly taken to be emotionally colder than imagination.

¹⁶⁵ Arcangeli, "Interacting with Emotions," pp. 730.

that Desdemona's exertions will be seen as evidence of infidelity." In doing so, Iago succeeds in "arousing Othello's imagination."¹⁶⁶ Similarly, Millicent Bell makes a connection between emotions and imagination and argues that Othello's jealousy is a fatal disease that grows on him and destroys him by promoting hallucinations and imaginations until the reclamation of sanity at the tragic end.¹⁶⁷ What has not been argued though is that the reverse is also true in Othello's case. As the play repeatedly demonstrates, Othello's imagination exhibits the power to have emotional impact, making his imagination an emotion-inducing factor.

According to Arcangeli, imagination does not operate in isolation, rather it is made up by *background knowledge or experience* and *mindset*: "Although in imagination we can bracket some of what we believe, to a large extent our imaginings bring our background knowledge and personal attitudes into play."¹⁶⁸ If we look closely at how the play presents Othello's background knowledge and mindset, we can begin to understand how Iago so easily prompts in Othello's mind this image of Desdemona's infidelity that

¹⁶⁶ Scott Forrest Crider, *With What Persuasion: An Essay on Shakespeare and the Ethics of Rhetoric*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 116.

¹⁶⁷ Millicent Bell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Skepticism*, (US: Yale University Press, 2002), 80, 82. In the chapter on *Othello*, she argues that Othello mounts to a level of hallucination because his jealousy feeds on the unseen, confirming that jealousy does not require justification; by its very nature, lack of knowledge is enough to satisfy it.

¹⁶⁸ Kendall L. Walton. *Mimesis as Make-believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 30. In this book, Walton provides detailed explanations on the difference between deliberate and spontaneous imaginations, which are often combined in a single imaginative experience. He argues that deliberate imaginings depend on the imaginer because the world of his imagination is an artificial contrivance, something he constructs bit by bit and by his choices of what to imagine, whereas spontaneous imaginings work differently, the imaginer is more their spectator than their perpetrator. However, he argues that the link between the two is the imaginer's previous experiences and knowledge; Arcangeli, "Interacting with Emotions," 744.

Even now, now, every now, an old black ram
Is tuppung your white ewe.¹⁷⁴

Brabantio also parts from Othello with a warning note that resonates in his mind: “Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee.”¹⁷⁵

These pieces of information (background knowledge) about Desdemona, that she is able to betray her father whom she loves dearly, and that she is a habitual deceiver, as her father portrays her, play an important role in prompting imaginative thoughts in Othello about her infidelity, especially because Iago echoes them to him, as part of his malicious strategy, to strengthen his suspicion of her fidelity: “She did deceive her father, marrying you. / ... / She that so young could give out such a seeming / ... / He thought ‘twas witchcraft.”¹⁷⁶

The play’s dramatization of how suspicious interpretation is predicated on the acquisition of background knowledge is remarkably in tune with, and can be further elucidated by modern cognitivists’ insights into the generation of the imagination. In accounts like Antonio Damasio’s, for instance, the human brain works as a network that helps share information across its different regions; these regions then work together to form mental images in our head. The signals from these mental images, which may represent an object or idea, “land in regions capable of triggering specific kinds of emotional chain reaction.”¹⁷⁷ Putting Damasio’s insights of the working network within

¹⁷⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.1.85-88.

¹⁷⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.3.289-290.

¹⁷⁶ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.207, 210, 212.

¹⁷⁷ Antonio Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*, (London: Vintage, 2012), 103. See more on the importance of signals from the images that

the human brain in practice to examine Othello's background knowledge of Desdemona further validates Roychoudhury's claim about Shakespeare's anticipation of the new science because his dramatization of Othello connects with the work of contemporary cognitive psychology, especially in relation to background knowledge that seems to be a crucial part of his mental network that helps form his imagination

Beyond *background knowledge*, cognitive psychologists have also indicated that *mindset* is crucial to the formation of the imagination. Othello, for instance, sees himself as inferior to and different from others because he is black and old. He believes that he is an inadequate partner for Desdemona in terms of age and race, an attitude that makes him think she may betray him. Before he makes his hero confesses this inferiority in his own speech—a scene which I will turn to shortly—Shakespeare conveys this concept of difference and inferiority in several dialogues between the characters to instill it in his audience's mind first. For example, he portrays Brabantio wondering why his daughter would run from his delightful guardianship to dwell in a black bosom, which is nothing but fearful: “Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou – to fear, not to delight,”¹⁷⁸ and characterizes the relationship between his daughter and

represent a certain object in triggering emotions in this section, under “Triggering and Executing Emotions.” Damasio provides wonderful insights on these signals which are made available to all sites in the brain, such as the amygdala in situations of fear and the ventromedial prefrontal cortex in situations causing compassion. He argues that in some cases the signals are likely to activate one particular site as in the case of fear-causing stimuli, which often activate the amygdala and succeed in triggering the fear cascade. He also argues that in some other cases, certain stimuli are ambiguous enough to activate more than one site, leading to a composite emotional state, such as bittersweet feeling arising from a mixed emotion.

¹⁷⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.2.70-71.

Othello as “against all rules of nature.”¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Shakespeare highlights it in a conversation between Iago and Roderigo in which Iago hints at Othello’s inferiority to the audience saying: “She must change for youth; when she is sated with his body, she will find errors of her choice”¹⁸⁰ and “[h]er eye must be fed. And what delight shall she have to look on the devil?”¹⁸¹ He also adds, “Very nature will instruct her in it, and compel her to some second choice.”¹⁸² Hence, it would seem that Shakespeare wants to make Othello’s inferiority a major contributor to his suspicious images of an unfaithful wife; this image is further validated when Othello considers and utters it himself. Tellingly, at one point in the play, Othello confirms that he sees himself inferior, confessing,

Haply for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That Chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years.¹⁸³

Such an account of the integration of background information and mindset in the formation of imagined facts explains what the play itself already dramatizes: how it becomes easy for Iago to provoke Othello’s jealousy because his verbal conjuring of the image of a disloyal Desdemona matches and elaborates an imaginative reality that Othello already possesses as “background” to Iago’s insinuations. That is why Othello begins to be moved by his own emotions once he contemplates Iago’s words.

¹⁷⁹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.3.101.

¹⁸⁰ *Othello* (Jeffares), 1.3.343-346.

¹⁸¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 2.1.217-18.

¹⁸² *Othello* (Jeffares), 2.1.225-6.

¹⁸³ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.263-266.

Particularly, he begins to feel moved when he dwells on Iago's claim that Desdemona may appear virtuous but is capable of doing treacherous deeds. Notice, in this soliloquy, the shift in Othello's expressions, where he moves from reasonable deliberation to emotional responses:

If I do prove her haggard,
 Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings,
 I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind
 To prey at fortune.

 She's gone. I am abused, and my relief
 Must be to loathe her."¹⁸⁴

At first, his mind is still making assumptions and venturing reasonable solutions to a possible problem, but soon his cognitive imagining triggers his affect system, whose output is a negative jealousy. He enters an emotional state that, according to him, requires relief; as a contemporary cognitive psychologist would observe, this is because jealousy "is linked with an array of negative feelings, including sadness, depression, rage, embarrassment, fear, and humiliation."¹⁸⁵ These negative emotions begin to affect his thinking, and from this point on, his behavior and actions, including his cognitive imaginings, are guided and shaped by his affective response.

¹⁸⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.260-263, 267-8.

¹⁸⁵ Buss, "Sexual Jealousy," 157; David M. Buss, *The Dangerous Passion: Why Jealousy Is as Necessary as Love and Sex*, (Riverside: Free Press, 2011), 21. In his book, Buss uncovers the origins of jealousy in order to understand its modern manifestations and learn how to grapple with them. He considers this emotion extremely dangerous because it can shatter the most harmonious relationships, giving Shakespeare's Othello as an example. But at the same time, he confesses that women and men typically interpret a partner's jealousy as a sign of the depth of their love, the absence of jealousy in a partner is showing a lack of love. The aim of his book is to attempt to resolve the paradox of how this emotion that is designed to shelter a relationship from intruders "turns homes that might be sanctuaries of love into hells of discord and hate," 28.

2.2 Othello's Jealousy: Experienced, Expressed, but Unregulated

Having established an understanding of how jealousy is provoked in Othello's mind, I turn in this section to examining how he experiences it emotionally and how this experience contributes to and manifests the early stages of his violent action. The first thing Othello verbalizes, after Iago's repeated provocation, is that he feels pain: "I have a pain."¹⁸⁶ He also affirms that Iago has tortured him with these thoughts: "Thou hast set me on the rack. / I swear 'tis better to be much abused / Than but to know't a little."¹⁸⁷ This is another opportunity to show that Shakespeare's dramatization of the psychological effects of jealousy in Othello's responses is, again, astute. Contemporary specialists on jealousy confirm that when jealousy is evoked, human beings commonly experience changes in affect, cognition, and behavior.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, they distinguish between two types of jealousy: cognitive jealousy and emotional jealousy. The former is related to one's thoughts, worries, and suspicions concerning the partner and her relationship with a rival, and the latter involves a range of feelings such as insecurity,

¹⁸⁶ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.284.

¹⁸⁷ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.334-336.

¹⁸⁸ For more on the expression of jealousy and the communicative responses to it, see Jennifer L. Bevan and Pamela J. Lannutti, "The Experience and Expression of Romantic Jealousy in Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Romantic Relationships," *Communication Research Reports* 19, no. 3 (2002): pp. 259. The authors categorize communicative responses to jealousy into two different subsets: interactive responses, which include face-to-face contexts and is partner-directed, and general behavioral responses, which are defined as actions that have "also communicate value but do not have to occur interactively in face-to-face contexts and may not necessitate partner responses," 260.

fear, anger, and sadness.¹⁸⁹ Paul Ekman maintains that jealousy is, in fact, derived from, or a blend of, different emotions all at once.¹⁹⁰ Othello experiences both cognitive and emotional jealousy, and when he does, he wishes he had never learned anything about Desdemona's presumed infidelity because it contaminates his happiness and sleep: "I saw't not, thought it not. It harmed me not; / I slept the next night well, fed well, was free and merry."¹⁹¹ Now, however, his thoughts and worries eat him up inside, and he bids his peace of mind goodbye: "Oh, now forever / Farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!"¹⁹²

The way Shakespeare presents Othello, it seems that his brain exhibits a disposition toward personal paternity and genetic continuity that evolutionary psychologists believe humans orient themselves toward. When examining Othello in the play, his behavior suggests someone who is emotionally programmed to react to infidelity; he behaves as though he considers his wife's sexual betrayal a deprivation of his opportunity to reproduce and convey his genetic traits to new offspring who will perpetuate his genes, something only her fidelity can guarantee. In one of his speeches, he does mention that his wife, who is supposed to be like the fountain from which his children and all his

¹⁸⁹ Laura K. Guerrero and Walid A. Afifi, "Communicative Responses to Jealousy as a Function of Self-esteem and Relationship Maintenance Goals: A Test of Bryson's Dual Motivation Model," *Communication Reports*, 11 no. 2 (1998): pp. 111. The authors of this article focus on jealousy as a complex of thoughts, feelings, and actions which follow threats to self-esteem and/or threats to the existence or quality of the relationship: "responses to jealousy are determined by two independent motivational goals—self-esteem maintenance and relationship maintenance," 112; Bevan and J. Lannutti, "The Experience and Expression," 259.

¹⁹⁰ Buss, "Sexual Jealousy," 157.

¹⁹¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.338-339.

¹⁹² *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.356-7.

descendants flow, has deprived him of his capacity to reproduce: “The fountain from the which my current runs, / Or else dries up – to be discarded thence!”¹⁹³ In this regard, Shakespeare’s *Othello* presents us with a character who seems selfishly and totally compelled by his jealousy, and this early modern representation of jealousy aligns in conceptually suggestive ways with contemporary accounts of a “selfish gene” that programs human beings to see reproduction and survival.¹⁹⁴

Allan argues that “Othello does eventually react in a humoral way... he becomes insanely and murderously jealous,” but his jealousy “has no room in the biologism of humoral theory” because, for her, Othello’s jealousy is a more complex reaction than the humoral response; it also has psychological layering: “Othello’s jealousy is not solely based in the humoral tradition. He has some very clear humoral moments and reactions, but these are often followed by... internalised debate we expect from Shakespeare’s tragic heroes.”¹⁹⁵ Othello’s biological moments and reactions—which Allan identifies with a humoral perspective—can further be illuminated by contemporary insights drawn from cognitive psychology because they tend to coincide with recent accounts of the gendered nature of sexual jealousy. According to Jerome Kagan, men are deemed to experience an extremely strong jealousy when it comes to sexual betrayal, a fact that reinforces our understanding that there is a strong emotional force behind Othello’s outrageous, yet high predictable, actions. Kagan argues that men are prepared to generate

¹⁹³ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.58-59.

¹⁹⁴ Richard Dawkins, 1941. *The Selfish Gene: 30th Anniversary Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88. This physiological fact of the selfish gene is argued by Richard Dawkins who claims that human beings are programmed to behave in altruistic ways because they seek reproduction and survival, constantly trying to multiply their own genes and pass them from one generation to another.

¹⁹⁵ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 41-42.

a particular hierarchy of emotions, and in this hierarchy, jealousy is situated in the top ranking because men are inclined to experience a high level of jealousy when their paternal certainty is threatened.¹⁹⁶ Since Othello's brain is disposed to seek paternal opportunities and is particularly sensitive to the perception of their loss, he feels threatened and becomes uncertain of these opportunities in the existence of a potential rival who is "handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after."¹⁹⁷ Othello expresses that he could tolerate "all kinds of sores and shames on [his] bare head, / poverty to the very lips," and even God's punishment that destroys all his "utmost hopes," except depriving him of his own reproduction, specifically her where all his descendants flow from: "current runs."¹⁹⁸ He believes that Desdemona's horrifying act has deprived him of reproducing his offspring and traits because she polluted herself by infidelity that creates uncertainty to his paternity. In other words, he sees her as a place where disgusting toads copulate and reproduce: "Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads / to knot and gender in. Turn by complexion there."¹⁹⁹ From his speech, it is evident, then, that he experiences jealousy that orients his mind to focus on reproduction instead of finding the truth or concrete evidence to restore his relationship

¹⁹⁶ For more on gender differences and the quality of jealousy experienced particularly by men, see Jerome Kagan, *What Is Emotion?: History, Measures, and Meanings*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 152. Kagan argues that although both males and females worry about their relative status, acceptability to peers, and the quality of their friendships, boys and men are concerned more with differences in status and relative power with peers than with the acceptance and affection derived from their relationships, and this is due to the fact that men with large increases in their hormones reported an intense desire to show potency among the people surrounding them; Christine Harris, "The Evolution of Jealousy," *American Scientist*, 92 (2004): pp. 62.

¹⁹⁷ *Othello* (Jeffares), 2.1.237-8.

¹⁹⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.48-50, 58.

¹⁹⁹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.60-61.

with Desdemona. His words show that jealousy controls his movements, including his cognitive and physical actions because his mind is programmed to yield to such dispositions.

Allan argues against such disposition when she claims that Othello is not strictly controlled by his humor because when Desdemona defends her husband, “and in direct opposition to Renaissance humoral theory,”²⁰⁰ Shakespeare decides to have her insist that imperviousness to jealousy is part of Othello’s nature:

DESDEMONA

Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
Full of crusadoes: and, but my noble Moor
Is true of mind and made of no such
baseness
As jealous creatures are, it were enough
To put him to ill thinking

EMILIA

Is he not Jealousy?

DESDEMONA

Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
Drew all such honours from him.²⁰¹

Similarly, Mary Floyd-Wilson supports this view in her book *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, when she argues that the “Moor is not devoid of passion... he does not act on impulse.”²⁰² Floyd-Wilson considers Othello as humorally cold and cannot be provoked easily: “[Othello] does not succumb to the mere ‘shot[s]’ and

²⁰⁰ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 41.

²⁰¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.4.21-29.

²⁰² Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 147.

‘dart[s]’ of provocation.”²⁰³ However, Floyd-Wilson’s claim is difficult to reconcile with Othello’s own speech and impulsive actions. Othello sees Desdemona’s handkerchief in Bianca’s hands and immediately thinks Cassio has given it to her, so he flies into a jealous rage, and when he sees Desdemona, he impulsively slaps her: “I am glad to see you mad / ... / *Othello Strikes her*.”²⁰⁴ He also continues to address her with these words:

O devil, devil!

If that the earth could teem with woman’s tears,
Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight!²⁰⁵

Moreover, Desdemona’s belief that “the sun where he was born / Drew all sun humours from him” is also refuted in a further conversation that shows Othello’s disposition to jealousy as innate:

EMILIA

But jealous souls will not be answered so.
They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they’re jealous. It is a monster
Begot upon itself, born on itself.

DESDEMONA

Heaven keep that monster from Othello’s mind!²⁰⁶

In these lines, Shakespeare presents jealousy as an innate disposition, especially when he says, “born on itself.” This, in turn, allows us to see that the play itself seems to reject Desdemona’s claim that the hot sun of Othello’s birthplace actually modified his

²⁰³ Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity*, 147.

²⁰⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.1.229, 231.

²⁰⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.1.235-238.

²⁰⁶ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.4.152-156.

“humors,”—which offers a theory of how environment can affect emotion. The play seems to insist that it is not so easily rooted out.

Othello also reveals that his jealousy is further provoked by other factors related to his dominance, power, and status because his experience of jealousy escalates even further when he faces several challenges that he finds himself incapable of controlling. Such challenges could be interpreted as hinting at similar ideas that contemporary theory might explain in certain ways. According to evolutionary psychologists, the idea of paternity that guarantees dominance and perpetuates traits of a male gene has broadened and evolved to concern also status and relative power among peers. Men, who are naturally inclined to sexual jealousy to secure their reproduction, are now more easily “threatened by any challenge to their potency, whether this quality is defined by the ability to dominate an interaction, strength, intellectual talent, athletic skill, sexual prowess, the control of fear, or the ability to defend self against coercion.”²⁰⁷ The play itself presents these challenges. First, the idea of Desdemona’s infidelity threatens Othello’s potency, especially because he is the military general who commands all the armies of Venice. Second, he sees himself losing his mate to a rival who is lower in rank—only recently did Othello promote Cassio to the rank of lieutenant—and lacks military skills. Losing against Cassio, then, is challenging, demeaning, and humiliating to his status and authority. He realizes that he has been deprived of his power by these threats and challenges when he utters: “Farewell the plumèd troops, and the big wars / That makes ambition virtue! O, Farewell / ... / Farewell! Othello’s occupation’s

²⁰⁷ Kagan, *What Is Emotion?*, 152-153.

gone!”²⁰⁸ These threats and challenges provoke his emotions even further because a few lines later, his jealous rage breaks out and his brain begins to react to it verbally: “Death and damnation,”²⁰⁹ “arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell,”²¹⁰ and “swell, bosom, with thy fraught, / For ‘tis of aspics’ tongues.”²¹¹

Jealousy, as we see it in *Othello*, stimulates behavior to alleviate mental pain; the tragic hero’s jealousy grows stronger and stronger until the need to alleviate the anguish it causes through action becomes irresistible. This escalation, of course, happens because Iago successfully manages to show him the lost handkerchief in Cassio’s possession, a detail that leads Othello to imagine Cassio and his wife having a sexual relationship. Othello’s conceptualization of infidelity further feeds his imagination, suspicion, and rage. It escalates his behavior from verbal threats to physical blows, which further provide evidence that Othello is reacting to his jealousy impulsively, and in opposition to Floyd-Wilson’s claim that he is cold and does not succumb to any sort of provocation.²¹² In fact, Othello’s disposition to jealousy—this biological force—motivates him to react impulsively in order to release himself from the pain he has previously expressed he is experiencing because, as some contemporary cognitive psychologists hypothesize, jealousy motivates behavior designed to ward off threats and ease mental pain. This motivated behavior may range from vigilance to violence.²¹³

²⁰⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.348-49, 356.

²⁰⁹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.395.

²¹⁰ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.446.

²¹¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.448-9.

²¹² Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity*, 147.

²¹³ Buss, “Sexual Jealousy,” 156.

Othello illustrates this range of behaviors over the course of the play, expressing four responses to jealousy that cognitive psychologists categorize as modes of *jealousy expression*. Two of these responses are what is commonly considered *general behavioral responses*; the other two are *interactive responses*.²¹⁴ The former includes Othello's investigation of Desdemona and Cassio's relationship by conducting *surveillance*, a behavior performed by the jealous individual in moments of doubt and suspicion, such as when Othello orders Iago to ask his wife, Emilia, to observe Desdemona and put her under surveillance, "set on thy wife to observe,"²¹⁵ or when, with the help of Iago, he observes Cassio to gather evidence. Another general behavioral response is Othello's denigration of his rival in moments of jealousy, a behavior that cognitive psychologists call *derogation competitor*.²¹⁶ He expresses his jealousy by making negative comments about Cassio on several occasions: "O, that the slave had forty thousand lives! / One is too poor, too weak for my revenge."²¹⁷ These two expressions, conducting surveillance and derogation competitor, demonstrate that Othello's jealousy motivates him to verbalize provoked feelings toward Cassio as a means of relieving his anxiety and emotional discomfort, especially after knowing that Iago will kill Cassio on his behalf: "it pleases; very good!"²¹⁸

Of the two jealousy responses that belong to the *interactive responses*, Othello performs *distributive communication*, which is a direct and aggressive communication

²¹⁴ Bevan and Lannutti, "The Experience and Expression," 260.

²¹⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.241.

²¹⁶ Bevan and Lannutti, "The Experience and Expression," 261.

²¹⁷ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.441-2.

²¹⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.1.205.

with the mate, and *violent behaviors*, which are considered actions that physically harm the partner when jealousy is instigated.²¹⁹ In one scene, Othello's jealousy gains control over his cognition as he aggressively addresses Desdemona and then beats her. He reprimands her for what he believes she has done, calling her "impudent strumpet,"²²⁰ and then he strikes her:

Othello: Fire and Brimstone!
 Desdemona: My Lord?
 Othello: Are you wise?
 Desdemona: What, is he angry?

 Othello: I am glad to see you mad.
 Desdemona: Why, sweet Othello –
 Othello: Devil! *Strikes her*
 Desdemona: I have not deserved this.

 Othello: O devil, devil!
 If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
 Each drop she falls would prove a crocodile.
 Out of my sight!²²¹

His eccentric behavior and these outrageous actions (verbal and physical) demonstrate that Othello is acting impulsively, which further reveals the biological part of the hybrid jealousy that I am further illuminating in this chapter.

David Buss, who is a prominent psychologist of jealousy, confirms that situations in which an individual experiences jealousy highlight the substantially higher probability

²¹⁹ Bevan and Lannutti, "The Experience and Expression," 261.

²²⁰ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.79.

²²¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.1. 227-8, 232-234, 237-240.

of their violent behavior because jealousy “subroutines” prepare the brain for violence by increasing heart rate, elevating blood pressure, and increasing adrenaline levels.²²²

Othello is stimulated by these internal factors which provoke him to change his behavior and perform these actions; primarily, his brain processes these internal factors through the amygdala.²²³ Othello acts according to the hedonic demand that his jealousy makes upon his brain, inducing inner turmoil. As he says at one moment in the play, when Iago informed him that Cassio possesses Desdemona’s handkerchief and saw him “wipe his bread with,”²²⁴ he expresses that his emotions are flowing through him like a violent river, overwhelming his rationality until he satisfies them:

Like to the Pontic sea,
Whose icy current and compulsive course
Ne’er keeps retiring ebb but keeps due on
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,
Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace,
Shall ne’er look back, ne’er ebb to humble love,
Till that a capable and wide revenge
Swallow them up.²²⁵

He feels condemned by his emotions because they restrain him from perceiving his

²²² David M. Buss, *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2015), 64.

²²³ Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 57. The amygdala (meaning “almond-shaped”) is a collection of interconnected nuclei associated with emotion and motivation. It detects and responds to threatening and emotionally significant events, though each of its different nuclei serves a different function. For instance, stimulation of one part of the amygdala generates emotional anger, while stimulation of another part generates emotional fear and defensive behavior. Its function is to regulate the emotions involved in self-preservation, such as fear, anger, and anxiety.

²²⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.438.

²²⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.452-459.

situation and dealing with it rationally. The first three lines of his speech take us back to the early modern theory of the body, reason, and emotion that Shakespeare, as I earlier suggested in the introduction, would have known. When Othello utters the words “current” and “ebb,” he is evoking the idea of “humors” that the Renaissance period used to denote in relation to the mental images at the experience of emotions: “emotions were embodied in humors (blood, choler, melancholy, phlegm), when a mental image aroused in the heart a particular emotion, that image literally became saturated with the associated humor before being sent back to the brain.”²²⁶

The contemporary insights on emotions presented by cognitive psychologists differ from the early modern theories in indicating that the emotional brain is responsible for the generation and control of emotions, and has the power to dominate one’s behavior because the amygdala has an anatomical power and connection with the other areas in the brain. It becomes easier to sympathize with Othello from this perspective, than when we deal with his jealousy from a humoral perspective because Allan argues that even though Othello fights his urges to react and wrestles with the humoral temptation of jealousy, his action is ultimately performed according to his own choice; he deliberately follows the path of jealousy rather than he is driven by the biological factor of jealousy. As Allan puts it, “Even though he has been severely tempted, Othello gives a clear indication that choosing the path of jealousy is a conscious choice and (initially) one he chooses not to follow.”²²⁷ Conversely, contemporary insights into how jealousy is processed through the amygdala provide a new interpretation of the mental and emotional obligations that

²²⁶ Zackariah C. Long, “The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet: Infernal Memory in English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy,” *English Literary Renaissance* 44, no. 2 (2014): pp. 162.

²²⁷ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 41.

Othello feels compelled to follow. Reeve explains that the amygdala is capable of sending projections to most parts of the brain, but only receiving back a small amount of mitigating information, and this imbalance explains why Othello's jealousy, especially because it is a negative emotion, gains control over his cognition more than his cognition overpowers his emotion.²²⁸ In other words, Shakespeare's depiction of Othello's loss of self-control is consistent with such theories: when Othello's jealous rage is viewed from the perspective of contemporary cognitive psychology, we might surmise that a lot of Othello's anger and sadness messages are broadcast from his brain, while relatively few messages of his reason and rationality return back to calm his amygdala. In more scientific jargon, this mental process can be explained in terms of the old structures of the amygdala that are responsible for primitive emotionality versus the developed part of its nuclei that allows pathways to the frontal lobe:

The current thinking is that most amygdala nuclei (e.g., central nucleus) are evolutionarily old structures that produce primitive emotionality, while a minority of amygdala nuclei (e.g., basolateral) have undergone relatively recent experiences to develop reciprocal projections and pathways with the neocortex and frontal lobes (Cardinal et al., 2002) that allow for some degree of conscious regulation of these primitive emotions.²²⁹

Such psychological insight explains Othello's behavior: in moments of rage he is led to express his jealousy through verbal and physical actions that he would not consider or perform in normal states; because his jealousy prevails over his cognition, each of his emotionally motivated actions drives him toward his crises. Such insights allow us to see Shakespeare's dramatization of Othello as a character who is compelled by his biology—this powerful force—to emotionally react to jealousy.

²²⁸ Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 58.

²²⁹ Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 58.

Complementing the play's depiction of jealousy's power to overwhelm rational thinking is its characterization of Othello as a character who fails to regulate his emotions—a matter that also features prominently in contemporary cognitive psychological accounts of how individuals respond to jealousy. That is, although the amygdala is responsible for the tendency to respond to emotional states, cognitive psychologists believe that people are able to undergo *emotion regulation*, which is the process whereby individuals seek to redirect their own spontaneous flow of emotions or apply strategies that manage a particular unwanted emotion.²³⁰ One of the basic methods, psychologists suggest, is to shift attention away from emotionally threatening information. The second is to resort to distraction strategies, such as generating positive imagery about the mate and their love, or even performing cognitive reappraisal, which involves reconsidering the mate's upsetting image of infidelity as fake.²³¹ Shakespeare's characterization of Othello indicates an intuitive awareness of precisely such cognitive strategies, but, because Shakespeare writes *Othello* in a tragic mode, the play acknowledges these forms of self-regulation by signaling their absence or their conspicuous inversion. For instance, rather than generating positive images of Desdemona to counteract his suspicions, Othello pays attention to what his emotions are demanding by accepting any information related to his wife's infidelity. He also

²³⁰ Sander L. Koole argues that emotions are often portrayed as irresistible forces. However, there is reason to believe that people have the ability and flexibility to deal with their emotions. Human beings can virtually control every aspect of their emotional processing, including how they direct their attention, their cognitive appraisals that shape their emotional experience, and the physiological consequences of their emotions. These processes, and others by which people manage their emotions, are commonly referred to as emotion regulation in "The Psychology of Emotion Regulation: An Integrative Review," *Cognition & Emotion* 23, no. 1 (2003): pp. 4-6, 16.

²³¹ Koole, "The Psychology of Emotion," 19.

sabotages his chances to restrain his emotions by fantasizing about imaginary scenes of Desdemona's martial betrayal: "she plucked him to my chamber."²³²

The information about his wife's infidelity and the imaginary scenes about the violation of his marriage occupy Othello's mind because his jealousy compels him to dwell on these imaginings. As the total picture of Othello's jealousy that emerges in the play attests, jealousy can overwhelm rationality, incite violent action, and frustrate the very cognitive techniques that might regulate its explosiveness. However, the biological factor is not the only factor that drives Othello to perform his actions. As Allan argues, there are also psychological layering for jealousy, and since my focus in the first part of this section has been on illuminating the biological factor—especially Allan's humoral perspective—of the hybrid theory of jealousy, I now turn to examine the psychological element of Othello's jealousy that shows that his mind also systematically works to find confirmation of his emotional experience.

2.3 Othello's Psychological Layering of Jealousy

Othello's emotions play a leading role in his behavior, and they also exert influence on his thoughts and goals insofar as they illustrate the truism, asserted by cognitive psychologists, that "emotions are irresistible forces that exert a sweeping influence on cognition and behavior."²³³ Allan argues that when examining the key scenes in the play, they reveal that Othello's jealousy is defined by a "mixture of humoral and psychological

²³² *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.1.140-141.

²³³ Koole, "The Psychology of Emotion Regulation," 4.

factors.”²³⁴ Likewise, Floyd-Wilson argues that “Othello has become hybrid” because he is “poisoned by suspicion and driven now by base bloody passions.”²³⁵ This psychological part of jealousy is further illustrated by cognitive psychologists who believe that when jealousy is instigated, the mind systematically works to find proofs and hints of treachery and against ideas that oppose it. In their book *The Enigma of Reason*, Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber explain this mental activity under the term *myside bias* or *confirmation bias*. They argue that the mind is capable of adopting opinion for which it seeks all kinds of confirmation and validation, despite the fact that there is much contradictory evidence that it neglects or rejects, simply to avoid the violation of its former conclusion.²³⁶ Othello’s mind follows this concept of *myside bias* because Othello can only confirm that Desdemona is a betrayer and he is willing to believe any mere clues that she is, without consulting any other possibilities that contradict his view. He never takes into account any claims that Desdemona makes to prove her innocence, neither

²³⁴ Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 42.

²³⁵ Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity*, 155.

²³⁶ Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason*, (MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 215. Myside bias is another term for Confirmation bias, which means that instead of finding reasons for and against a view or conclusion, the agent finds plenty of reasons supporting his initial view, neglecting reasons to support the opposing view. The mind is more efficient in evaluating good arguments than in producing them: when the arguments are there, the agent is able to elevate his argument to a firm decision with the support of validations. The brain gets into biased conclusions because of two conflicting features named the lower- and higher-order features. The lower-order features are commonly associated with instincts in animals and intuition in humans; humans also have higher-order features, which are conscious mental activities: thinking and deliberate reasoning. Sometimes the intuition takes place spontaneously and it is up to the reasoning to correct it and override it. In most cases, the mind fails to do so and scientists have come to a conclusion that the human mind is both biased and lazy: biased because it blindly finds justifications and arguments that support the agent’s point of view, and lazy because it makes little effort to assess the quality of the justifications and arguments it produces.

when she swears that she has not given Cassio the handkerchief (“No, by my life and soul!,”) ²³⁷ nor when she asks for his mercy:

And have you mercy too! I never did
Offend you in my life; never loved Cassio
But with such general warranty of heaven
As I might love. I never gave him token. ²³⁸

He never consults the possibility that her confession might be true. However, his mind is willing to accept any clues that align with his jealousy because the moment he sees her weeping over Cassio’s death, his jealousy is instigated and his rage breaks out again:

“Out, strumpet! Weep’st thou for him to my face?” ²³⁹

Another important scene that demonstrates the hybridity of jealousy, particularly its psychological aspect, is when Othello arrives at a crossroads where he feels condemned to act according to his emotional impulses and kill Desdemona to alleviate his anguish, but, at the same time, he finds himself compelled to resist performing this action because he still loves her. This impasse—intrinsic to jealous rage—is presented in the scene where he is in Desdemona’s room preparing to murder her. Before he proceeds, he expresses that he will not harm her or disfigure her beauty: “I’ll not shed her blood, / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow, / And smooth as monumental alabaster.” ²⁴⁰ He will instead kill her “humanely”: “Yet she must die, else she’ll betray more men.” ²⁴¹ At the same time, he takes from her a kiss and then another and another because he still

²³⁷ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.49.

²³⁸ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.58-61.

²³⁹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.77.

²⁴⁰ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.3-5.

²⁴¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.6.

adores her, “loves” her, and finds her beautiful. Allan contends that this scene “brings this collision of humoral/psychological traditions to a head of as Othello conveys his confusion, changes his mood suddenly, and works himself into a murderous frenzy, but still has the time and the faculties to admire Desdemona’s beauty.”²⁴²

These conflicting emotions make it even harder and more painful for him to proceed with his decision. It is harder for him, first because he has to deal with two emotions and their influences all at once, and second because they are conflicting emotions that motivate two different cognitive decisions instead of one that is evoked by one single emotion or two harmonious emotions. It is more painful for him to perpetrate the deed because even when his conflicting cognitive judgments are resolved by killing her, his emotions towards her remain unresolved.²⁴³ He finds himself subject to claims made by these conflicting emotions and decisions such that the importance to him of one

²⁴² Allan, “Seized by the ‘Mirth-Marring Monster,’” 43.

²⁴³ David Pugmire, “Conflicting Emotions and the Indivisible Heart,” *Cambridge University Press on behalf of Royal Institute of Philosophy* 71, no. 275 (1996): pp. 30. Pugmire’s argument is that ambivalent emotional states would only be possible if emotions can contrast, differ, and even oppose themselves to one another. He claims that the mind could be torn between pairs of emotions such as wistfulness contrasting with disgust or gladness opposing itself to sadness if the same thing could ever engage them in tandem. His aim, in this article, is to know how emotions of different types manage to contrast, clash, or consort with one another. More specifically, he explains how far the experience of an emotion involves the person having it is its capacity to carry him into action and to follow him through it. At the core of his discussion, Pugmire argues that there may be reasons why the awfulness of an act is restricted to situations and should not devolve onto its perpetrator, because it was a fluke, a result of special circumstances, or because the perpetrator was not himself. He gives an example of a perpetrator who did not create the predicament in which he acted and could not avoid it; doing nothing was not an option and he could not have done any better by choosing differently; in this case, the perpetrator is a victim of his choice and merits pity for that. Despite all this, forms of distress such as guilt, revulsion, or hate, can transfer themselves from the act to him. This is Othello’s predicament: the guilt of his choice comes back to haunt him in the third section.

emotion cannot be qualified by the importance that attaches for him to the countervailing emotion, thus making his resolution difficult, unpleasant, and certainly insupportable.

Like God in the Old Testament, he finds himself punishing the one he loves: “This sorrow’s heavenly, / It strikes where it doth love.”²⁴⁴ This, in turn, leaves Othello with intensified negative sensations because he is torn by emotional demands that are structurally impossible to fully gratify.

The psychological dimension of jealousy, I argue, is represented here not only by the confusion or the admiration of his wife, as Allan claims, but also in Othello’s mental process when he starts to weave a more controlled scenario having to do with justice and public duty in order to justify his violent reprisals. The mind’s capacity to bring about emotional gratification is exemplified by Othello’s psychological process after he is torn by conflicting emotions. In order to escape the adverse hedonic sensations he is experiencing, Othello takes counteractive measures by deceiving himself with the concept of justice that posits Desdemona’s death as a solution. He comes to a point where he realizes that it is an unacceptable choice just to slaughter her out of sheer vindictiveness, so he modifies the cause of his action in order to justify it to himself with a nobler motive. He moves from one mental condition focused on sexual jealousy to another mental state focused on justice in order to overcome his hesitation and mitigate the pain that the emotional conflict is producing. In other words, he reconstitutes himself as a reluctant-functionary of the judicial system who must carry out justice—although it is a difficult task in front of Desdemona who “dost almost persuade / Justice to break her

²⁴⁴ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.21-22.

sword!”²⁴⁵—a cognitive framework that will surreptitiously allow him to free himself from his emotional misery. By thus reconstituting his role in her murder, he attempts to deceive his conscience into believing that she deserves death on the universal grounds of justice, rather than merely as a punishment to satisfy his outraged (and personal) sexual jealousy. Contemporary cognitive psychologists call such a convenient shift in beliefs *motivationally biased*, noting that individuals “*attempt to deceive oneself, or to cause oneself to believe something, or to make it easier for oneself to believe something*” in order to resolve a difficult situation that is too hard or too painful to experience, live or even tolerate.”²⁴⁶ In other words, Othello shifts his motivational beliefs from petty jealousy to an ostensibly more acceptable set of values in order to resolve the discomfort produced by the original and still more pressing motive.

That the psychological part of jealousy plays the main role in this shift—inciting Othello to claim that Desdemona has done something to offend the morality of the camp so that he can bring himself to perform the terrible deed that mitigates his emotional pain—is further supported by the play’s historical context. During the Renaissance, adultery was a very serious offense, and the conventional punishments at that time, including judicial verdicts set by rulers, governors, and judges of crimes, were humiliating, ranging from naming and shaming in public to putting the criminal in a pillory or sometimes an “adulterous woman might have her head shaved or her clothing

²⁴⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.16-17.

²⁴⁶ Alfred R. Mele, *Self-Deception Unmasked*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 17-18.

torn,”²⁴⁷ but they never entailed killing her. Given this context, it seems likely that without his emotion of jealousy, Othello would not have proceeded with the punishment of killing his wife coldly, out of a notion of justice on the grounds of committing fornication. To put it in other terms: the justificatory function of his jealousy would be relatively shallow if he could have made the same moral judgment independently of his jealousy, by using moral concepts he already accepts. Because he did not, in reality, make the judgment of justice prior to the emotion of jealousy, we can only deduce that his jealousy plays a facilitative role in the justification of his judgment.

With regards to the complexity of language use and rhetoric in the play, especially when it comes to the self-deception that Shakespeare assigns to Othello in order to proceed with his deed, it is worth noting that English dramatists during the Renaissance period were using rhetorical tradition that shaped their work and was center in their comedy and tragedy. Wayne A. Rebhorn argues that rhetorical education throughout the Renaissance was an instrument of debate, known by *argumentum in utramque partem*, in which schoolboys were taught to argue both sides of a case: “advanced students of rhetoric were trained to produce orations, usually on hypothetical propositions, which they were to attack or defend from different points of view... [known by] the famous *argumentum in utramque partem*, argument on each side (of a case).”²⁴⁸ Such rhetorical education, Rebhorn argues, “helps to explain the proliferation of dialogues in the

²⁴⁷ Sandra Sider, *Handbook to Life in Renaissance Europe*, (New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2005), 295.

²⁴⁸ Wayne A. Rebhorn, “Rhetoric and Politics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* edited by Michael J. MacDonald, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 392.

Renaissance.”²⁴⁹ Likewise, Russ McDonald argues that this practice of debating topics from both sides was common in the early modern period and demanded imaginative exertion, “an effort to place [the student] in the position of the debating opponent and thus see both sides of the issue with absolute clarity.”²⁵⁰ McDonald contends that such imaginative training profited the dramatists of the early modern period and that whether or not Shakespeare “was an aspiring playwright when he attended the King Edward Grammar School in Stratford, he would later find the method useful in the creation of dramatic conflict.”²⁵¹ Arthur F. Kinney adds that this historical phenomenon of debating both sides of a case allows us to interpret the early modern text in different ways because Renaissance playwrights assigned speeches to their characters that “are actually hypotheses or propositions urged upon an audience.”²⁵² From a rhetorical perspective, this implies that Othello’s speech, especially when he deceives himself, might be a depiction of his own problem, and that he argues the side that serves his desire to proceed with the deed.

Having acknowledged the rhetorical tradition of the period and its influence on the writing of the Renaissance dramatists, however, it remains important to recognize that the rhetorical tradition is not the only way through which we can examine Othello’s language, for the psychological perspective—which provokes him to speak his lines—is

²⁴⁹ Rebhorn, “Rhetoric and Politics,” 392.

²⁵⁰ Russ McDonald, “Rhetoric and Theater,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* edited by Michael J. MacDonald, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 451.

²⁵¹ McDonald, “Rhetoric and Theater,” 451.

²⁵² Arthur F. Kinney, “Rhetoric and Poetics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies* edited by Michael J. MacDonald, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 444.

also evident in the hybridity of his jealousy that further comes into collision when he is about to kill Desdemona. His psychological part of his jealousy prepares him to justify his judgment, but he is only capable of performing the killing when his biological part comes into play because once he sees Desdemona caring for Cassio's death, he becomes furious, reprimanding her and calling her "strumpet" as if his cognition falters and his amygdala gains control, and he smothers her despite all her pleas for mercy:

Desdemona: O banish me, my lord, but kill me not!

Othello: Down, strumpet!

Desdemona: Kill me tomorrow; let me live tonight!

Othello: Nay, if you strive –

Desdemona: But half an hour!

Othello: Being done, there is no pause.

Desdemona: But while I say one prayer!

Othello: It is too late.

Desdemona: O, Lord, Lord, Lord! *He smothers her*²⁵³

Having Othello performed the deed, we arrive at one of the most challenging questions of this play: By what standards does Othello think that death is the only appropriate reaction to a woman, even if she were guilty? He could simply banish her (as she asked) or spurn her; he could also send her home to her father, but he decides to take her life. He goes beyond the standard and rational reactions in such circumstances and performs a morbid act because he expresses his reaction exaggeratedly.²⁵⁴ As a

²⁵³ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.78-84.

²⁵⁴ Christine R. Harris, "A Review of Sex Differences in Sexual Jealousy, Including Self-Report Data, Psychophysiological Responses, Interpersonal Violence, and Morbid Jealousy," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): pp. 115. Morbid jealousy is a term used to describe individuals who show symptoms of a usually

psychophysiological response to jealousy, he attempts to stop or prevent his wife's infidelity in an aggressive fashion, and Steven Pinker considers this response to jealousy as the "largest cause of spousal abuse and spousal homicide."²⁵⁵ Certainly, Othello's jealousy pollutes his mind with its own excessive terms that extreme violence becomes the only vocabulary of action that seems commensurate with what he deems true for himself. Nevertheless, Othello's killing motive has another important motivational explanation that has to do with entitlement and exclusive enjoyment.

Steven Pinker confirms that spousal murder is often performed to prevent others from enjoying the mate further if the self cannot enjoy her: "The forsaken man may stalk [his mate], hunt her down, and execute her, always with the same rationale: 'If I can't have her, no one can.'"²⁵⁶ Othello's action seems to be based on this paradigm. The relationship he shares with his wife not only involves opportunities of reproduction to perpetuate his genes and traits, but also provides him with a number of essential relationship rewards from warmth and validation to meaning and love that he believes they only belong to him. Seeing Cassio usurping this relationship and all that comes with it from reproduction and rewards can only evoke his jealousy to motivate any action that

delusional conviction that their mates are cheating on them, which is very often accompanied by anger, depression, and urges to put their mates under surveillance. In some cases, these morbidly jealous individuals attempt to prevent infidelity in an aggressive manner.

²⁵⁵ Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 489. Pinker believes that one of the reasons why men kill their disloyal wives is because men have deployed the full cognitive apparatus of ownership in conceiving of their relationship to their wives. In most cultures, marriage is a shameless transfer of ownership of a woman from her father to her husband, and when the wife is exposed to other intruders, by committing adultery, she makes herself "impure by introducing an improper substance," that should be purified by death, 490-491.

²⁵⁶ Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, 489.

gets between Cassio and Desdemona; he seeks any action—whether it is physical or mental—that stops or prevents this threatening liaison. His decision to kill her and not banish her, then, is motivated by the idea that she and Cassio may reunite and enjoy a relationship if he allows both to live: “I had rather be a toad / And live upon the vapour of a dungeon / Than keep a corner in the thing I love / For others’ uses.”²⁵⁷ Consequently, his jealousy activates his cognition and urges him to command Iago to kill his rival and, for him, to proceed with killing her in order to prevent them from forming a relationship to which he believes he is entitled exclusively.²⁵⁸

Othello rationalizes his murder of Desdemona by appealing to “justice”—only to find that he is later haunted by the guilt that lingers as a result of this self-deception. After he murders Desdemona, he is confronted by the sensation of guilt that perpetuates the hedonic nightmare he had intended to escape once and for all. He soon decides that the only escape from this intolerable feeling is to destroy his own consciousness—the center of his awareness, which now torments him. It is, as cognitive philosophers put it, “[guilt is] the sense that... often lead[s] to subsequent confusion, self-directed anger and a pressing desire to disappear.”²⁵⁹ Othello’s self-serving action ironically brings him to a new emotional state that paves the way to his suicide. His brain arouses guilt at the horror and realization of his action and, of course, the loss of his innocent wife. He begins to

²⁵⁷ *Othello* (Jeffares), 3.3.270-273.

²⁵⁸ Mingi Chung and Christine R. Harris, “Jealousy as a Specific Emotion: The Dynamic functional Model,” *Emotion Review* 10, no. 4 (2018): pp. 273. Once threat is detected and appraised, individuals activate jealousy, which includes feelings, cognitions, action readiness, behaviors, and most importantly, the essential motivation to engage in any action that protects the relationship and its rewards.

²⁵⁹ Simon M. Rice, David Kealy, John L. Oliffe, Matt S. Treeby & John S. Ogrodniczuk, “Shame and Guild Mediate the Effects of Alexithymia on Distress and Suicide-Related Behaviours among Men,” *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 2019, pp. 6.

feel responsibility for her death and deep remorse for ending her life, even before knowing that she was innocent: “Oh, insupportable! Oh, heavy hour!” When the truth about her loyalty and innocence is revealed to him, accompanied by an epiphany that he was tricked by Iago,²⁶⁰ his guilt escalates to the point that he wishes to be damned:

O cursèd, cursèd slave! Whip me, ye devils,
 From the possession of this heavenly sight!
 Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
 Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
 O Desdemona! Dead Desdemona! Dead. O! O!²⁶¹

He offers this extraordinarily precise visual picture of damnation, no doubt based on the popular cultural traditions of hell with burning fires and devils inflicting punishments. It becomes intolerable for him to sustain this new negative emotion of regret, which inevitably evolves into considerable self-punishment.

This idea of punishment comes from within Othello’s mind because he regrets the horrifying action that he cannot undo. He finds himself in a situation in which he experiences an unpleasant emotional state brought about by moral objections to his blameworthy, conspicuously vituperative action.²⁶² Such mental state, according to cognitive psychologists, motivates him to attempt to make amends or try to repair the

²⁶⁰ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.318.

²⁶¹ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.274-8.

²⁶² Jared F. Roush, Sarah L. Brown, Sean M. Mitchell, and Kelly C. Cukrowicz, "Shame, Guilt, and Suicide Ideation among Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, and Sodomasochism Practitioners: Examining the Role of the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide," *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 47, no. 2 (2016): pp. 130. Guilt is indirectly related to the development of suicide ideation, which is caused by proximal interpersonal risk factors, one of them is *perceived burdensomeness*, indicated by feelings of self-hatred and the belief that one’s death is worth more than one’s life (same feeling that Othello experiences when he finds death happier than life).

damage he has caused. Othello cannot revive Desdemona; he is fully aware that there is no way to undo her death:

Once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume"²⁶³

Nor does he believe that he can remedy his behavior through repentance and forgiveness, as his conscience convicts him for an action he has taken to restore his emotional equilibrium, i.e. a vengeful act against the perpetrator—in this case, himself. His suicide is thus a form of self-punishment through which he acknowledges that he does not have the right to take another's life, as well as a fatal way of alleviating the guilt he feels for taking the life of his innocent and beloved wife.

Othello's suicidal decision reflects a logic of balance: he understands his murder of Desdemona to have violated some principle of balance which may only be restored by an answering action that creates an equilibrium: death is matched by death. As Jon Elster puts it, "The guilty person who reacts by punishing himself is trying not to undo the harm he did but to create an equilibrium in which suffering is matched by suffering."²⁶⁴ It is a cognitive process about balancing costs—emotional ones in this case—between Desdemona and Othello: Desdemona "paid" for her alleged disloyalty, so now he must "pay." In other words, because Othello destabilized nature through murder, he must now appease that perceived order through an equivalent cost to himself. Cognitive psychologists argue that the human brain is designed to maintain this balance of

²⁶³ *Othello* (Jeffares), 4.2.10-13.

²⁶⁴ Elster, *Strong Feelings*, 40.

emotions, noting its tendency to induce actions that, in one way or another, ultimately reduce the negative feeling living inside of him. Othello cannot cope with his guilt and in order to create this balance, he finds death the ultimate salvation from this infinite suffering that his jealousy and its influence have brought to others and now to himself: “I’d have thee live, / For in my sense ‘tis happiness to die.”²⁶⁵ After going through even just a short period of mental and emotional suffering, Othello cannot tolerate the guilt feelings that may haunt him for life. He blames himself, ascribes responsibility to himself, and commits suicide over Desdemona—“I kissed thee ere I killed thee: no way but this, / Killing myself, to die upon a kiss”²⁶⁶—falling victim to his mind which generates emotions he fails to regulate. He ends up following the emotional system that induces his actions; he has followed the pure promptings of a designed brain, his own, and in doing no more than that, has lived out his own jealousy-inflicted version of the tragic sense of life.

Having approached Othello’s internal processes—emotional and cognitive—from a cognitive-psychological perspective to understand his violent behavior and action, it is crucial to note that such an account of Othello’s jealousy is not a defense of domestic violence or spousal murder. It is true that the human mind is disposed to emotional experiences and reactions that influence the course of action—sometimes decisively—but Othello’s decision to kill Desdemona and then commit suicide is Shakespeare’s representation of a pathological and morbid jealousy that does not follow the norm; otherwise, everyone who is made upset by jealous feelings could be excused for murder.

²⁶⁵ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.285-286.

²⁶⁶ *Othello* (Jeffares), 5.2.353-354.

As Bell argues in her article “Othello’s jealousy,” Shakespeare, “as is his habit, is always telling us a number of things at once. The power of the theme of sexual jealousy obscures other subjects in the play.”²⁶⁷ In his emphasis on the theme of sexual jealousy, Shakespeare presents the play—“rooted in the unnaturalness of *any love* inordinate in its expectations... expressed by the symbolic fantasy of miscegenation, the monstrous union of the socially separated”²⁶⁸—with a protagonist who fails to regulate his emotions in order for the audience to “respond to [martial violence] with recognition, seeing this problem rooted, then as now, in false notions.”²⁶⁹

Othello’s jealousy can then be seen as a morbid and pathological case—someone who is acting totally outside the norm—in which Othello’s “reaction is exaggerated.”²⁷⁰ Harris argues that morbid jealousy is a term used to describe individuals “who exhibit symptoms of a usually delusional conviction that their mates are cheating on them, which is frequently accompanied by anger, depression, and urges to check up on and spy on their mates... attempt[ing] to prevent infidelity in an aggressive fashion.”²⁷¹ Likewise, Buss argues that, for some individuals, jealousy is “a form of *pathology*.”²⁷² According to

²⁶⁷ Millicent Bell, “Othello’s Jealousy,” *Yale Review* 85, no. 2 (1997): pp. 122.

²⁶⁸ Bell, “Othello’s Jealousy,” pp. 122.

²⁶⁹ Bell, “Othello’s Jealousy,” pp. 122.

²⁷⁰ Harris, “A Review of Sex Differences in Sexual Jealousy,” pp. 115.

²⁷¹ Harris, “A Review of Sex Differences in Sexual Jealousy,” pp. 115.

²⁷² Buss, “Sexual Jealousy,” pp. 162; many other philosophers of jealousy confirm that jealousy is “the emotional state linked with the desire to preserve one’s possession, sits high atop a list comprised of the most human emotional experiences; among the more differentiated human emotions, it is an extremely common, heterogeneous and complex emotion ranging from normality to pathology, with different degrees of intensity, persistence and insight” in Gabriel Cipriani, Marcella Vedovello, Angelo Nuti, and

his account, “normal psychologically healthy people... simply do not experience extreme or intense jealousy,” whereas individuals who suffer pathological jealousy experience “extreme jealousy [that] results from a major malfunction of the human mind.”²⁷³ The play itself demonstrates that Othello experiences a pathological jealousy because Shakespeare portrays him with a range of irrational thoughts, extreme emotions, and morbid actions. Michael Kingham and Harvey Gordon believe that “irrational thoughts and emotions” are aspects of morbid/pathological jealousy, which is “associated with unacceptable or extreme behaviour, in which the dominant theme is a preoccupation with a partner’s sexual unfaithfulness based on unfounded evidence.”²⁷⁴

Ultimately, Othello’s tragedy is that he possesses a human mind that is subject to biological and psychological responses to jealousy, which, in turn, manipulate the entire trajectory of his experience, behavior, action, and certainly his downfall. Shakespeare portrays him disposed to an extreme form of jealousy, a pathological one, in order to emphasize the theme of sexual jealousy and martial violence. His protagonist gradually builds a narrative of hedonic responses to jealousy, guilt, justice, and responsibility, which are all originate in the cognitive faculties that eventually lead him to commit suicide. Therefore, Othello’s mind writes its story in connection with his emotional provocation, stability, and equilibrium. With the help of contemporary cognitive-psychological insights that confirm the disposition of sexual jealousy in the human brain and provide empirical explanations to its experience and influence, including the ones of

Andrea Di Fiorino, “Dangerous Passion: Othello Syndrome and Dementia,” *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 66 (2012): pp. 467.

²⁷³ Buss, “Sexual Jealousy,” pp. 162.

²⁷⁴ Michael Kingham and Harvey Gordon, “Aspects of Morbid Jealousy,” *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment* 10 (2004): pp. 207.

morbid and pathological jealousy, we are able to arrive at a deeper understanding of Othello's eccentric behavior and downfall, and we are able to illuminate Allan's argument that the play itself "anticipates" contemporary theory drawing on more than one tradition of explanation for jealousy—the hybridity of humoral and psychological jealousy—because contemporary cognitive psychology also draws both from biology and psychology. Such insights shed light on aspects of human sexuality that contribute to the fundamental narrative and inspiration of Shakespeare, who artistically shapes his work according to the genetic unconscious of our emotional programs,²⁷⁵ from jealousy and hard evidence to reason and guilt, which are engraved in Othello's genetic make-up and lurks behind his tragic behavior.

²⁷⁵ Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind*, 223.

CHAPTER THREE

Desire: Faustus's Eighth Deadly Sin
and
the Tragic Properties of an Imaginative Mind

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* has long been recognized as a play of desire. More than a century ago, Israel Gollancz characterized the play as "a parable of the impotent yearnings of the Middle Ages—its passionate [and] its fettered curiosity amid the cramping limits of imperfect knowledge, and irrational dogmatism"²⁷⁶ and claimed that Faustus possessed a "conscience-stricken desire."²⁷⁷ Seventy-two years later, Frank Manley called Faustus a tragic hero with ambition to elevate himself and surpass the limits of man, but his desires only bring him downward, to the beasts and core of nature.²⁷⁸ Regardless of whether critics view Faustus's desire in a religious framework, as in Augustine's view that desire "was the result of human sinfulness and disobedience to

²⁷⁶ Christopher Marlowe, and Israel Gollancz, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus: Edited with a Preface, Notes and a Glossary by I. Gollancz*, (London: J. M. Dent and Aldine House, 1897), v.

²⁷⁷ Marlowe and Gollancz, *The Tragical History*, v.

²⁷⁸ Frank Manley argues that Faustus's desire was meant to making him better than a man, but instead it brings him downward to the very womb of nature: "Earlier in the play he wanted to search out the secrets of nature and reveal them in all their rich individuality, like the orient pearl his spirits would ransack the ocean... Now, in the dissolution of his pride, he would become one of those secrets himself. He would hide in the ocean the pearls of his soul." "The Nature of Faustus," *Modern Philology* 66, no.3 (1969): pp. 231.

God,”²⁷⁹ or a secular one, as in Evelyn Cobley’s claim that desire is related to sensibility and it is an “irrational impulse” which can be in opposition to thought, reason, and morality,²⁸⁰ there is still an extraordinary congruence of contemporary attitude about this motivational force behind Faustus’s actions and downfall. The varied testimony on the play by contemporary scholars—Ruth Stevenson, Alexander Norman Jeffares, and John D. Cox among them—strongly suggests that the story offers a psychological allegory about the momentum of desire.

The early modern period had a particular understanding of desire that David Hoeniger explores in his book chapter “The Passions and the Body.” Hoeniger argues that philosophers of the early modern period maintained that there were two powers that prompted and directed the motion (or action) of the person: appetites and passions.²⁸¹ He indicates that the term “appetite” referred to desire, and that “appetite can be aroused by a simple bodily need like hunger or by a passion or by the higher, rational faculty through the will.”²⁸² Yet, he presents Thomas Aquinas’s view—which was passed down to the Renaissance—that “passions are in themselves passive and are aroused only by the appetites.”²⁸³ Hoeniger further illustrates the early modern concept of how desire is reinforced by the liver: “the liver produces substantial red blood, it fills the body with abundant nutriment, vitality, and warmth and thus strengthens... desires, including the

²⁷⁹ Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 30.

²⁸⁰ Evelyn Cobley, *Temptations of Faust: The Logic of Fascism and Postmodern Archaeologies of Modernity*, (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 36, 241.

²⁸¹ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

²⁸² Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

²⁸³ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

sexual drive.”²⁸⁴ Moreover, he argues that Shakespeare’s age inherited such “traditions concerning the organ or organs in which the passions and appetite are located,” adding that “passions reside in the heart... [because] it is a vital organ... [and] the primary organ of life.”²⁸⁵ These two traditions were later conceptualized by “the majority of the psychological treatises of the later Renaissance [that] the heart is the seat of all or most of the passions, [including appetites].”²⁸⁶

From a cognitive psychological perspective, desire is considered to be aroused from and operated through the mind, and is a motivational force that commands the individual to perform an action: “the strength of a desire... [is] the degree to which a desire commands attention, and the level of energy that a desire would bring to an action that it motivates.”²⁸⁷ Cognitive psychological studies also hold that desire “can serve as a practical reason: only desires can motivate action, and so only desires can serve as practical reasons.”²⁸⁸ Building off such definitions of desire, my claim in this chapter is that we can arrive at a deeper understanding than the early modern period of the psychological allegory of desire in *Doctor Faustus* in light of new philosophical and scientific insights within the framework of cognitive psychology.²⁸⁹ The early modern

²⁸⁴ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

²⁸⁵ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 163.

²⁸⁶ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 163.

²⁸⁷ Peter K. McInerney, “Strength of Desire,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (2004): pp. 299.

²⁸⁸ Allen Coates, “Ethical Internalism and Cognitive Theories of Motivation,” *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 129, no. 2 (2006): pp. 296.

²⁸⁹ Ruth Stevenson, “The Comic Core of Both A- and B-Editions of ‘Doctor Faustus,’” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 53, no.2 (2013): pp. 408; *Doctor Faustus*,

theories and the contemporary cognitive psychological insights on desire distinguish not only by the organ that generates desire, but also—as I will show below—in how it is aroused.

A psychological reading rooted in desire is in many ways invited by the action of the play, which presents Faustus as a typical example of a tragic man who falls victim to his own mind. From the outset of the play, the Chorus informs us that because Faustus possesses such a voracious desire, things will turn out badly for him:

So much he profits in divinity,
The fruitful plot of scholarism graced,
That shortly he was graced with doctor's name,
Excelling all, whose sweet delight disputes
In th' heavenly matters of theology.
Till, swollen with cunning, of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
And, melting, heavens conspired his overthrow.²⁹⁰

Faustus has found academic studies unsatisfactory, dismissing philosophy, medicine, theology and law, which serve to show him the drudgery involved in the practice: “This study fits a mercenary drudge, / Who aims at nothing but external trash.”²⁹¹ Moreover, in the above lines, Marlowe compares him to the figure of Icarus, the son of Daedalus, who goes beyond normal limits and flies too near the sun that melted the waxen wings his

(Jeffares), xi; John D. Cox, “‘To Obtain His Soul’: Demonic Desire for the Soul in Marlowe and Others,” *Early Theatre* 5, no. 2 (2002): pp. 40.

²⁹⁰ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), Prologue. 15-22.

²⁹¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.35-36.

father had made.²⁹² Faustus, too, is as a man who desires to go beyond normal limits, conventional realities, and theological beliefs by gaining supernatural powers to escape death, know the unknown, and command everything that exists in his world. In his speech, he acknowledges the inevitable death from which he wants to flee:

Ay, we must die an everlasting death.
 What doctrine call you this? *Che sarà, sarà*:
 What will be, shall be, Divinity adieu!
 These metaphysics of magicians,
 And necromantic books are heavenly;
 Lines, circles, signs, letters and characters!
 Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
 O what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
 Is promised to the studious artisan!
 All things that move between the quiet poles
 Shall be at my command.²⁹³

We come to realize, then, that his life becomes determined by inexorable desires that motivate him to act recklessly and engage in dangerous practices of the most eccentric sort, especially because his desire exceeds the strength of his intellectual capacities.

Reading the play as a psychological allegory about the momentum of desire involves at least a partial reconsideration of the play's overtly religious framework. I would not deny that Marlowe's play has a strong representation of theology: it is manifestly concerned with the struggle between God and the devil and with moral

²⁹² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), xi.

²⁹³ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.45-56.

questions of good and evil, temptation, sin, and punishment.²⁹⁴ However, many scholars have argued that the play is a “rebellious one deriving from Renaissance conflicts between acceptance of orthodox Christian doctrine and [a validation of] the exploration of ideas by individuals.”²⁹⁵ In Beecher’s words, Faustus’s purpose is “to escape the tyranny of a pre-modern belief system and to live the freedom of modern plurality.”²⁹⁶ Or, as I would put it, the play introduces the tension between escaping from restrictive religious frames conditioned by pious life and inevitable death, on the one hand, and desire for ultimate power that Faustus attempts to achieve through necromancy, on the other. As this tension suggests, *Doctor Faustus*’s damned hero and his tormenting devils are not simply instructive figures from the medieval morality play tradition; they are also folk-psychological indicators of Marlowe’s own understanding of motivation and action as a psychological system. *Doctor Faustus* is, in other words, a play of desire and a tragedy of the mind because in all its scenes, we are forced to acknowledge cognitive activities and inner conversations taking place in Faustus’s mind. Marlowe, through his depiction of Faustus’s interiority, thus creates this tension between the Christian moral framework of desire-as-sin and the cognitive-psychological dynamics of desire-as-

²⁹⁴ In his study of Faustus, David A. Male identifies Faustus’s first series of doubts when “his mind or conscience clings to thoughts of God whilst the rest stays with the Devil,” showing that he struggles between two opposing religious figures. Male further argues that the pervasively binary moral structure of good and evil is represented by the figures of Good and Bad Angels, which are drawn from medieval morality plays: the good is a “constant reminder of the possibility of repentance and salvation,” whereas the evil is the seduction of Faustus into “visions of richness and power.” Besides the theological conceptions of God and Devil, the play utilizes well-recognized examples of “damnation, the just punishment of the unrepentant and the sin of despair which represents a denial of God’s forgiving mercy that must inevitably lead to condemnation.” *Doctor Faustus by Christopher Marlowe*, (London: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1985), 14, 18, 77.

²⁹⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), x.

²⁹⁶ Beecher, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds*, 74.

motivator-of-action because he creates a plot in which he presents his protagonist trying to escape the tyranny of religion by pursuing his desire and suffering its consequences.

What in fact are we saying when we say Faustus's desire is behind his damnation or that Faustus falls victim to his own desire? What is desire and what does it do to Faustus who exhibits its experience and influence through his action? How can we understand desire as a motive that influences Faustus's cognition and action to liberate him from the constraints of the Christian world? These are the questions I wish to consider in this chapter. As a means of approaching them, I would like first of all briefly to examine the enabling premises—which differ from the early modern theories because their emphasis is on mental states, rather than on simple bodily needs and fluids—and methodological strategies of the most-known current commentators on desire and action: Timothy Schroeder and Donald Davidson. These two scholars have not written on Faustus—indeed their scientific and philosophical insights about desire and how the mind generates this motivational force have focused almost exclusively on actual people and patients—but it is nonetheless worth our while to attend to their programmatic claim that “desire is a motivational phenomenon” because this idea is crucial to understanding Faustus's behavior and downfall. Schroeder claims, for instance, that desire is a mental state that leads human beings to action, including those mental and physical actions that pertain to everyday experience.²⁹⁷ His proposed theory is based on the standard principle that desires are action-guiding: “Desires can play all sorts of causal roles within our heads, but there is just one role definitive of desiring, and that is of engaging the mental

²⁹⁷ See more on the nature of desire that is understood through scientific and philosophical findings and interpreted through the many sources of evidence available when it comes to thinking about the mind in Timothy Schroeder's *Three Faces of Desire*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 178.

machinery in such a way as to tend to bring it about that *P*, for the *P* that is the content of the desire. Desires are distinguished by what they do, and what they do is move us to act.”²⁹⁸ In his article, “Actions, Reasons, and Causes,” Davidson discusses the essential elements of an action. He points out that for an agent to take an action, he should “(a) [have] some sort of pro attitude toward actions of a certain kind, and (b) [believe] that his action is this kind.” He also specifies that under (a) come desires, wantings, and urges, which “can be interpreted as attitudes of an agent directed toward actions of a certain kind.”²⁹⁹

In *Doctor Faustus*, the complementarity of the hero’s desire and action directly provides evidence of a theory of desire-guided action that is remarkably similar to contemporary cognitive psychology’s approaches to the same set of questions. As we shall see, Faustus’s desire and actions are forthrightly dramatized in the play with all their conditional components. Moreover, the play explores desire as a motivator of action in ways that resonate powerfully with current cognitivist theories about the role of emotional satisfaction in motivating desire as well as about the dangers of emotion-led desire in the generation of delusion. Today, the science informing cognitive psychology confirms that desire is more complicated than the early modern theories which maintain that “desire, can manifest in a variety of forms, as, for instance, greed and ambition.”³⁰⁰ Desire, for contemporary cognitive psychologists, is connected to the emotional system

²⁹⁸ Schroeder. *Three Faces of Desire*, 3.

²⁹⁹ Donald Davidson explains further that the word ‘attitude’ in here not only covers the permanent character traits that are reflected in his or her lifetime behavior, but also it is “the most passing fancy that prompts a unique action, like a sudden desire to touch a woman’s elbow.” “Actions, Reasons, and Causes,” in *Essential Davidson*, ed. Donald Davidson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 23.

³⁰⁰ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

in relation to the seeking of pleasure and the avoidance of displeasure either through the fulfilling or frustration of desire—two emotional forces that can play all sorts of causal roles within human action, motivating an individual’s behavior in order to obtain the content of their desire—something it can do only because it involves pleasure as a core component.³⁰¹ Galen Strawson, for instance, observes that “the experience of positive or negative affect occurs when the desire is fulfilled or frustrated.”³⁰² Melinda Vadas states that for someone to desire something attests to the fact that they find satisfaction in it.³⁰³ Likewise, Wayne Davis joins this conversation by confirming that desires “yield pleasure when satisfied.”³⁰⁴ Such psychological insights are borne out in the play, for Faustus is inclined to desire in order to prosper materially but also to achieve emotional satisfaction out of earthly power, and this orientation has meaning in cognitive psychology because these emotional gratifications can be achieved through the human reward system. As I explain in more detail below, Faustus’s emotions, desire, and actions can be read as a system in which the actions generated by “extrinsic” desire (the instrumental desire for worldly things and achievements) are ultimately regulated by the emotional satisfactions associated with what cognitive psychologists call “intrinsic” desire (a more fundamental and satisfying mode of desiring that is associated with obtaining pleasure or avoiding pain).

³⁰¹ Chai M. Tyng, Hafeez U. Amin, Mohamad N. M. Saad, and Aamir S. Malik, “The Influences of Emotion on Learning and Memory,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): pp. 2; Victor S. Johnson, *Why We Feel: The Science of Human Emotions*, (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1999), 171-172.

³⁰² Galen Strawson, *Mental Reality*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 280.

³⁰³ Melinda Vadas, “Affective and Non-Affective Desire.” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 45, no. 2 (1984): pp. 276-277.

³⁰⁴ Wayne A. Davis, “The Two Senses of Desire,” *Philosophical Studies* 45, no. 2 (1984): pp. 182.

Yet, as much as desire is helpful for individuals to learn, be creative, experience love, and pursue pleasure, it can be very destructive when it becomes obsessive, as the case of Faustus demonstrates. In *Faustus*, Marlowe dramatizes a character who is conscious of the danger of his desire, but who, despite this awareness, is obsessed with satisfying his desire at any cost: “I’ll conjure though I die therefore.”³⁰⁵ This negative manifestation of desire is associated with compulsive tendencies based on obsessively desiring things that individuals cannot obtain and things that are harmful and destructive to their welfare. Throughout the entire play, Marlowe is keen to show how such negative manifestations of desire motivate his protagonist’s actions until they destroy him, a tragic situation that I examine in the final section of the chapter.

3.1 Faustus’s Intrinsic and Extrinsic Desires

Modern insights into desires show that there are, in fact, two distinguishable types of desire: intrinsic and extrinsic (or instrumental). The two types are closely related, but intrinsic desires are associated with pleasure and the avoidance of displeasure and are ends in themselves, whereas extrinsic desires are “for means for some further end,”³⁰⁶ for something that helps achieve the desired thing or makes it feasible.³⁰⁷ Extrinsic desires are thus inevitably generated by psychological mechanisms such as reason and reward

³⁰⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.165.

³⁰⁶ Timothy Schroeder, “Desire: Philosophical Issues,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science* 1, no. 3 (2010): pp. 363, 366.

³⁰⁷ David K. Chan, “Are there Extrinsic Desires?” *Noûs* 38, no. 2 (2004): pp. 326; Harry G. Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 13-14; Alan Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 199.

learning.³⁰⁸ As the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction suggests, human desires are not only those which assure physical survival by constantly maintaining the body with what it needs to survive, such as food, water, sleep, and sex; the homeostasis of the body also concerns the stability, balance, and equilibrium of the emotional desires. Moreover, the two forms of desire are often bound together in a causal relationship. As Schroeder argues, if a person desires pleasure intrinsically, then this person will generate extrinsic desires “whenever he comes to believe that there is some means to attaining pleasure, or whenever he comes to believe that there is something he could do that would count as a concrete realization of a kind of pleasure.”³⁰⁹ Thus, intrinsic emotional desires stimulate extrinsic desires, and these in turn provide motivation for action. The anticipated pleasures of emotional satisfaction encourage the individual to seek out and search even as they increase his general level of arousal and the individual’s goal-directed behavior; indeed, emotional desires are motivational phenomena that generate “expectancies, goals, and values.”³¹⁰

In spite of appearances, emotions play a foundational role in the formation of Faustus’s desires, in the arousal of his “expectancies, goals, and values.” “Faustus most

³⁰⁸ Schroder, “Desire: Philosophical Issues,” 363.

³⁰⁹ Schroder, “Desire: Philosophical Issues,” 366.

³¹⁰ There are many voices that participate in the discussions of contemporary motivation study, and some of them reinforce the others. For example, behaviorists highlight that desire stems from the attractiveness of the object being desired; neuroscientists point out that desire is produced by the neurotransmitter dopamine being released into the brain’s limbic system; physiologists believe that the presence and absence of desire influences the rise and fall of hormones such as testosterone; and finally, the social-cognitive researchers add that the beliefs and expectations related to desire arise from our interactions with other peers and role models in Reeve’s *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 43.

desires / a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,”³¹¹ he says, announcing a series of apparently extrinsic goals and values. His turn to necromancy is a means of realizing these goals. But his goal of omnipotence is already desired intrinsically. He finds pleasure in achieving it in the same way that he experiences pleasure in knowing that his name will be popularized, globalized, and perpetuated if he impresses various heads of state by performing conjuring acts: “My four and twenty years of liberty / I’ll spend in pleasure and in dalliance, / That Faustus’s name... / May be admired through the furthest land.”³¹² His reference to “pleasure and dalliance” in this quotation along with the previous mention of “delight” indicate that Marlowe’s vision of motivating desire is one that links intrinsic pleasure (emotional pleasure) to extrinsic pleasure (power and fame). Faustus turns to necromancy and becomes determined to practice it, in other words, because he seeks positive hedonic sensation that he wants to extend or no longer can achieve by conventional means like books and research—a desire that leads him to renounce traditional scholarly pursuit: “Then read no more / ... / this profession... / farewell!”³¹³ The promise of pleasure to be had from achieving such power becomes his ultimate desire; he practices black magic not to assure his material well-being per se, but to fill the empty hole in his existence with emotional gratifications. Faustus’s desire is thus actually of two types that operate in conjunction: his intrinsic desire is expressed in his seeking after omnipotence to yield pleasure and his extrinsic one is indicated by the practice of necromancy as a means to achieve such pleasure. Therefore, when Faustus plans to call his magician friends and decides to practice black

³¹¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.49-51.

³¹² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 3.1.61-64.

³¹³ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.10, 20-21.

magic, his extrinsic desire comes into play in guiding his reasoning to proceed with the damned deed in order to obtain his final goal: the emotional satisfactions that stem from his supernatural powers.

The promise of omnipotence becomes a supremely attractive motivational stimulus that determines Faustus's thought, belief, action, and behavior throughout the play, and it grows within him as a compulsive desire because it reorganizes the more limited options of his predestined life. That is, not only does he believe black magic to be the means of achieving pleasure, he also believes that it can mitigate the negative hedonic sensation that emanates from his frustration about life and death: "What art thou Faustus, but a man condemned to die. / The fatal time doth draw to final end / Despair doth drive distrust into thy thoughts / Confound these passions with a quiet sleep."³¹⁴ Black magic, likewise, seems capable of mitigating his disappointment about the limitations of the disciplines he has been mastering, for as Beecher puts it, Faustus mastered "all the disciplines of the medieval university before registering his disenchantment with their limitations."³¹⁵ His thoughts and actions about black magic and necromancy, in other words, are influenced by those frustrated hedonic readings of his circumstances, as his long soliloquy at the beginning of the play in which he expresses his frustration and disappointment makes clear. Reflecting on the most rewarding type of scholarship (logic, medicine, law, and theology), he discredits and dismisses all of them on the basis that they are not enough to make him a mighty god,³¹⁶ the only condition that can now provide him with a source of

³¹⁴ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 4.5. 21-24.

³¹⁵ Donald Beecher, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds: Cognitive Science and Renaissance Literature*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 74.

³¹⁶ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.1-60.

satisfaction and pleasant sensation. Such emotional satisfaction can, in fact, affect the behavior of any individual no matter how intelligent he or she is, and Faustus becomes this representation of an intelligent person who falls victim to his own need for emotional gratification. It is plausible to think that because Faustus is an intellectual man, he should be able to suppress his desire by choosing not to act in ways that would lead to its catastrophic satisfaction. Since he does not, his foolhardy actions attest to the overpowering strength of his desire: the more strongly he feels about it, the more frequently he thinks about it, and the more he feels inclined to satisfy it, the harder it is to suppress his behavior.³¹⁷

In this particular scene, in which he dismisses all forms of scholarship, combing through past studies only to devalue them, Faustus's rhetoric and the dissection of each of the things he has studied, illustrate his capacity to employ language in a way that will serve his own desire. His words become his persuasive tools that justify his attraction to necromancy even though he could simply argue the opposite. Marlowe's audience was no doubt well aware that philosophy, law, and physic are demanding subjects, but he argues the contrary: "Philosophy is odious and obscure; / Both law and physic are for petty wits."³¹⁸ This is a typical example of the power of language and its subtlety which Marlowe, like Shakespeare and Kyd, has represented in his play; his depiction of Faustus's ability to argue that all scholarly disciplines are only appropriate "for petty wits"—individuals who are not very intelligent—suggests that Faustus, like Othello, is

³¹⁷ Maria Alvares, "Desires, dispositions and the Explanation of Action," in *The Nature of Desire*, edited by Federico Lauria and Julien A. Deonna, (New York: Oxford University, 2017), pp. 128-129.

³¹⁸ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.105-106.

uttering those words to depict his problem to himself in a particular way that serves his ultimate desire. This is the efficacy of rhetoric when a character speaks words whose “meaning need not correspond to the truth” and whose “use is dependent on the limited perspective and self-interested intentions of the speaker.”³¹⁹ Kinney argues that this rhetorical device, in turn, requires “an imaginative grasp of the author’s purposes and designs on the reader [or auditor] coupled with the recognition that language is rhetorically constructed; it requires the ability to infer private motives and presentations from public expression.”³²⁰

Such a claim, regarding the author’s purpose in depicting certain traits and specific private motives in *Faustus*, can further be understood if we look into the characteristics that Marlowe depicts in his tragic hero. Marlowe portrays *Faustus* as an educated man who cannot master his emotional desire precisely to show that this motivational force can incline even intellectual individuals to make decisions and perform actions for the purpose of emotional gratification. Several literary scholars confirm that Marlowe tells a story of an intellectual scholar who turns to necromancy because he desires more than what his studies can provide. For instance, Lisa Hopkins argues that Marlowe “tells the story of a scholar who, disillusioned with all conventional branches of study, turns to magic and eventually decides to sell his soul to the devil.”³²¹ Likewise, Rebecca Lemon believes that Marlowe depicts *Faustus* as a “scholar who should apply himself to [his]

³¹⁹ Kinney, “Rhetoric and Poetics,” 444.

³²⁰ Kinney, “Rhetoric and Poetics,” 444.

³²¹ Lisa Hopkins, *Christopher Marlowe, Renaissance Dramatist*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 27.

study... [but] is otherwise inclined, embracing alternate fields.”³²² Lemon argues further that Marlowe’s lines “‘read no more: thou hast attain’d the end’ and ‘Why Faustus, hast thou not attain’d that end?’” suggest “the scholar’s desire to strive forward rather than to complete his studies.”³²³ In this regard, Faustus seems to be disposed to follow gratification that is greater than his studies and conventional scholarship.

The emotion-based origins of Faustus’s decision to reject conventional scholarship in favor of necromancy are evident in the play’s prescient depiction of obsessive thinking—a variation on what contemporary cognitive psychologists call *desire thinking*. The play presents this desire thinking from the first scene, when Faustus begins thinking about the things he desires, “Lines, circles, signs, letters and characters! / Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires,” then later when he confirms it in writing when he reads the conditions of the pact, “*Mephostophilis shall do for him, and bring him whatever he desires,*” and again toward the end when Faustus thinks of Helen for whom he yearns, “let me crave of thee, / ... the longing of my heart’s desire.”³²⁴ The interpretation of desire during the early modern period, David Hoeniger argues, was a power that “prompt[ed] and direct[ed] motion (or action),” and it was referred to as “appetite.” Hoeniger further argues that “appetite” in classical and medieval writings commonly concerns “anything that an animal or person may desire.”³²⁵ As for the period’s explanation of the strength of desire, it was limited to an internal organ—the liver—that

³²² Rebecca Lemon, “Scholarly Addiction: *Doctor Faustus* and the Drama of Devotion,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 69, no.3 (2016): pp. 865.

³²³ Lemon, “Scholarly Addiction,” 881; *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.10, 18.

³²⁴ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.54-55; 2.1.99-100; 5.1.87-88.

³²⁵ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, 162.

produces substantial red blood to vitalize desire : “[the liver] fills the body with abundant nutriment, vitality, and warmth and thus strengthens the warm desires, including the sexual drive.”³²⁶

The contemporary insights on desire drawn from cognitive psychology can provide a new interpretation to Marlowe’s use of desire in his play that further illuminates the early modern interpretation. The main distinction that cognitive psychology provides today in relation to the reinforcement of desire is that it operates within the mind, and not through the internal organs. Generally, human beings, distinguished from other animals, have the privilege of being able to manifest their psychological dispositions and desires both internally and externally: internally, in mental phenomena, which can be ideas, concepts, sensations, thoughts, emotional reactions, and anything that does not have to be expressed outwardly or perceived publicly;³²⁷ and externally, through purposive behavior.³²⁸ Faustus manifests his emotional desire internally through continuous, if not obsessive, thinking about the desires that Marlowe assigns to him throughout the play.

³²⁶ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 165.

³²⁷ Desiring something consists of being a state of desiring, and since desiring is being in a state, this state does not necessarily need to be manifested. For instance, a man may desire royalty and power over a period of time, and yet at some times in that period he may not manifest the desire in any way. Since desires are states that can, but need not, be manifested in certain ways, desires are then considered *dispositional* states. For inanimate things, the manifestation of the dispositions tends to be perceivable through physical changes or processes related to the disposition. However, the human psychological dispositions are different because they can be manifested both in perceivable occurrences such as purposive behavior or in “purely mental” phenomena, such as thoughts, sensations, feelings, and emotional reactions in Alvarez’s “Desires, Dispositions and the Explanation of Action,” pp. 122.

³²⁸ Eric Schwitzgebel, “A Phenomenal, Dispositional Account of Belief,” *Noûs* 36, no. 2 (2002): pp. 252.

In one particular scene, Faustus summarizes his desires in a passage that shows his mind's inclination in such direction *internally* before he expresses it *externally* through his action:

I'll be great emp'ror of the world,
And make a bridge thorough the moving air,
To pass the ocean with a band of men;
I'll join the hills that bind the Afric shore,
And make that country continent to Spain,
And both contributory to my crown:
The Emp'ror shall not live, but by my leave,
Nor any potentate of Germany.³²⁹

This passage is another example to Faustus's manifestation of internal thinking since he explicitly states the things he wants, desires, and craves. In psychological terms, this internal thinking is referred to as *desire thinking*, and it has been conceptualized as a cognitive activity that an individual voluntarily initiates, orienting him to prefigure images, information, and even memories reviewing his achievements that target his mind.³³⁰ For many people, this type of desire thinking is helpful because it pushes them to make efforts and to delay gratifications in order to reach long-term goals even as it motivates them to overcome obstacles. However, in Faustus's case, desire thinking becomes dangerous and misleading: he aims it at supernatural targets that will torment him "with ten thousand hells" and deprive him "of everlasting bliss."³³¹

³²⁹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.3.104-111.

³³⁰ Gabriele Caselli and Marcantonio M. Spada, "Desire Thinking: What Is It and What Drives It?" *Addictive Behaviors* 44 (2015): pp. 71.

³³¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.3.79-80.

Marlowe creates a protagonist whose desire is motivated by several factors, one of which he demonstrates at the beginning of the play: a prior experience of spiritual despair that originates in his misreading of Romans 6:23:

Jerome's Bible Faustus, view it well:

Stipendium peccati mors est: ha! Stipendium, etc

The reward of sin is death? That's hard.

Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, et nulla est in nobis veritas:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us. Why then, belike, we must sin, and so consequently die.

Ay, we must die an everlasting death...³³²

Faustus's prompt misreading of the key New Testament passage—which indicates a scholarly failure on his part—leads him to incorrectly believe he is damned simply because he has sinned. Michael H. Keefer argues, in his article “Misreading Faustus Misreading: The Question of Context,” that Faustus misreads the words of St Paul (Romans 6:23) because he has lifted it out of its contexts, failing “to notice that the words he quotes form only the first half of an antithetical construction. The second clause of Romans 6:23—‘*Gratia autem Dei, vita aeterna in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*’ (‘but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’)... conditionally withdraw[s] the condemnations which are all that Faustus sees.”³³³ This shows that Faustus's desires are not only motivated by a wish for power and pleasure, but by his despair that he is

³³² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.38-45.

³³³ Michael H. Keefer, “Misreading Faustus Misreading: The Question of Context,” *Dalhousie Review* 65, no. 4 (1986): pp. 518-519.

damned and must die, and therefore, he desires to escape death by seeking other means of salvations.

Obviously, Marlowe's pedagogical goal in this play is to depict Faustus's "sinful" thoughts leading to catastrophe in the manner of a cautionary tale for a moralistic reason, but other psychological issues are in play as well because when we approach the play from the perspective of obsessive desire thinking, it also uncannily anticipates modern insights about its dangers. As Caseli and Spada suggest, if not regulated, desire thinking can activate all facets of cravings and obsessions in individuals who have tendency to respond to them or fall victim to their experience.³³⁴ According to these insights, we begin to see Faustus from a new perspective because in his episode of desire thinking about necromancy, he becomes such a victim, fixating on this imaginative craving for omnipotence and translating it from "mine own fantasy"—an imagery-based desire "to practice magic and concealed arts," a "[ruminat]ion on necromantic skill"³³⁵—into focused decision-making and purposive behavior. He does that by initially commanding Wagner, his servant and student, to bring his magician friends to him: "Wagner, commend me to my dearest friends, / The German Valdes and Cornelius, / Request them earnestly to visit me."³³⁶ From this point onward, Faustus becomes engaged in goal-directed behavior that is manifested externally in order to bring about what he desires; therefore, he adapts all his behavior to fulfill this end.

³³⁴ Caselli and Spada, "Desire Thinking," 72.

³³⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.102, 104.

³³⁶ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.63-65.

As Victor S. Johnson argues, our emotions influence our thoughts and reasoned decisions, and the more intense our emotions, the greater their impact on our behavior and experience. The way our decisions change in the presence of strong emotions is often explained as emotions interfering with logical reasoning, leading a person to make “crazy” decisions.³³⁷ Faustus’s intense desire thinking and the actions he takes to bring about his intrinsic and extrinsic desires are a compelling early modern depiction of such seemingly “crazy” decision-making, illustrating the operation of the human mind and its genetic disposition toward emotional gratification. Because Faustus is a tragic hero, he is depicted as an exceptional individual who is not saved but damned at the end of the play: “here are Faustus’ limbs, / All torn asunder by the hand of death.”³³⁸ But like many of the heroes of early modern tragedy, the exceptional individual is merely an exaggerated, not a pathological, version of the human norm because Faustus acts as an everyman figure who is distracted from good deeds by worldly desires: “Divinity is... / Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible, and vile. / ’Tis magic, magic that hath ravished me.”³³⁹ The Faustian brain is thus not so much exceptional as it is archetypal: it has a genetic disposition to desire because, like any human being, Faustus cannot exist in this world unless he remains connected to it through the experience of vitality and desire. No matter how mature and

³³⁷ Victor S. Johnson, *Why We Feel: The Science of Human Emotions*, (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1999), 171-172.

³³⁸ Bruce Thomas Boehrer argues that early modern tragedians push boundaries in their depiction of characters in order to achieve their main goals in their literary activity: “Shakespeare and his contemporaries... create a new purpose for literary activity—that of drawing and redrawing the species boundary through the elaboration of literary character as defined by the revelation in words of a distinctive personal interiority.” *Animal Characters: Nonhuman Beings in Early Modern Literature*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 10; *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.3.6-7.

³³⁹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.107-9.

knowledgeable he becomes, he still feels incomplete on the human level because he keeps feeling this emotional urge to grow and develop through the satisfaction and gratification of certain essential desires in the world.

3.2 Desires Evoke Cognitive Imagination and Delusion

Marlowe's depiction of the Faustian brain is as much concerned with the nature and processes of the imagination as it is with dramatizing the role of emotion in desire, motivation, decision-making, and action. This additional interest in dramatizing the inner workings of the imagination is especially evident in the psychomachia, devil-conjuring, and magical visitation and transport scenes in which the dramatization of supernatural figures and magical events on stage can be seen to correspond with an allegorization of cognitive and psychodynamic processes.

There has been considerable critical debate over whether the devils conjured in *Doctor Faustus* are meant to be understood as real supernatural tempters or mere literary devices whose roles are to allegorize Faustus's psychology. Early modern scholars were regularly suspected of dealing with actual devils, and Faustus's devils do seem instrumental in staging a Christian allegory that "can produce or strengthen faith and prepare the believer or receive God's grace;"³⁴⁰ nevertheless, as Genevieve Guenther has suggested, research has also stressed the influence of psychological and imaginative conjuring on Faustus's devils. In his book *The Devil as Muse*, Fred G. Parker introduces the alternatives between viewing the devils as real figures and viewing them as

³⁴⁰ Genevieve Guenther, "Why Devils Came when Faustus Called Them," *Modern Philology* 109, no. 1 (2011): pp. 51.

imaginative or illusionary by showing that reflective consciousness and artistic genius are opposed in the play: “[the play either] presents a real dialogue with another being, or... those diabolical cynicisms ‘came out of the afflicted one’s own soul.’” Either way, [Faustus] presents it to the reader as an object of Gothic terror; his hand trembles as he transcribes [the pact].”³⁴¹ On the one hand, Guenther’s work gives support to the position that confirms the appearance of the devils: “the formula of conjuration functioned as a script that cued devils to appear and behave as if they had been commanded.”³⁴² On the other hand, Gudrun Tockner and T. B. Saunders question the existence of the devils by posing the question: “is this really the devil torturing Faustus’s heart?”³⁴³ Tockner supports his view by relying on Reginald Scot’s book *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* in which Scot argues that witchcraft and magic “‘being contrarie to nature, probabilitie and reason’ simply do not exist, attributing the belief in such phenomena to... psycho-physiological conditions.”³⁴⁴ Similarly, Saunders, a prominent scholar of an earlier generation, believes that the devils were based on imagination instead of reality. He argues that the concept of a supernatural devil was prominent in the Renaissance period, and that the idea that magic can conjure one became engrained in people’s minds and imaginations: “belief, which has existed for centuries, that the devil was a very potent personality and supreme in nature had come so firmly rooted in the popular imagination,”

³⁴¹ Fred G. Parker, *The Devil as Muse: Blake, Byron and the Adversary*, (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2011), 176.

³⁴² Guenther, “Why Devils Came when Faustus Called Them,” 48.

³⁴³ Gudrun Tockner, “’Tis Magic, Magic that Hath Ravished Me” *Passionate Conjuring in Doctor Faustus Doctor Faustus and the Devil’s Charter*, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018), 211.

³⁴⁴ Tockner, “’Tis Magic, Magic that Hath Ravished Me,” 202.

that Faustus's devils took on an intense coloring of reality.³⁴⁵ In the sixteenth century, the belief in the existence of magic, its power as a theory, and its practice as an art "were at their greatest height at the time the New Learning, the beginnings of the Reformation, and the birth of modern science, were transforming the character of the civilized world."³⁴⁶ From this perspective, the intensity of popular belief in supernatural devils and the linked belief in the power of magic to conjure such devils during the period, Faustus's devils can connote psychological projection and even hallucination, even if the play often gives us reason to believe, as Faustus does, in their objective reality.

Thus, in spite of the devils' apparent "reality" in the play, Faustus's practicing of a fantastic art to conjure up a powerful devil becomes fundamental to the ambiguity of Marlowe's work because it presents a character that can also be examined from a psychological perspective, and it becomes feasible to see Faustus entertaining cognitive imaginings to fulfill inner gratifications. Moreover, it is important to remember that the supernatural figures in the play need not be reduced to "hallucinations" or "imaginings" in order for them to signify as psychological allegories—indeed, my claim here is that they are properly "overdetermined" signifiers. Marlowe's play is so rich and is written in such a way that it presents the supernatural figures with multiple and even contradictory meanings. In fact, the debate made by the above-mentioned critics over whether the

³⁴⁵ Because of this idea of a supreme devil that has been rooted in the popular imagination, it would seem nothing at all impossible in the idea of Faustus, "a reckless individual, ambitious of success in the world, entering into a compact with him." And the purpose of this play is to stretch our imagination to contemplate "how real and universal that belief was, what gross intellectual bondage it imposed, and to what an extent the religion of love had come to rest on a system of mere terrorism." T. B. Saunders' "The Faust Legend," *The Scottish Review* 12, no. 23 (July 01, 1888): pp. 162-164.

³⁴⁶ Saunders, "The Faust Legend," 159.

supernatural figures in the play are real or simply dramatizations of psychological processes affirms their semantic heterogeneity. In other words, we may consider the supernatural figures in *Faustus* as real and psychological at once; they can be viewed as psychological because of the strong feeling of desire that affects Faustus's imagination throughout the play, and they can be seen as real because Faustus gets chopped up by them at the end of the play; Marlowe describes the gruesome scene where his students discover his mutilated and torn limbs the next morning: "O help us heaven! See, here are Faustus's limbs, / All torn asunder by the hand of death."³⁴⁷ The discovery of his dismembered body does not align with the part of Faustus's afflicted imagination, and therefore, it allows us to examine the play from several and sometimes opposing perspectives.

Having acknowledged the different readings the play presents to us, there still remains considerable reason to consider Faustus's devils as evidence that the play is a tragedy of the mind and psychology, which dramatizes the processes by which Faustus attempts to know the unknown by imagining it in his non-actual inner world, a world of thoughts, images, and dialogues that is formed, guided, and controlled by the faculty of his own imagination that exists solely in his own mind. In Faustus's mind, we see fabulous pictures and struggles between reason and emotion, and this pervasive binary is represented through the Bad and Good Angels respectively and through the figure of God who speaks on behalf of Faustus's reason against Mephostophilis, a devilish figure also of his own imagination that induces him to his own destruction.

³⁴⁷ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.3.6-7.

The Good and Bad Angels that appear to Faustus when he decides to proceed with necromancy represent the mental conflict between his desire and reason. On the one hand, the Good Angel is trying to convince him to abandon this dangerous deed: “O Faustus, lay that damned book aside, / And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul.”³⁴⁸ On the other hand, the Bad Angel is trying to tempt him to continue in his pursuit of magic: “Go forward Faustus in that famous art / Wherein all nature’s treasury is contained.”³⁴⁹ According to Hoeniger, the early modern conceptions of imagination were connected to passion and the senses: “inordinate passion can affect parts of the brain, especially the faculty of imagination. It can make the ‘imagination all compact,’ causing it to color or transform the images that reach it from the senses, and thereby mislead the reasoning faculty.”³⁵⁰ This indicates that, for the early modern period, Faustus’s imaginative figures are instigated by his inordinate passions that mislead his reasoning.

While examining Faustus’s imagination using cognitive psychological insights, we may arrive at a deeper understating of his imagination than the early moderns presented because for these psychologists, imagination is actually motivated by a number of cognitive and complex constructs that work simultaneously and often overlap, including emotions, desire, memory, and belief. Such examination through the lens of cognitive psychology allows us to see this Faustus from a different perspective; we become aware of the many cognitive influencers that drive to his destructive actions beyond the one emotional element, “inordinate passion,” that early moderns regarded as the cause that motivated his imagination. From a cognitive psychological perspective, Faustus’s

³⁴⁸ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.69-70.

³⁴⁹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.73-76.

³⁵⁰ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 169.

psychomachia figures are figments of his imagination that his mind generates to facilitate decision-making. It is a mental activity that is referred to as “cognitive imagination,” and it is a type of thinking that is based on conceptual images, rather than sensory ones.³⁵¹ Through the exercise of the cognitive imagination, these two conceptual elements of good and bad form the propositional contents of desire and reason, which are in conflict within Faustus’s mind. His mind remains divided throughout the entire play because every time he moves forward, the two imaginative figures are called once again to mind, one to represent his desire to repent and another to maintain course on his execrable deed. Within this drama of decision-making, Marlowe is keen to show us that Faustus’s desires are quite dominant because Faustus repeatedly approaches repentance only to pull back at the last moment. Whenever he is faced with the idea of repentance, he is easily driven away from it under the influence of his strong desire, conceding to its power:

My heart’s so hardened I cannot repent!
 Scarce can I name salvation, faith, or heaven,
 But fearful echoes thunders in mine ears,
 ‘Faustus, thou art damned’: then swords and knives,
 Poison, guns, halters and envenomed steel
 Are laid before me to dispatch myself:
 And long ere this, I should have done the deed,
 Had not sweet pleasure conquered deep despair.
 Have not I made blind Homer sing to me
 Of Alexander’s love, and Oenon’s death?

³⁵¹ Sensory and cognitive imaginations are two types of imagination that employ different elements but involve the same faculty in the brain. The sensory one employs sensory elements, much as perception does, whereas cognitive imagination employs conceptual elements, much as thinking does, and these elements combine to form propositional contents, in Colin McGinn’s *Mindsight: Image, Dream, Meaning*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 129.

With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
 Made music with my Mephostophilis?
 Why should I die then, or basely despair?
 I am resolved! Faustus shall not repent.³⁵²

In this vividly described picture of the emotional turmoil that attends difficult decision-making, Faustus points out the various emotional conflicts he experiences: he is self-restraining and reluctant to repent, he is plagued by the thought that he is already damned, he becomes miserable through his despair, and most importantly he is conquered by “sweet pleasure.” This progression of emotional states confirms that although Faustus experiences several emotions almost simultaneously, there is one dominant constituent that overpowers all the rest: the satisfaction of his desire that stimulates his brain with positive hedonic sensation and gives rise to the pleasure of his mind. It paralyzed his will to repent at earlier stages, and it keeps exerting influence on his thoughts and decision-making as he ends his speech with a resolution not to repent but to proceed with his deed.

Because desires are related to emotional gratifications, Faustus’s brain seeks to achieve such gratifications by imagining the possibility of becoming an omnipotent commander, a process that further reveals his imagination to be motivated by desire. We see such a use of the imagination in his dialogue with Mephostophilis, an imaginary devil figure with extraordinary powers who urges, “here Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity.”³⁵³ In other words, Mephostophilis invites him to experience this supremacy and the positive hedonic sensations that come with it:

MEPHOSTOPHILIS

³⁵² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.2. 18-32.

³⁵³ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.62.

Now, Faustus, what wouldst thou have me do?

FAUSTUS

I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live,
To do whatever Faustus shall command,
Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere
Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.

MEPHOSTOPHILIS

This, or what else my Faustus shall desire,
Shall be performed in twinkling of an eye.³⁵⁴

Talia Morag argues that this type of imaginative fancy is triggered by an *unconscious desire* because it is an imagination that is not limited to deliberation, but rather is motivated by the unconscious, which enjoys unlimited and immediate access to the desires and goals of the individual, leaving no room for influential deliberation or deviation from the intended goal that may result from overthinking.³⁵⁵ In keeping with the earlier discussion of the emotional roots of intrinsic desire, the unconscious is “posited as a separate part of the mind in order to explain strange behaviors.”³⁵⁶ Faustus’s imagination of a great devil fulfilling his wishes exemplifies just this type of unconscious desire.

The conjuring of a wish-fulfilling devil drawn from Faustus’s imagination strongly hints that unconscious desire is not easily separated from cognitive experiences of hallucination and delusion in this play, but as we shall see, the particular quality of Faustus’s imaginative visions is also bound up in the play’s depiction of the relation

³⁵⁴ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1.35-39; 5.1.94-95.

³⁵⁵ Talia, Morag, *Emotion, Imagination, and the Limits of Reason*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 103.

³⁵⁶ Morag, *Emotion, Imagination, and the Limits of Reason*, 104.

between imagination, belief, and memory. Faustus generates images of such a powerful devil and conversation with him in order to entertain his thoughts and gratify his aspirations: “make spirits fetch me what I please,” “perform what desperate enterprise I will,” and have “these joys in full possession.”³⁵⁷ This practice reflects the power of his desire because the thoughts and mental images it evokes are connected to situations that either one would either strive to achieve because they are emotionally pleasant (positive) or shun because they are painful and unpleasant (negative).³⁵⁸ In order to achieve the pleasant sensation and satisfy his yearnings, Faustus believes that his imagination has literally come to life, and that all that he sees, the two angels, Mephostophilis, and the prominent figures and spirits that he encounters later, including his dialogues with them, are objective occurrences.

Faustus is able to achieve this imaginative reality because his imagination and belief are connected, and because his emotional desires depend not only on perception and bodily sensation, but also on belief in relation to the world.³⁵⁹ As I demonstrate below, Faustus’s imagination is involved in his belief that he can conjure up the king of burning hell Belzebub, the powerful demon prince Demogorgon, and Mephostophilis; his imagination is actually embedded in such belief and is presupposed by it. At first, his desire pushes him to imagine that he is going to conjure up the devils, and this happens even before he comes to believe that he actually does so. But once he conjures up this

³⁵⁷ *Doctor Faustus*, (Jeffares), 1.1.78, 80, 151.

³⁵⁸ Catherine Barsics, Martial Van Der Linden, and Arnaud D’Argembeau, “Frequency, Characteristics, and Perceived Functions of Emotional Future Thinking in Daily Life,” *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology* 69, no. 2 (2016): pp. 218.

³⁵⁹ Gregory Currie and Ian Ravenscroft, *Recreative Minds: Imagination in Philosophy and Psychology*, (Oxford University Press: Clarendon Press, 2011), 195.

hypothesis of the figures and spirits by means of his imagination, he subsequently verifies it as true—thus coming to believe in what he earlier merely imagined. In other words, he entertains the possibility of the conjuring, and later comes to believe that it is actually occurred,³⁶⁰ yielding the sort of emotional satisfaction that he seeks to achieve through such practice.

Belief, then, functions as a stimulator for imagination that helps Faustus achieve emotional gratification, but belief is not the only cognitive activity that motivates imagination. The analysis of memory in generating mental images reveals that memory is a motivating power of imagination very similar to belief. Faustus's contemplation of the Seven Deadly Sins is an example of the function of memory in his imaginative process. As my argument concurs with the view that the devil does not exist in Faustus's reality, it likewise maintains that the Seven Deadly Sins do not exist either. Faustus turns to his own memory in order to contemplate their abstract concepts around temptation and vice; he then feeds on the casuistic self-deception that comes from within his own mind.³⁶¹ In this mental process, he follows a memory-based imagination that is triggered by emotions. Since imagination is connected to pleasure and displeasure,³⁶² Faustus is capable of forming mental images of the Seven Deadly Sins because his emotions help

³⁶⁰ McGinn, *Mindsight*, 135-136.

³⁶¹ Although, in his article, Robert Ornstein tackles the subject of comedy that he observes within the fragmented main actions of the play, he nevertheless touches on Faustus's insatiable desire that blinds him and obstructs his mind to understand the indisputable evidence of reality that stands before him, in "The Comic Synthesis in *Doctor Faustus*," *Elh* 22, no. 3 (1955): pp. 169.

³⁶² Barsics, Van Der Linden, and D'Argembeau, "Frequency, Characteristics," 218.

his memory retrieve and shape their abstract concepts in his mind.³⁶³ In other words, his emotions evoke images of the Seven Deadly Sins which are stored in his memory. This process has been described in detail by contemporary cognitive psychology, which reveals that imagination and memory are intimately connected: imagining is tightly linked to remembering.³⁶⁴ To be able to imagine the future and put pieces together to serve as an imagined scenario, one has to rely on the remembrance of the past, using memory fragments and stored knowledge: “[imagination] relies on re-presenting the images stored in memory, either as originally encountered or as disassembled and recombined.”³⁶⁵ These insights provide a new way of interpreting Faustus’s imagination because Marlowe presents him as a scholar who is knowledgeable about the Seven Deadly Sins through the Christian world he lives in. Their concepts and symbolism are engrained in Faustus’s mind and stored in his memory; he is a man who reads the bible, attends church, and most certainly studies theology. This strong familiarity with the Seven Deadly Sins is also confirmed in the writing of Richard Newhauser, who, in his book chapter “‘These Seaven Devils’: The Capital Vices on the Way to Modernity,” argues that Faustus registers a deep understanding of the Seven Deadly Sins and their personifications that further corroborates the role of memory in the formation of Faustus’s imagination.³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Tyng, Amin, Saad, and Malik, “The Influences of Emotion,” 2.

³⁶⁴ Alan Richardson, “Imagination,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies*, edited by Lisa Zunshine, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 231.

³⁶⁵ Richardson, “Imagination,” 231.

³⁶⁶ Richard Newhauser, “‘These Seaven Devils’: The Capital Vices on the Way to Modernity,” in *Sin in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: The Tradition of the Seven*

In the previous examples, I touched on the connections between emotions, memory and belief in the formation of imagination, and in the following examples, I expand on the complexity of Marlowe's representation of the imagination by turning to additional cognitive constructs it enlists in its representation of the imagination's creation and operation. Evidence of the relationship between memory, imagination, and emotions comes from research that shows our emotions influencing "our ability to remember and imagine events."³⁶⁷ In addition, the work from across psychology and neuroscience considers imagination to be induced by a number of cognitive constructs that often overlap, including emotions, desire, memory, and belief.³⁶⁸ This connection between desire and memory seems obvious in the Pope scene in which Faustus follows a memory-based imagination that is triggered by his emotional desires. In this scene, Faustus imagines himself mocking Pope Adrian and his cardinals and bishops, a scenario which depicts his desire to free him from the power of the church and the influence its memory holds. Faustus's memory of religious constraints helps him imagine himself independent and liberated from the constraints of Catholicism, and in this particular scene, his imagination presents his unconscious desire to annihilate the power and control of the Catholic church, which exerted a great dominance during the sixteenth century. Drawing on a memory of the sovereign power of the church, Faustus's desire leads him to imagine a wish-fulfilling change, taking the form of a mental image of a vulnerable church with ridiculous cardinals and bishops. Through this process, his imagination becomes the

Deadly Sins, edited by Richard Newhauser and Susan J. Ridyard, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2012), 179.

³⁶⁷ Brendan Gaesser, "Constructing Memory, Imagination, and Empathy: A Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective," *Frontiers in Psychology* 3 (2013): pp. 1.

³⁶⁸ Gaesser, "Constructing Memory, Imagination, and Empathy," pp. 1.

faculty that connects him with the non-actual world, a world that he wants to bring about.³⁶⁹ In this regard, Faustus's imagination is triggered by his unconscious desire and influenced by his memory to shake off the fetters of his religious life through an image of himself ridiculing the Pope and dashing his pride: "make his monks and abbots stand like apes, / And point like antics at his triple crown: / To beat the beads about the friar's pates, / Or clap huge horns upon the cardinals' heads."³⁷⁰ With these words, Faustus mocks and defeats the supreme power of the church represented by the Pope's "triple crown" or the papal tiara.

The functions of memory and desire and their overlap in the formation of imagination are further illustrated by the scene in which Faustus imaginatively meets Helen of Troy. Faustus's unconscious desire continues to generate images in his mind to achieve gratification because he pictures Helen of Troy. His union with her form is triggered by his craving and longing to embrace her and have her as a mistress "let me crave of thee, / To glut the longing of my heart's desire, / That I may have unto my paramour, / That heavenly Helen."³⁷¹ At the same time, Faustus is able to form mental images or concepts of her beauty, describing her as "fairer than the evening's air,"³⁷² because his memory holds such information, which he has presumably inherited as cultural knowledge: "As the ultimate manifestation of divine beauty in the human world, Helen is not merely an extraordinarily beautiful woman but the most beautiful of all, a

³⁶⁹ McGinn, *Mindsight*, 137.

³⁷⁰ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 3.1.83-86.

³⁷¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.1.87-90.

³⁷² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.1.109.

status that remains unsullied by the vagaries of time or taste.”³⁷³ Her beauty is also praised, in the play, by Faustus’s students: “Master Doctor Faustus, since our conference about fair ladies, which was the beautifullest in the world, we have determined with ourselves, that Helen of Greece was the admirablest lady that ever lived.”³⁷⁴ Faustus’s imagination of her—based on his desire and memory—is also validated in a subsequent scene before he dies, where he imagines himself embracing and kissing her lips that may offer earthly pleasure:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
 And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
 Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss:
 Her lips suck forth my soul, see where it flies!
 Come Helen, come, give me my soul again.
 Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
 And all is dross that is not Helena.³⁷⁵

This passage is significant because it shows that Faustus’s imagination of Helen is directly related to his sexual desire, even as it is connected to his memory—the memory that Marlowe assigned to him, especially in the first two lines about the naval launch. Marlowe is aware of the naval launch because he has read it in the Lucian’s “Dialogues of the Dead” in which Lucian gave the round number of a thousand ships: “It was the combination of beauty and naval launch that appealed to Marlowe in Lucian and that he

³⁷³ Ruby Blondell, *Helen of Troy: Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48.

³⁷⁴ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.1.9-12.

³⁷⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.1. 96-102.

made his own repeatedly.”³⁷⁶ Marlowe repeated it in here, but he also added to it his own artistic touch, as a dramatist, by reframing it within a kiss for which Faustus gave up his soul.

From a cognitive-psychological point of view, this passage shows that Faustus’s desire and memory work together in order to stimulate his imagination into beholding a simulation of Helen’s face and beauty. This kind of simulation, Jane Heal argues, “involves a kind of faint version of what is simulated, conjured up by imagination.”³⁷⁷ It does represent the actual thing, but occurring in the mental system while it is being run “off-line” from reality. Therefore, Faustus’s memory about Helen’s fame and his desire to embrace and kiss her allow him to imagine her presence in his arms in order to gratify his yearning of her. Faustus’s imagination of Helen of Troy serves as another proof that Marlowe’s representation of imagination is really a complex one and that he dramatizes it based on the interlacing of different cognitive elements; in this particular scene, memory and desire are especially connected and significant in the formation and operation of Faustus’s imagination.

Further support for Tockner and Saunders’s claim that the devils and spirits encountered in the play are nothing but imaginative figures stemming from Faustus’s mind rather than they are actual ones is the fact that Faustus has not been able to learn anything from them that he does not know already. Mephostophilis has not been able to inform him about the unknown to extend his knowledge; he does not provide Faustus

³⁷⁶ Laurie Maguire, *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 162.

³⁷⁷ Jane Heal, *Mind, Reason and Imagination: Selected Essays in Philosophy of Mind and Language*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 81.

with the undisclosed details he earnestly desires about the world or about the figures and spirits he has encountered and their secrets: “Resolve me of all ambiguities / And tell the secrets of all foreign kings.”³⁷⁸ The first question Faustus asks is about the location of hell: “First will I question with thee about hell: / Tell me, where is the place that men call hell?”³⁷⁹ Mephostophilis’s answer is as vague as it could possibly be: “where we are tortured, and remain for ever. / Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed / In one self place; but where we are is hell, / And where hell is, there must we ever be,”³⁸⁰ Faustus thus decides that hell must not exist: “I think hell’s a fable.”³⁸¹

In her book *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe*, Melina Kostic argues that Mephostophilis’s denial of the existence of Hell as a geographical locale confirms that Faustus’s whole experience is psychological instead of real. As she points out, the devil himself verifies it as psychological: “In his attempt to warn Faustus, Mephostophilis denies the existence of any local Hell, and defines it instead as a state of mind.”³⁸² Moreover, when Faustus resumes making enquiries about all spells and incantations to raise up spirits when he pleases, all the characters and planets of the heavens, and all plants, herbs, and trees that grow upon the earth, Mephostophilis supplies him with nothing except references to books: “Here they are in this book. *There*

³⁷⁸ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.1. 78, 86.

³⁷⁹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.1.115-116.

³⁸⁰ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.1.120-123.

³⁸¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.1.127.

³⁸² Melina Kostic, *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2013), 25.

turn to them.”³⁸³ In the words of Sarah Wall-Randell, “this book, which is never mentioned again, seems to offer Faustus only what... he possesses already.”³⁸⁴ When Faustus further asks about who made the world, Mephostophilis refrains from giving an answer because speaking about God’s creation would be against his satanic kingdom.³⁸⁵ Had all of these encounters with the spirits and Mephostophilis, who was supposed to be a potent teller of the future and the unknown, been genuine, Faustus would have acquired new knowledge and learned something out of this experience, especially because he had signed an irrevocable pact, giving his own soul in exchange of twenty-four years of omnipotence and service from the devils.

Another way to read this inability to deliver most of these desires is through Marlowe’s depiction of Mephostophilis. Marlowe’s representation of Mephostophilis is part of a traditional depiction of the Devil as “the father of lies and deceit” who fails to deliver any of the things that Faustus desires. The biblical understanding of the Devil in the early modern world was a powerful belief that the Devil was “both a tempter and the Father of Lies”: “the Devil used ‘crafty persuasions, deceatefull and false illusions’ to win followers.”³⁸⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising that the belief in the Devil as a liar is prominent in the early modern period and that Marlowe seems to have given us this understanding in his depiction of Mephostophilis—which presents another view of the devil’s failure to make good on his promises to Faustus—besides seeing it as a product of

³⁸³ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.1.167-175.

³⁸⁴ Sarah Wall-Randell, “‘Doctor Faustus’ and the Printer’s Devil,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 48, no. 2 (2008): pp. 263.

³⁸⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.2.67, 72.

³⁸⁶ Charlotte-Rose Millar, *Witchcraft, the Devil, and Emotions in Early Modern England*, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 35.

Faustus's mind.

Now that I have established some of the ways the figures and spirits can be read as imaginative figments of Faustus's mind, let us turn to see their further connection with belief that makes Faustus delusional about their existence. When considered in light of contemporary insights in cognitive psychology about the difference between delusional beliefs and hallucinations, Faustus is misled by his own imagination and not by his own senses when he encounters these figures. These imaginative figures appear to him like figures from a dream. In other words, he experiences what desire philosophers refer to as delusional beliefs. These differ from hallucinatory states, which are connected to perception. Faustus's delusional beliefs are decoupled from his perception and attached instead to his imagination, and therefore, he is delusional about what he is seeing. As McGinn has argued, in the delusional theory, beliefs are generated by the imagination system, which is itself mainly driven by human desires and the affective system. It is worth dwelling on this point since it shows that Faustus's imagination is irrational and formed as a result of his obsession. If Faustus were truly hallucinating about the figures and spirits, then his belief in them would be rational, even if his perception is mistaken. But because he knows what he is seeing is a creation and formation of his own imagination to bring him pleasure and emotional gratifications, he is acting irrationally because he is basing his beliefs upon images of the wrong kind; he is letting his beliefs be driven by his desire and by what he knows to be merely imaginary, and therefore, his problem lies in the abnormality of his imagination as it links to belief. Lest there be any doubt about the state of his self-knowledge, Faustus confirms his awareness of his imagination *as* imagination several times in the play: when he says, "I'll live in

speculation of this art,” and also when he expresses his affection for it by stating, “Faustus is so fond to imagine,”³⁸⁷ validating the power of his own speculation and imagination.

However, at one point, when Mephostophilis invites the devils to dance in front of Faustus and give him crowns and rich apparel, his unconscious desire so completely takes over his imagination that he questions what he is seeing: “What means this show? Speak Mephostophilis.”³⁸⁸ Marlowe uses a direct reference to the power desire, which he assigns to Mephostophilis’s speech, in order to express that it is all a psychological enjoyment: “Nothing Faustus, but to delight thy mind.” In this scene, Faustus’s unconscious desire stimulates his delusion because Faustus seems to have no power to direct or control it. His imagination slips from his control and comes to him unwilled. It is controlled by his unconscious desire to achieve power and wealth, which are symbolized by crowns and rich apparel. Faustus’s unconscious desire can form images of historical, religious, and royal figures, including spirits who submit to Faustus’s commands, but, by definition, Faustus cannot “decide” to delude himself with images which are not subject to his will. The difference between desire-evoked imagination and desire-evoked delusion is that Faustus’s imagination is willed and controlled by him, whereas his delusion comes to his mind unwilled and is directed by his unconscious desire. He is not consciously and intentionally willing these images; otherwise, he would know that this is how they arise. In other words, in this scene, Faustus’s psychological state resembles that of the dreamer, in that he is undergoing a *psychic split*, where his

³⁸⁷ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 1.2.113.

³⁸⁸ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.1.83.

“unconscious component of his mind is controlling the course of his imagery” and he is ready to believe it.³⁸⁹

3.3 *Doctor Faustus*: From Morality Play to Psychological Tragedy

As we have seen, Faustus’s portrayal in the play can seem ambiguous because, on the one hand, Faustus often seems to be a medieval character type in a cautionary tale that deals with sins and damnation, even though, on the other hand, the play brings to the stage a truly innovative type of early modern tragic hero whose thought and action are more prone to follow a complex vision of human motivation and psychology. Because of this representation of human motivation and psychology, we are fascinated by Faustus’s downfall despite the play’s seemingly pedagogical evocation of a medieval morality that revolves around the traditional Christian beliefs of sin, fall, and damnation. Many critics agree with this view, and they consider the play to be a pure tragedy of psychology because Faustus’s actions lead him to a damnation brought about by his emotional and psychological forces:

Faustus is like modern man in his tendency to let the thought of power cloud his mind. His desire and expectation run wild, causing him to lose the ability to see wholes... [his] rejection of Christianity, though, like that of modern man, is based really on no single argument or analysis of text, but on deep psychological realities of the times.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ McGinn, *Mindsight*, 118.

³⁹⁰ Kenneth L. Golden examines Faustus’s psychology in the play, and he points out that he is so driven by his own desire that he can only notice things or understand them because they support his own desire: “Faustus ‘profanes the intellectual process by selecting only those data which substantiate conclusions predetermined by desire.’ He hears ‘only the evidence that confirms his pre-established vision,’” in “Myth, Psychology, and Marlowe’s ‘Doctor Faustus,’” *College Literature* 13, no. 3 (October 1, 1985): pp. 203.

Similarly, Anne Lancashire argues that although Marlowe depicts morality in *Doctor Faustus*, he develops the play in a completely different direction. Lancashire believes that the “force of the play comes above all from his use of the morality scheme combined with his deliberate departures from it.”³⁹¹ However, she maintains that Marlowe’s work diverges from this morality tradition because Faustus, “his mankind here, is not saved but damned at the end of the play.”³⁹² Marlowe presents him as a historical individual who self-inflicts his downfall, which makes the play tragic, and by doing so, Marlowe “personalizes and somewhat secularizes the morality tradition.”³⁹³

Such views confirm that Marlowe’s use of morality and theology in the play ultimately serve a different purpose, namely to provide a framework within which the play’s anatomy of human emotions and desire that govern Faustus’s actions and cognition can be made meaningful. Faustus’s inner conflict between his emotional and psychological struggles is the main concern of the play, a claim that is supported by the fact that there are scarcely any external forces that lead him to his downfall. Faustus’s emotion and desire play the chief roles in his decision making, action, and downfall, and they affect his psychology, perception, and imagination; they muddle his rational capacity to really understand his moral choices. Kostic concurs with this view that the play is a psychological tragedy because she acknowledges that Marlowe imbues his protagonist with this mental complexity involving morality and theology only to convey psychological facts:

³⁹¹ Anne Lancashire, “Timon of Athens: Shakespeare’s Dr. Faustus,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1970): pp. 35.

³⁹² Lancashire, “Timon of Athens: Shakespeare’s Dr. Faustus,” pp. 35.

³⁹³ Lancashire, “Timon of Athens: Shakespeare’s Dr. Faustus,” pp. 35.

This psychological use of theology explains Mephistophilis's surprising eloquence on the side of the good angels and his description of himself and all other angels that live with Lucifer as 'unhappy spirits', forever punished for committing a sin of 'aspiring pride and insolence'. This is again Christian eloquence on the part of Mephistophilis and would be indeed strange if it did not serve a psychological purpose.³⁹⁴

The use of a moral and theological framework to convey a complex portrait of human psychology becomes especially evident toward the end of the play when Faustus runs out of time and frantically tries to find a solution to save his soul. Marlowe allows access to Faustus's mind and cognitive activities in the crucial moments when Faustus reflects upon and revises his moral decisions. As Cowley puts it, Faustus begins to process a "U-shaped imaginative journey into the past, then into the counter-factual future, and again back to the present."³⁹⁵ He returns to the moment of his decision, where he confirms "Faustus hath done it,"³⁹⁶ and then back to the moment where he sees himself blessed, saved by God, and awaiting the eternal joy of heaven had he not taken the route of damnation or at least repented, as he often attempted to do: "Oft have I thought to have done so."³⁹⁷ Finally, he comes back to the present where he faces reality, admits his mistake, and accepts the consequences of his secular life driven by the attainment of emotional gratifications and desire fulfillments: "now 'tis too late," "for nothing can rescue me."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁴ Kostic, *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe*, 25.

³⁹⁵ Christopher Cowley, "Regret, Remorse and the Twilight Perspective," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 25 no. 5 (2017): pp. 626.

³⁹⁶ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.62.

³⁹⁷ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.69.

³⁹⁸ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.71, 79.

Faustus's speculation about the moral choices he made—this and that, good and bad, right and wrong—against his culture's theological beliefs becomes the tool through which Marlowe expresses Faustus's emotional and cognitive activities; we become aware of these cognitive activities only because Marlowe depicts Faustus rationally contemplating his choices. Marlowe brings back Faustus's rationality in order to evaluate the choices he made following his emotional impulses. Faustus's rational evaluation of his deeds allows him and us to see more clearly how his thinking and decision-making throughout the play has been compromised by his excessive reliance on emotion. Toward the end, we get access to Faustus's mind and emotions because the more he becomes conscious of his choices of committing to his desire, the more he experiences a diminishing of pleasure and he declines into an agitated state of lamentation. Out of these speculations and contemplations, we become aware that Faustus is wracked with regrets and remorse, not because he can no longer repent, but because he allowed himself to be guided by an emotional desire that deprived him of divine pleasure and trapped him in his present destructive circumstance. He realizes that he has only been engaged in "vain pleasure" that now deprives him of "the throne of the blessed, the kingdom of joy."³⁹⁹ Until this moment, Faustus has not been able to coolly evaluate his actions without having his emotions overpowering his cognition at any stage during the play. Previously, he always weighed his options and chose his actions in order to satisfy himself or at least fulfill some sort of deeper emotional need whose regrettable value was, at the time, denied or unclear to him.

³⁹⁹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.48-49.

The final scene clearly exposes Faustus's psychological processes, and we are able to identify them when we see him acknowledging his regrets and remorse. He experiences painful remorse because he has done serious harm to himself, and he feels his actions are responsible for his downfall. Kostic regards Faustus as the only person who should be blamed for his actions and that he should take full responsibility for what he has gotten himself into: "Faustus has to blame only himself."⁴⁰⁰ However, Faustus does not allow us this poetic "moral" satisfaction. Instead, Marlowe again uses Faustus's reevaluation of moral decisions and actions in order to foreground the psychological and biological factors behind Faustus's downfall. Faustus cannot find excuses for his behavior to reduce or justify his wrongness: "what hast thou done? / Damned art thou Faustus, damned; despair and die."⁴⁰¹ Instead, he blames it on the temptation of his strong desire when he says, "O thou bewitching fiend, 'twas thy temptation, / Hath robbed me of eternal happiness,"⁴⁰² and on his own parents for bringing into this life: "Cursed be the parents that engendered me!"⁴⁰³ Through these two references, Faustus acknowledges that his current misery and fatal decisions were caused by his psychological and biological factors: the psychological function of desire that drives him toward the satisfaction of his desire and the physiological factor of desire that he inherited from his parents.

All this can come full circle when we acknowledge that Faustus's loss of Faith contributes to his destruction. Faustus ignores grace and this theme reoccurs in the language of the chorus ("Excelling all, whose sweet delight disputes / In th' heavenly

⁴⁰⁰ Kostic, *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe*, 30.

⁴⁰¹ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.52-53.

⁴⁰² *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.88-89.

⁴⁰³ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.178.

matters of theology. Till, swollen with cunning, of a self-conceit⁴⁰⁴), the good angel (“Faustus repent, yet God will pity thee⁴⁰⁵), and his students (“Yet Faustus, look up to heaven, and remember God’s mercy / is infinite⁴⁰⁶). He refuses to believe he can be saved and keeps denying it until he dies. The tragic sense of life in Faustus lies in his incapacity to deal with damnation. His ultimate catastrophe is that he deprives himself of God’s grace and ultimately places himself in the fires of Hell. His mind’s incapacity to realize the presence of God and salvation alienates him from his own salvation at the end of the play because he damns himself in preparation for eternal alienation from God in Hell.

Doctor Faustus, then, is a profound tragedy of psychology and a cognitive examination of the distinctive features of the human mind. Faustus falls victim to his own mind, a mind that follows the common mental operations of human beings, but it is unique in the excess of its obsession and submission to its emotional desires.⁴⁰⁷ It is a tragedy that is based on the inclinations and tendencies of the protagonist’s mind, which it dramatizes in terms of an interaction between cognition and emotions. It reveals how Faustus’s mind operates and how his rationality is compromised by his emotions, desire, and beliefs when experiencing events in the outside world. To dramatize these ideas, Marlowe takes a special route of “utilizing [morality and] theology in order to convey psychological facts,”⁴⁰⁸ and he depicts Faustus’s mental and emotional processes in

⁴⁰⁴ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), Prologue, 18-20.

⁴⁰⁵ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 2.2.12.

⁴⁰⁶ *Doctor Faustus* (Jeffares), 5.2.36-37.

⁴⁰⁷ Beecher, *Adapted Brains and Imaginary Worlds*, 47.

⁴⁰⁸ Kostic, *The Faustian Motif in the Tragedies by Christopher Marlowe*, 25.

relation to his own acute understanding of human nature and through his own psychological insights into human emotions, desire, imagination, belief, and compulsive reactions to the environment. Marlowe is able to achieve that by reflecting these operations in Faustus's mind and supplying him with dispositional emotions and thoughts that constitute the tragic dimensions of his experience. Marlowe not only anticipates insights draw from cognitive psychology, but also his talent in narration equals those theories by allowing us to see, study, and examine the play from various perspectives, surpassing cognitive psychology as an "empirical" science.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Spanish Tragedy and the Predilection for Revenge

The Spanish Tragedy is usually classified as a “revenge and justice play” in order to connect it with and differentiate it from other tragedies of its period and other eras. For instance, in his chapter “Tradition and Genre: Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*,” Edward Gieskes concentrates mainly on making the connection between Kyd’s play and Seneca’s revenge plays—from an antecedent era—as well as with plays of Kyd’s contemporaries and later playwrights who were inspired by Kyd’s masterpiece:

The Spanish Tragedy embraces the ethical problems of justice and revenge, problems that are explored in Seneca’s plays and that at least some Neo-Latin adaptations paper over or simply ignore. Later plays... are among the texts that respond to Kyd’s innovation and expand on it in what Bakhtin calls the chain of speech communion.⁴⁰⁹

Likewise, Jonas Barish argues that the play is an adaptation of Kyd’s predecessors and contemporaries’ dramatic and nondramatic style:

The Spanish Tragedy is, as has long been recognised, a repository of ‘patterned’ speech. What has perhaps been less well recognised is that this derives, for the most part, not so much from the dramatic as from the nondramatic verse of Kyd’s

⁴⁰⁹ Edward Gieskes studies the play and its success and influence on other plays. He considers the play as one of the best plays that had an immediate and enduring success on the early modern stage. For him, the play “remained a consistent part of the repertory throughout the period, and is referred to constantly by other playwrights.” 90; “Tradition and Genre: Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*,” in *Bakhtin and His Others (Inter)Subjectivity, Chronotope, Dialogism*, edited by Lisa Steinby and Tintti Klapuri, (London: Anthem Press, 2014), 92.

predecessors and contemporaries among the poets. Specifically, it seems to represent Kyd's adaptation of the rhetoric of the 'middle style,' the rhetoric of the schemes, tropes and figures, as enshrined in the poetical miscellanies of the later sixteenth century and codified in the manuals of style.⁴¹⁰

Janet Clare, in similar terms, argues that the play generated a dramatic preoccupation with the revenge theme for several decades, and although it has antecedents in the dramatic works of Seneca, it is a highly original play because of the "intricate plotting, characterization and intuition of theatrical effect."⁴¹¹ I agree with Clare that the play is a tremendously original one, but the originality, I argue, stems from its extraordinarily perceptive and intuitively apt representation of the human behavior, action, and the deliberation of the mind. For the early modern period, deliberation was a way of dealing with legal discourses and it was referred to as forensic or judicial rhetoric, inherited from Aristotle who was considered "as the father of the theory, practice, and discipline of rhetoric."⁴¹² The definition of rhetoric, according to Aristotle, "is the ability to see the best available means of persuasion in each specific situation."⁴¹³ In his treatise *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle identified three instances of rhetoric:

(1) Deliberation, where future action would be in the best interest of the state; (2) forensic speeches of either prosecutorial or defense attorneys in court where they

⁴¹⁰ Jonas A. Barish, "*The Spanish Tragedy*, or The Pleasures and Perils of Rhetoric," in *Elizabethan Theatre*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), 59.

⁴¹¹ Janet Clare claims that Thomas Kyd's work is highly original because unlike other playwrights, Kyd was not university educated, but he was able to produce a fine work because he received a classical training at the Merchant Taylors' School in London where he mastered the language, rhetorical style and imagery that he demonstrated in *The Spanish Tragedy* in *Revenge Tragedies of the Renaissance*, (Tavistock: Northcote, 2007), 18.

⁴¹² Susanna Shelton Clason, *Forensic Rhetoric: The Force of Closing Arguments*, (El Paso, TX: LFP Scholarly Pub., 2010), 6.

⁴¹³ Clason, *Forensic Rhetoric*, 6.

sought a just resolution to allegations of past transgressions; and (3) epideictic rhetorical circumstances, usually ceremonial occasions such as funerals or holidays... In each of these rhetorical settings the speaker's goal was to 'persuade or influence actions or belief.'⁴¹⁴

George A. Kennedy expands this concept even further by defining rhetoric as “the energy inherent in emotions and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language... to influence... decisions or actions.”⁴¹⁵ Derek Dunne argues that such forensic and deliberative modes of thinking “had a profound impact on the construction of character in the [early modern] period.”⁴¹⁶ Dunne further contends, quoting Lorna Huston, that “plot and forensic rhetoric [governed] principles in a broad range of early modern drama that includes the revenge genre.”⁴¹⁷ My own approach to the revenge genre builds on the work of these philosophers and scholars, by looking beyond the deployment of forensic rhetoric and its presumed salience within revenge tragedy as a space of legal critique, but rather as a psychological mechanism. It is Kyd's treatment of human cognition and behavior under the influence of extremes of violent emotion and suffering that makes the play an intriguing work of outstanding artistry, skill, and workmanship.

Central to any consideration of the play's representation of human psychology are early modern attitudes towards revenge—a mental disposition and social practice that threatened to destabilize the religious and social orders of the early modern period, which

⁴¹⁴ Clason, *Forensic Rhetoric*, 6.

⁴¹⁵ Clason, *Forensic Rhetoric*, 7.

⁴¹⁶ Derek Dunne, *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern Law: Vindictive Justice*, (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 10.

⁴¹⁷ Dunne, *Shakespeare, Revenge Tragedy and Early Modern Law*, 11.

disapproved of private revenge. For the purpose of warning the individuals not to be reined by their emotions in a state of revenge, the theme of revenge “combined with dramatic convention,” Ronald Broude argues, deemed essential to invite consideration of “the religious, ethical, and socio-legal implications of revenge.”⁴¹⁸ This, in turn, prompted many prominent figures and playwrights in the sixteenth century to develop a pedagogical literature warning individuals of the dangers of seeking revenge, from Thomas Kyd and William Shakespeare to Francis Bacon who says, “vindictive persons live the life of witches, who, as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate.”⁴¹⁹ Michel De Montaigne takes a similarly cautionary view, exemplifying a contemporary humanist’s attitude to revenge in his essay written only a few years before Kyd’s play when he advises that a person who is incited and irritated by anger should turn to reason in order to pacify the furious desires of revenge: “provoked and stung to anger by an insult, takes up the weapons of reason against his furious desire for revenge.”⁴²⁰ In order for these examples and warnings to be successfully conveyed, writers instilled them in protagonists who fall victim to the power and influence of revenge. In other words, writers depict the examples and warnings in protagonists who have the mental capacity to conceive, reject, or even deliberate about the dangers and attractions of revenge, but at the same time they depict them in those who fall victim to their minds when they indulge emotional and psychological impulses that detrimentally influence the entire trajectory of

⁴¹⁸ Ronald Broude, “Revenge and Revenge Tragedy in Renaissance England,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1975): pp. 56.

⁴¹⁹ Francis Bacon and Michael Kiernan, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 33.

⁴²⁰ Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cruelty,” in *Essays*, translated by J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 174.

their thinking and action.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd presents his protagonist Hieronimo, who discovers the horrific murder of his son Horatio, surrendering to the power of revenge emotionally and psychologically. This hero experiences strong emotions and mental conflicts over whether to demand justice through official channels or personally avenge his son's death by a play-within-the play stratagem. He ends up following his emotional responses that lead him to his tragic downfall. My intent in this chapter is to analyze Hieronimo's revenge in light of contemporary psychology of revenge, focusing on the protagonist's revenge fantasies that he expresses in revenge acts. Reading the play from a psychological perspective about the sequenced phases of revenge, we can arrive at a deeper understanding of Hieronimo's emotional impulses, cognitive activities, and motivated action that lead to his downfall. Hieronimo is a perfect illustration of a mind committed to revenge and driven by powerful anger and grievance, and cognitive psychology provides useful explanation for the anger that preoccupies his mind and motivates his revenge. According to cognitive psychologists, "angry thoughts thus generate a vicious cycle: 'the more he thinks about them the angrier he gets, and the angrier he gets, the harder it is to think about anything else.'"⁴²¹ Using contemporary insights about the psychology of revenge, I broaden knowledge on revenge as a psychological mechanism—besides the other participatory structures embedded in the delivery of vindictive justice in the play, such as legal, religious, and political structures—in order to understand the dynamic of emotion and revenge that Kyd

⁴²¹ James L. Knoll, "The 'Pseudocommando' Mass murderer. (The Psychology of Revenge and Obliteration, Part 1)," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 38, no. 1 (2010): pp. 90.

represents in his work. This study explores how the revenge genre represents the psychological mechanism of revenge at a more fundamental level because the play is not solely concerned with political or legal activity, but instead tends to represent a collection of approaches coming together to represent revenge within its fictional world.

4.1 Revenge as a Psychological Mechanism

Before analyzing Hieronimo's cognition and emotions when he experiences revenge and how it is provoked in him, I want to provide an explanation of revenge as a psychological mechanism. Clearly, revenge is an internal process within the human mind; it is "the interplay of both cognitive *and* affective signatures" of the victim against the perpetrator.⁴²² It is the idea that a person wants to do to others what they have done to him or her. In revenge, in other words, individuals obey the golden rule, which provides a human-scale measurement of justice and fairness that is fundamental to the way revenge-seekers create and manage their social realities. In such social realities, revenge-seekers are constantly thinking in emotional terms: the violence that some people inflict on them; the experience of frustration that stems from observing other people's success or achievement; and the feeling of humiliation that other people cause to us, creating mortification and leading to a decrease in social status. Such experiences cause mental or physical pain, prompting a desire to retaliate in order to alleviate this pain.

⁴²² Michael E. McCullough, Robert Kurzban, and Benjamin A. Tabak, "Cognitive Systems for Revenge and Forgiveness," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, no. 1 (2012): pp. 21; Likewise Ellen Spolsky argues that the tragic plot of *The Spanish Tragedy* allows "new clarity to emerge from the interplay of normal cognitive processes" 175, in *The Contracts of Fiction: Cognition, Culture, Community*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 175.

Fundamentally, the desire for revenge is provoked by emotional responses to environmental or circumstantial events, and generally thoughts of revenge arise out of the *anger* that is stimulated after individuals have been placed in an inferior position in some painful way. The early modern period regarded anger as “a particularly dangerous and destructive passion” that leads to revenge “either [to] find fulfillment, resulting in joy, or be painfully frustrated,”⁴²³ and they linked it to cholera: “medieval and Renaissance medical writers and psychologists... link anger to cholera.”⁴²⁴ Contemporary cognitive insights on revenge confirm that revenge is a result of “negative emotions (e.g. anger, disappointment) [that] accompany retaliation as a response to perceived unfairness,”⁴²⁵ but they emphasize the external circumstances as provoker of anger. In other words, “thoughts of revenge have their basis in a *traumatic event* built up by *external violations* and our *internal vulnerability*.”⁴²⁶ External violations, such as unsolicited events and situations, in turn, ignite anger inside of the revenge-seeker that lingers as long as it can

⁴²³ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

⁴²⁴ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 170.

⁴²⁵ In the study of retaliation, psychologists discovered that retaliation is the result of unfair treatment. In their article, Brebles, De Cremer, and Sedikides focus on finding answers why recipients of unfairness sometimes pursue and other times inhibit retaliation, and the answers they discussed revolved around negative emotions and disappointment, in Lieven Brebels, David De Cremer, and Constantine Sedikides, “Retaliation as a Response to Procedural Unfairness: A Self-Regulatory Approach.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 95, no. 6 (2008): pp. 1511.

⁴²⁶ Tomas Böhm and Suzanne Kaplan explain revenge as a psychological process that affect individuals, groups, and societies. They focus on compiling, sharing, and analyzing revenge that has been an essential topic ever since the Greek drama: “The authors remind us that the revenge motif appears in literature, such as ancient Greek drama and Shakespeare’s plays, which is no surprise, as we notice it almost daily in our all-too-human individual and collective behavior.” Their focus remains in their book on the urgency to understand precisely the revenge phenomenon, that is, the psychological elements in perpetrators and victims in *Revenge: on the Dynamics of a Frightening Urge and Its Taming*, translated by Pamela Boston, (London: Karnac Books, 2011), 19.

until he or she satisfies it.

One pitfall of analyzing revenge is that “fairness” is often subjective. People often compute their own sense of fairness in terms of what is “fair” only to themselves and not to others and therefore commit a crime in revenge that is greater than the original crime to which it answers. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo commits revenge as “measure for measure,” but toward the end of the play, we see his version of justice overwhelmed by anger and frustration because his thoughts and decisions are being driven by his desire to achieve an emotional equilibrium calculated according to his own sense of fairness, in the absence of law and official trial. Bacon defines revenge as “a kinde of Whilde justice; which the more Mans Nature runs to, the more ought Law to weed it out. For as for the first Wrong, it doeth but offend the Law.” He then adds that “in taking Revenge, A Man is but even with his Enemy.”⁴²⁷ Hieronimo’s example indicates that revenge, as a more or less private impulse, is a psychological mechanism taking place between him and his enemies, especially in the absence of law; in such circumstances, his revenge is initially triggered by emotions to form *revenge thoughts* which then in turn affect his emotional system until they are expressed in *revenge acts*.

Many critics approach *The Spanish Tragedy* from a psychological perspective, arguing that the real psychological complexity of the play is recognized through political and religious terms. For instance, in this article “‘The Spanish Tragedy’ and the Politico-Religious Unconscious,” Ian McAdam argues that Hieronimo’s psychology can be understood if we look at the political and religious changes being experienced externally because they “illuminate the mechanisms of self-idealization and identification operative

⁴²⁷ Bacon and Kiernan, *The Essayes or Counsels*, 32.

in Kyd's great, and greatly disturbing tragedy."⁴²⁸ McAdam gives the Reformation—the major religious movement and change of the period—as an example of what affects Hieronimo's psychology when he pursues private revenge and ends his relationship with God: "Vengeance is mine." Yet his observation that Kyd portrays "psychological complexity"—which contributes to the brilliance of the play—requires further examination in order to solve the enigma of the play: "It is probably no exaggeration to assert that solving the play's 'mystery' is contingent upon an adequate explanation of Hieronimo's specific psychology (or pathology)."⁴²⁹ My approach to Hieronimo's psychology builds on McAdam's by trying to explain the emotional and mental developments that lead to Hieronimo's downfall. In the next section, I will begin my analysis by tracing the formation of Hieronimo's *revenge thoughts* before he expresses them in *revenge acts* and later overextends them in relation to the initial harm, until they eventually cause his own destruction.

4.2 Hieronimo's Formation of *Revenge Thoughts*

Understanding the formation of revenge thoughts within the framework of contemporary cognitive psychology provides a valuable perspective on Hieronimo's behavior in *The Spanish Tragedy* because contemporary terminology and theory help to specify and explain the generation of vengeful thoughts that follows an experience of trauma like the one Hieronimo goes through: individuals who experience "humiliation,

⁴²⁸ Ian McAdam, "'The Spanish Tragedy' and the Politico-Religious Unconscious," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 42, no. 1 (2000): pp. 54.

⁴²⁹ McAdam, "'The Spanish Tragedy,'" pp. 49.

unjust hurt caused by another or anger naturally elicit the desire to seek revenge and fantasies of revenge.”⁴³⁰ Upon discovering the horrific murder of his son, Hieronimo immediately provides an insight into his understanding of the incident and how it provokes his *revenge thoughts*:

Who hath slain my son?
 What savage monster not of human kind
 Hath here been glutted with thy harmless blood,
 And left thy bloody corpse dishonored here
 For me, amidst this dark and deathful shades,
 To drown thee with an ocean of my tears?

 O wicked butcher, whatsoe'er thou wert,
 How could thou strangle virtue and desert?
 Ay me most wretched, that have lost my joy,
 In leasing my Horatio, my sweet boy!⁴³¹

In these lines, Hieronimo begins to form thoughts about his situation and about the perpetrator. He addresses the perpetrator as if he is present; his mind visualizes the murderer as a living presence because he seeks instant responses and explanations for the awful deed. The psychologically complex situation exposes what Hieronimo truly feels and thinks in a traumatic moment of disbelief. He perceives the loss of his precious son,

⁴³⁰ The desire for revenge is considered to have a biological, evolutionary, and instinctive basis in that its roots stem from people's basic animal fighting instincts. Achieving revenge is intended to re-equilibrate the gains and losses caused by an assault. In other words, the desire for revenge is intended to re-equilibrate power and allow the victim to regain a sense of control over his or her circumstances, in Limor Goldner, Rachel Lev-Wiesel, and Guy Simon, "Revenge Fantasies After Experiencing Traumatic Events: Sex Differences," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10, (2019): pp. 1.

⁴³¹ Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy: Authoritative Text, Sources and Contexts, Criticism*, edited by Michael Neill, (New York: Norton, 2014), 2.5.18-23, 30-33.

“Ay me most wretched, that have lost my joy,” and the cruelty of the act. Such realizations trigger his emotions, which in turn begin to influence his thinking and mental state. Anticipating Böhm and Kaplan’s recent account of revenge thinking, these thoughts begin to take form because Hieronimo is in a state of frustration and strives to escape the burden of his pain through triumphal thoughts: “the thought of revenge can also entail an endeavour to obliterate the other—symbolically or literally—in order to gain a feeling of triumph.”⁴³² In this regard, addressing the murderer as if he is imaginatively present (and thus potentially vulnerable to counterviolence) hints that, as Hieronimo feels frustrated, his mind is becoming motivated to form retaliatory thoughts that may provide him with a form of satisfying pleasure or relief.

Revenge thoughts function as an initial calmer to anger and frustration before they are actually expressed in actions. Specialists on the psychology of revenge maintain that revenge thoughts or “revenge fantasies often serve to calm the negative feelings of frustration, humiliation, and insult by virtually punishing the perpetrator and settling the score between the victim’s suffering and the perpetrator’s actions.”⁴³³ So when Hieronimo utters, “To know the author were some ease of grief, / For in revenge my heart would find relief,”⁴³⁴ his mind seeks some sort of calmness to the negative emotions he is experiencing. He experiences sadness, frustration, and anger all at once, and his anger and frustration become clearer for him once he analyzes his helpless situation. At first, he is saddened by the knowledge that his existence as a father and his relationship with his

⁴³² Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 32.

⁴³³ Goldner, Lev-Wiesel, and Simon, “Revenge Fantasies After Experiencing Traumatic Events: Sex Differences,” 2.

⁴³⁴ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 2.5.40-41.

son—a psychological part of him—are forever lost: “O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears; / O life, no life, but lively form of death.”⁴³⁵ Then, he becomes frustrated for realizing his wounds about his distressful son, “sad secretary to my moans, / With direful visions wakes my vexed soul,”⁴³⁶ and his anger is incited because he is unable to revive his son or cause the perpetrator to suffer. The early modern period makes a connection between anger and sadness; writers and psychologists of the period confirm that anger is sometimes linked to melancholy: “the angry person... will tend to brood on revenge and appear much like a melancholic. This may explain why the malcontent types of late Elizabethan and Jacobean plays are... melancholic.”⁴³⁷

In the vocabulary of contemporary cognitivists like psychologists of anger Michael Potegal and Gerhard Stemmler, the feeling of anger often accompanies sadness or fear, and therefore, when an individual is in a state of anger, sadness or fear is also likely present: “Anger is often associated or blended with other strong emotions, such as fear or sadness.”⁴³⁸ Hieronimo’s experience of tense emotions, especially anger, lead him to form his revenge thoughts, leading him toward becoming an individual who has lost the capacity to manage his emotions. In this regard, he comes to embody a quintessential

⁴³⁵ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.2.1-2.

⁴³⁶ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.2.12-13.

⁴³⁷ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 170.

⁴³⁸ Although many psychologists distinguish anger from other emotions, they still maintain that anger has an especially powerful interaction with other emotions, and that is because the specificity of anger shows that it has substantial and still emerging evidence for biological rootedness. Michael Potegal and Gerhard Stemmler, “Cross-Disciplinary Views of Anger: Consensus and Controversy,” in *International Handbook of Anger: Constituent and Concomitant Biological, Psychological, and Social Processes*, edited by Michael Potegal, Gerhard Stemmler, and Charles Spielberger, (New York: Springer, 2010), 7.

human dilemma: the general and biological human incapacity to flee from strong emotions and their inescapable influence on our thoughts. His revenge thoughts, in turn, occupy his mind because he believes that revenge is the only way for him to ease his pain and the only adequate action to direct upon his injurer.⁴³⁹ In such a state, the retaliator feels an urge that is induced by the crucial emotional element of *anger* needed to inflict harm on the other person. It offers the possibility of an emotional cure, “allowing them to reclaim the pleasure and peace of mind that was violently and unjustly taken from them.”⁴⁴⁰

This emotional system that generates anger and forms vengeful thoughts in vindictive circumstance is of focal interest to Kyd’s dramatization of the danger of revenge in his play. Kyd portrays revenge as an impulsive power that affects the mind and “drive[s Hieronimo] forth to seek the murderer,”⁴⁴¹ and is directed by emotional impulses that produce a catastrophic outcome if one follows them—a moral lesson with real social purchase since, during his time, revenge was still occurring. Although private revenge was implemented among less developed societies in the absence of laws and regulations, it remained a feature of the early modern age. Fredson Bowers argues that even though during the Elizabethan period, justice was the only prerogative, and severe punishments were imposed on private revengers, the act of revenge did not diminish: “the

⁴³⁹ Fredson Thayer Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 1966), 3.

⁴⁴⁰ Emma Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan, *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 61.

⁴⁴¹ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.2.21.

spirit of revenge had scarcely declined in Elizabethan times.”⁴⁴² Kyd reflects and comments on this reality in his play, and he demonstrates that vengeful thoughts can be very dangerous in the mind of his hero who experiences negative emotions.

In order to dramatize the ongoing power of revenge thinking, Kyd gives Hieronimo a chance to satisfy his vengeful thoughts through official channels only to intensify his anger even further when he fails to do so. Unable to speak to the king about his son’s murder, Hieronimo’s anger becomes inflamed by his frustration. In the following lines, Kyd portrays him as a distressed father who is excited that he can inflict punishment on the perpetrator through royal means, but who is also discomfited by the idea that it may not work and that he may have to turn to other plans that entail violent reprisal:

I will go plain me to my lord the king,
And cry aloud for justice through the court,
Wearing the flints with these my withered feet,
And either purchase justice by entreats,
Or tire them all with my revenging threats.⁴⁴³

Eventually, what Hieronimo has feared comes to pass: Lorenzo is able to deny him access to the king, a complication that frustrates him to the level of rage, “Away, Lorenzo, hinder me no more! / For thou hast made me bankrupt of my bliss. / ... / Away!

⁴⁴² Even though the Elizabethans had officially moved away from private revenge toward a system of state justice that punishes the avenger, private revenge was still performed, especially when it comes to blood-revenge that can be justified by the sentiment for revenge. During the Elizabethan period, the avenger of blood was legally convicted and “incurred the same penalties as any other murderer. Religiously, too, he was banned, since all revenge belonged to God. There is, however, much evidence of an Elizabethan sympathy for blood-revenge, which had survived from the tumultuous times not so long past” 37, in Bowers’s *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, 8.

⁴⁴³ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.8.69-73.

I'll rip the bowels of the earth."⁴⁴⁴ Following this, he vows to revenge himself privately on the two killers because he is left with no other choice but to take this route in order to ease his pain and rage.

4.3 Hieronimo's Self-Deliberation before Perpetrating the Deeds

In the process of expressing thoughts in actions, there are cognitive activities that take place before the action is eventually performed. Noel Brick, Tadhg MacIntyre, and Mark Campbell believe that the final goal or action that the individual aims to achieve or perform depends on several cognitive processes: "proactive, goal-driven processes and reactive, stimulus-driven processes."⁴⁴⁵ The proactive processes may involve contemplating the action's possible consequences in order to solidify difficult decisions in moments of doubts. Hieronimo performs such cognitive processes, and Kyd allows access to them through soliloquies that he assigns to his protagonist throughout the play. In a way, these soliloquies mentally prepare Hieronimo for his vengeful action because they entail self-deliberation and self-instruction to strengthen his decision. Kyd purposefully assigns soliloquies to Hieronimo in order for his audience to understand his cognition, emotional states, and experiences, as well as to inform the audience about his exact situation. As a speech genre through which playwrights reveal a character's thoughts, feelings, and mental processes at work, soliloquy has been studied by many literary scholars, such as Wolfgang Clemen and James Hirsh. Besides Clemen's definition

⁴⁴⁴ *The Spanish Tragedy*, (Neill), 3.11.68-71.

⁴⁴⁵ Noel E. Brick, Tadhg E. MacIntyre, and Mark J. Campbell, "Thinking and Action: A Cognitive Perspective on Self-Regulation during Endurance Performance," *Frontiers in Physiology* 7:159, (2016): pp. 1.

of soliloquy as a verbal speech either addressed to the public, especially to the audience in theater, or addressed to the self to make plans known,⁴⁴⁶ Hirsh takes a deeper path in analyzing soliloquy because he relates its function to the psychological experience of the character. He especially argues that the two forms *Self-addressed* and *Interior monologue* are the most representative of the character's psychology. However, he determines that Renaissance Drama only uses the *Self-addressed* form to express inner thoughts in the process of performing an action: "Unlike earlier drama, late Renaissance drama typically limited... soliloquies by characters engaged in the fictional action while the action is still in progress... to self-address by the character."⁴⁴⁷

For Hirsh, interior monologue did not exist in Renaissance drama, for interior monologues "do not represent words spoken by the character but rather represent words merely passing through the mind of the character."⁴⁴⁸ The distinction is a subtle one. Hirsh defines interior monologue as dramatized speech that "represents mental *experience* rather than outward *behavior*," noting that it "tends to make the character seem passive" rather than active as witnessed in the self-addressed speech: "Instead of speaking, the character experiences a voice speaking in his mind."⁴⁴⁹ Despite his acknowledgement of the inner voice, Hirsh does not attribute this type of soliloquy to the Renaissance drama, arguing that "Renaissance dramatist did not have to distinguish self-addressed speeches from interior monologues for the simple reason that interior

⁴⁴⁶ Clemen Wolfgang, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, (London: Methuen, 1987), 4.

⁴⁴⁷ James Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, (Madison, N.J: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003), 84.

⁴⁴⁸ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 15-16.

⁴⁴⁹ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 15-16.

monologues never occur in Renaissance drama.”⁴⁵⁰ In this section, while examining Hieronimo’s soliloquies before he performs his actions, I intend to show, *contra* Hirsh, that interior monologues do take place in Hieronimo’s mind and that soliloquy—in its both forms: self-addressed and interior monologue—is a cognitive tool that has an important function in influencing his course of action.

Hieronimo’s soliloquies influence his thoughts and help him decide on revenge because the processes of self-deliberation allow him to carefully consider his options and arrive at a course of action. Motivated by his emotional system to seek relief and equilibrium, Hieronimo soliloquizes, and when he does, he strengthens his decision to avenge his son’s death. Hirsh contends that a character speaks in soliloquy in order to capture his or her difficulty in words: “a character in a late Renaissance play might review her situation in a soliloquy for any of a variety of implied motives. She might do so in order to give coherence to her raw perceptions or to establish a sense of control over the difficulties she faces by capturing those difficulties in words.”⁴⁵¹ Moreover, Hirsh puts special emphasis on the relation between soliloquy and emotion: “In many soliloquies a character gives voice to two or more distinct emotions... In extreme cases the character gives voice to an emotional conflict that is tearing the character’s mind apart.”⁴⁵² It is clear then, from Hirsh’s claim, that emotions and soliloquies have a connection and that a character soliloquizes because he or she experiences some sort of emotion that compels him or her to express and reconsider. Besides establishing a

⁴⁵⁰ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 95.

⁴⁵¹ James Hirsh, “Late Renaissance Self-Address Fashioning: Scholarly Orthodoxy versus Evidence,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 27 (2014): pp. 155.

⁴⁵² James Hirsh, “Dialogic Self-Address in Shakespeare’s Plays,” *Shakespeare* 8, no. 3 (2012): pp. 312.

connection between soliloquy and emotion, Hirsh does not provide further explanation as to how the self-addressed speech evoked by emotion influences the course of action. His view on soliloquy is that emotions provoke the character to speak it. I argue that emotions have the power to push the individual to address himself or herself in order to reinforce a decision that is deemed difficult and to decide to perform certain actions. As we shall see in the soliloquies discussed below, they reveal Hieronimo's internal crisis and function as a self-deliberative tool that helps push him toward a course of action. As Alan Palmer observes in *Fictional Minds*, the importance of self-deliberation is that it allows individuals to speculate about the actual situation they are in, the future situation that is going to happen as a result of their actions, and the counterfactual situation that may occur if they proceed or do not proceed with their action.⁴⁵³ Soliloquy, then, is not limited to a "verbal process" as Clemen suggested or a "review process" as Hirsh pointed out. It is also a "mental process" through which individuals strengthen their thoughts and reinforce their decisions to perform an action, and it takes place between the initial thought and the action itself.

Hieronimo's revenge thoughts go through a typical phase of self-deliberation before he expresses them in actions. He carefully considers whether he should ignore or maintain these negative thoughts and contemplates the kinds of danger they pose for him and his plan. In one scene, he experiences a conflict over whether to demand justice from the king for Horatio's death or to kill himself to be with his son in the afterlife. He enters with tools of suicide, a dagger and a piece of rope, and utters this soliloquy:

⁴⁵³ Alan Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 120-121.

Away, Hieronimo, to him be gone:
 He'll do thee justice for Horatio's death.
 Turn down this path, thou shalt be with him straight,
 Or this, and then thou need'st not take thy breath.
 This way, or that way? Soft and fair not so:
 For if I hang or kill myself, let's know
 Who will revenge Horatio's murder then?
 No, no! fie no! pardon me, I'll none of that.⁴⁵⁴

This passage is a typical example of what I consider an internal dialogue (self-deliberation) between Hieronimo—who addresses himself—and another split-off version of himself, i.e. a representation of the thoughts passing his mind, which are mostly triggered by his own emotions. In the first two lines of this soliloquy, this other self calls his name and asks him to commit suicide so he can stand before the Eternal Judge, not the King's hands, to appeal for justice. He feels helpless and agitated that he cannot bring about justice for Horatio, so his emotions speak to him. It is an interior monologue because this second self sends signals to his own mind, advocating for one particular goal and showing no interest in alternatives, and it speaks to Hieronimo's mind without his being able to suppress it. This is what Hirsh alluded to but could not locate in the Renaissance drama: "I have not located any evidence that any soliloquy in any play written before the middle of the seventeenth century was designed or interpreted as an interior monologue."⁴⁵⁵ In a scientific framework that seems useful for Kyd's dramatization of interior dialogue, Charles Fernyhough explains this process within the brain in his book *The Voices Within: The History and Science of How We Talk to*

⁴⁵⁴ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.12.12-19.

⁴⁵⁵ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 84.

Ourselves. Fernyhough argues that “a signal is sent from the system that produces inner [voices] to the speech detection areas of the brain,” effectively instructing the individual what to do.⁴⁵⁶ This passage indicates that Hieronimo actually experiences such an interior monologue, and he soliloquizes his self-addressed speech simultaneously as a response to this inner voice. The third line “Turn down this path...” marks the beginning of his self-addressed speech in response to his mind’s interior monologue.

In support of the idea that these two types of soliloquies—interior monologue and self-addressed monologue—are uttered simultaneously in the same speech, it is clear that there is a change in tone when we move from the first two lines to the third, and the third begins with an opposing idea to what have stated earlier. This simultaneity is further explained by Russell Hurlburt who has described cases in which people experience inner speech that includes both “inner speaking” and “inner hearing.” The distinction between the two, for him, is that “inner speaking” is the sense of generating the language that is being produced, “under the control of the subject, just like speaking aloud,” and it is the more common form of inner speech. “Inner hearing,” by contrast, is something more receptive; it is the “the experience of a sound ‘coming toward,’ ‘experienced by’ rather than produced by, ‘listened to’ rather than spoken.”⁴⁵⁷ When the other self calls Hieronimo by his name and instructs him to perform certain actions and refrain from getting involved in others, it is his “inner hearing” that comes toward him, and Hieronimo plays the receptive role when it occurs. Of course, this “inner hearing” has to be *spoken*

⁴⁵⁶ Charles Fernyhough, *The Voices within: The History and Science of How We Talk to Ourselves*, (London: Profile Books Ltd, 2017), 398.

⁴⁵⁷ Russell T. Hurlburt and Eric Schwitzgebel, *Describing Inner Experience?: Proponent Meets Skeptic*, (Cambridge: Mit Press, 2011), 257.

by Hieronimo because the only way for Kyd to represent Hieronimo's "inner hearing" is in a spoken soliloquy that reveals his inner experience. Hirsh does not consider this type of soliloquy as a conventional one for the early modern period because he believes it to be strictly interior, internally experienced and not revealed. However, Hieronimo is the only character who can reveal such experience, and Kyd in his astute dramatization allows access to Hieronimo's "inner hearing" through this split self that represents the interior monologue and comes to his mind spontaneously: "Hieronimo stay," "Hieronimo attend," "Hieronimo bethink," and "Hieronimo pursue."

Another supporting idea that could be useful to consider in relation to the amalgamation of these two types of soliloquies in one speech is that soliloquies of the early modern period were supposed to be verbalized during performance in theaters; their verbalization was a "set of theatrical conventions," but "soliloquies have survived as written texts to be read and performed in subsequent ages when different sets of conventions have governed soliloquies."⁴⁵⁸ This implies that the lines representing Hieronimo's "inner speaking" and the ones representing "inner hearing" could have been actually performed on stage by two different actors: one actor who represents Hieronimo's interior monologue, "words spoken by the actor [who does] not represent words spoken by the character,"⁴⁵⁹ and another one playing the character of Hieronimo addressing himself. But since soliloquies survived as written texts, we tend to see their representative passages as one type of soliloquy, and in this case, as a self-addressed one.

Having the interior monologue and self-addressed speech soliloquized

⁴⁵⁸ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 29.

⁴⁵⁹ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 13.

simultaneously in one passage creates this internal dialogue evoked by emotions that we refer to as self-deliberation. In his article “Self and Others in the Field of Perception: The Role of Micro-Dialogue, Feeling, and Emotion in Perception,” Ian Burkitt argues that our self-deliberation “can never be emotionally neutral because it is informed by the often conflicted and divided voices that evaluate us, and the action stemming from this is motivated by highly personal emotional stances taken toward things, toward others, and toward one’s own self.”⁴⁶⁰ Hieronimo’s self-deliberation over whether he should go “this way or that way” leads him to a relatively stronger emotion-based decision. Reviewing the consequences of his actions and probing their implications, he realizes that if he takes his own life, no one will avenge his son’s death, and he will not achieve the emotional equilibrium he is seeking; hence, he feels obliged to choose between alternatives, neither one of which is completely acceptable to him. His climactic line “No, no! fie no! pardon me, I’ll none of that” shows that his emotions toward his son—in his self-addressed speech—are stronger than his own emotional suffering—that his interior monologue keeps nagging—because eventually, it is the thought of vengeance for his son that seems to hold a superior promise of reconciling his emotional discrepancy, appearing more important and valuable than the countervailing thought of joining him in the afterlife.

Intriguingly, the voicing of countervailing ideas and feelings in Hieronimo’s soliloquies also resonates powerfully with recent accounts of “private speech” (the scientific term cognitive psychology gives to soliloquy) and its efficacy in shaping decisions and actions. Daniel Dennett’s account of the practice of self-addressing a

⁴⁶⁰ Ian Burkitt, “Self and Others in the Field of Perception: The Role of Micro-Dialogue, Feeling, and Emotion in Perception,” *Journal of Theatrical and Philosophical Psychology* 33, no. 4 (2013): pp. 267.

means for auto-stimulation is a case in point. He argues that self-addressing is a behavior designed to improve “one’s prospects by promoting better-informed action-guidance.”⁴⁶¹ One may hold information in his or her brain, Dennett observes, but for some reason, the specialist part of the brain that holds the information cannot share it with or transmit it to the subsystem where it is needed. In such a case, the information would be in the possession and control “of the wrong specialist.”⁴⁶² Therefore, Dennett contends, people tend to verbalize the information in a self-addressed manner to provoke the specialist to broadcast it into the environment. What happens next is that people rely on their ears and auditory system to receive such information. Through this practice, the individual builds a “virtual wire” between the relevant subsystems.⁴⁶³ In other words, the self-addresser pushes the information through his or her ears to stimulate the kind of connection he or she is seeking and activate the part of the brain, the frontal lobe, which is responsible for decision-making. This allows individuals to better learn how to strengthen their thoughts and assess their situations.

Dennett’s theory of self-addressing both seems dramatized by and illuminates the process Hieronimo goes through in each of the scenes where he addresses himself; he goes through this process of transmitting stored information through his auditory system, and once the needed information is received by the portion of his brain responsible for processing it, he subsequently proceeds with a decision or an action. Notice how, in

⁴⁶¹ Daniel Clement justifies his theory by the claim that the “practice of asking oneself questions could arise as a natural side effect of asking questions of others, and its utility would be similar: it would be a behavior that could be recognized to enhance one’s prospects by promoting better-informed action-guidance” in Dennett and Paul Weiner, *Consciousness Explained*, (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company, 2007), 195.

⁴⁶² Dennett and Weiner, *Consciousness Explained*, 195.

⁴⁶³ Dennett and Weiner, *Consciousness Explained*, 195-196.

Hieronimo's most famous and decisive soliloquy, "*Vindicta mihi*," he reinforces his decision to take vengeance and develops a plan to do so over 45 lines of self-deliberation:

Vindicta mihi!

Ay, heaven will be revenged of every ill,

Nor will they suffer murder unrepaid:

Then stay, Hieronimo, attend their will,

For mortal men may not appoint their time.

Per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter.

Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offered thee,

For evils unto ills conductors be,

And death's the worst of resolution;

For he that thinks with patience to contend

To quiet life, his life shall easily end.

Fata si miseros juvant, habes Salutem:

Fata si vitam negant, habes sepulcrhum.

If destiny thy miseries do ease,

Then hast thou health, and happy shalt thou be;

If destiny deny thee life, Hieronimo,

Yet shalt thou be assured of a tomb;

If neither, yet let this thy comfort be:

Heaven covereth him that hath no burial.

And to conclude, I will revenge his death.⁴⁶⁴

Again, this soliloquy shows an internal dialogue—between Hieronimo and his other self—in which he has two opposing directions: he wants to gratify his desire to avenge his son's death, but at the same time his other self is passing thoughts to his mind that oppose what his self-addressed ones strive for. He begins his soliloquy by quoting the

⁴⁶⁴ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.13.1-20.

biblical order against revenge: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord,”⁴⁶⁵ and acknowledging that revenge is a criminal act; Neill argues that because “the subsequent Latin quotations in his speech are from the plays of Seneca, it seems likely (as Boas suggests) that Hieronimo is reading from *Octavia (Vindicta debetur mihi, 849)*.”⁴⁶⁶ But soon, he begins showing that his emotions are more powerful because he wants to ease his pain and seek comfort through revenge. His speech clearly indicates this emotional conflict he experiences: an interior monologue representing a set of thoughts that is directed toward God and religious beliefs; the other is Hieronimo’s anger provoking him to self-address motives to take revenge for his son’s murder in order to achieve the emotional gratification he has been seeking. This emotional conflict is precisely what provokes him to deliberate and soliloquize. As Hirsh argues, the self-addressed soliloquy is to review process of a difficult situation, but as some contemporary cognitive psychologists indicate, it is a mental process to decide on the course of action.

Gregory M. Colón Semenza argues that when Hieronimo speaks this soliloquy, he is in the state of mind of a typical avenger: he is “encouraged to pursue compensation for his losses, motivated by the conviction that injustice must not go unpunished,”⁴⁶⁷ and makes his decision to privately avenge his son’s death, perfectly aware that he is violating God’s command not to take revenge. Semenza also concludes by saying that the foundation for Hieronimo’s thoughts, pushing him to speak these lines, is his

⁴⁶⁵ “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans,” *The Holy Bible: Old and New Testaments, King James Version*, 12:19

⁴⁶⁶ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 79.

⁴⁶⁷ Gregory M. Colón Semenza, “*The Spanish Tragedy* and Revenge,” in *Early Modern English Drama: A Critical Companion*, edited by Garrett A. Sullivan, JR., Patrick Cheney, and Andrew Hadfield, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 54.

“psychological agony.”⁴⁶⁸ Since Hieronimo’s speech comes because he cannot free himself from the agony that his mind constantly generates, he misemploys the line “the safe way for crime is always through crime.”⁴⁶⁹ He addresses himself with motives to accept his private revenge and ease his way to perpetrate the deed, and finally he convinces himself that crime is the only option he has and declares vengeance: “I will revenge his death.” Burkitt believes that this kind of decision “is centered on a living core of dialogue for each person... given its emotional, evaluative shading by the tone and the voices and images that have informed it.”⁴⁷⁰ Besides his inner voices, Hieronimo utilizes images, such as the tomb and heaven that covers the one who has no burial, that seem influential in his speech. Damasio emphasizes this type of mental image as a stimulator of action and argues: an emotional action “can be triggered nonconsciously as a bodily response; it only becomes mental when it becomes a ‘state of feeling,’ which ‘consists of having mental images arising from the neural patterns which represent the changes in the body and brain that make up an emotion.’”⁴⁷¹ Such mental images work together with Hieronimo’s inner voices as he decides on revenge.

As we have seen, cognitive psychology tends to view self-deliberation as a mental process whereby the individual converses with his inner voices and draws on mental images that seem influential in decision-making and action. Alain Morin believes that the person engaged in subjective experience about which he or she has ambivalent feelings can better perceive the various elements that constitute this experience by verbally

⁴⁶⁸ Semenza, “*The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge*,” 54.

⁴⁶⁹ David Laird, “Hieronimo's Dilemma,” *Studies in Philology* 62.2 (1965): pp. 141.

⁴⁷⁰ Burkitt, “Self and Others in the Field of Perception,” pp. 268.

⁴⁷¹ Burkitt, “Self and Others in the Field of Perception,” pp. 270.

identifying them; the same person can also become more explicitly aware that he is the subject of this experience by stepping back and saying “I’m the one going through this.”⁴⁷² Hieronimo self-deliberates because, through this internal dialogue, he is able to see his situation from a different point of view. Throughout his soliloquy, Hieronimo experiences inner voices that address him, calling his name and commanding him to refrain from proceeding with his plan: “Then stay, Hieronimio, attend their will,” he says, in a quintessential instance of such splitting. Listening to his inner voices, he responds to them with stronger self-addressed motives to overcome them, and in so doing, he perceives his situation more effectively and acknowledges the urgency of acting swiftly and striking immediately. Hieronimo’s other self represents the inner voices that Kyd’s dramatization stylistically presents in an interior monologue that has a critical part in Hieronimo’s self-deliberation. Kyd’s dramatization of his soliloquies with a split of two selves seems to align with Alan Palmer’s claim that “interior monologue... often contains a good deal of thought report that is simply not generally recognized by theorists.”⁴⁷³ Palmer further argues that it is “not true that thought can only be represented by one... method [—self-addressed speech—] for rendering [inner] speech.”⁴⁷⁴ For him, “monologues involve transmuting impression and sensation into language; some are openly stylized... [and] multi-voiced.”⁴⁷⁵

Another literary theorist, Lubomir Dolezel—known as one of the founders of the

⁴⁷² Alain Morin, “Inner Speech,” in *The Oxford Companion to Consciousness*, ed. Tim Bayne, Axel Cleeremans, and Patrick Wilken, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 382.

⁴⁷³ Alan Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 57.

⁴⁷⁴ Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 66.

⁴⁷⁵ Palmer, *Fictional Minds*, 74.

fictional worlds theory—argues that self-deliberative speech is evoked by mental conflicts that can be emotional or goal oriented. For him, such mental tension is expressed in the form of interior monologue and is verbalized to the self of the acting person: “inner conflict is located in the mental domain of the acting person; it arises from contradictory intentions, desires, goals, strategies, and so forth. It manifests itself in the form of interior monologue, a basic verbal expression of mental tension.”⁴⁷⁶ From these insights, we can deduce that interior monologue exists in Renaissance drama and is represented in Kyd’s *Hieronimo*, especially when his inner voices address him by his name, manifesting a splitting mind. Kyd creates this mental tension in *Hieronimo*’s mind through contradictory desires and goals, and he stylistically does that by allowing his interior monologue to converse with him. Such mental tension is represented in another scene where *Hieronimo* is deciding how to proceed with his plan for private revenge:

But how? Not as the vulgar wits of men,
 With open, but inevitable ills,
 As by a secret, yet a certain mean,
 Which under kindship will be cloaked best.

 Not seeming that I know their villainies,
 That my simplicity may make them think,
 That ignorantly I will let all slip—
 For ignorance, I wot, and well they know,
Remedium malorum iners est.
 Nor aught avails it me to menace them
 Who, as a wintry storm upon a plain,
 Will bear me down with their nobility.
 No, no, *Hieronimo*, thou must enjoin

⁴⁷⁶ Hirsh, *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies*, 97.

Thine eyes to observation, and thy tongue
 To milder speeches than thy spirit affords,
 Thy heart to patience, and thy hands to rest,
 Thy cap to courtesy, and thy knee to bow,
 Till revenge thou know when, where, and how.⁴⁷⁷

Some critics have interpreted this speech as the protagonist's shift from hero to villain. For instance, Timothy M. Ponce argues that most scholars refuse to identify Hieronimo's actions as Christian in nature, and he quotes Bowers saying that he contends that the abused father gradually transforms from "Hieronimo the hero to Hieronimo the Villain."⁴⁷⁸ Although in these lines, Hieronimo thinks like a villain and pursues Machiavellian tactics, his villainy is not an indication of his transition to some new theatrical type; it is rather a state of mind that he comes to experience because of the mental tension that occurs between his inner voices representing his agony and anger and his self-addressed speech representing his reason to temporarily hold off his plan for a successful private revenge.

Another example of interior monologue that the play demonstrates in Hieronimo's mind is where Hieronimo is about to execute his play-within-the-play stratagem in which he finally kills his son's murderers. In this particular scene, his "inner hearing" is again activated to reinforce his earlier decision and determine his actions once and for all:

Bethink thy self, Hieronimo:
 Recall thy wits, recompt thy former wrongs

⁴⁷⁷ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.13.21-44.

⁴⁷⁸ Timothy M. Ponce, "Reconsidering the Early Modern Machiavellian: Illicit Manuscripts and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 60, no.4 (2018): pp. 446.

Thou hast received by murder of thy son,
 And lastly, not least, how Isabel—
 Once his mother and thy dearest wife—
 All woe-begone for him hath slain herself.
 Behoves thee then, Hieronimo, to be revenged:
 The plot is laid of dire revenge;
 On then, Hieronimo, pursue revenge,
 For nothing wants but acting of revenge.⁴⁷⁹

In these lines, his other self addresses Hieronimo and asks him to recollect his painful losses: his son's loss and now his wife who kills herself because she could not cope with the intolerable pain of Horatio's death. In *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*, Thomas Rist points out that Hieronimo shows in every scene that he is a father who cannot simply forget his son's death, and "despite the calls of contemporary Reformers for moderation in mourning"; his constant mourning attests instead to a different truth: that "passionate remembrance is 'What 'tis to be subject to destiny.'" Rist argues further that this practice of passionate remembrance re-surfaces emotional experiences that reinforce Hieronimo's decision to proceed with his plan, especially given that his wife's suicide reinforces to his initial motive: "the dishonourable death of a son, now further fuelled by the dishonourable death of a wife."⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.3.20-30.

⁴⁸⁰ Thomas Rist considers *The Spanish Tragedy* a tragedy of commemoration, and he places a special emphasis on the remembrance of the dead in his analysis of the play. He makes an association of remembrance and revenge that clears Hieronimo's doubts and lessens his hesitation when he proceeds with his decision. He claims that Hieronimo's motive stems from his mourning and his "passionate remembrance" of the dead in *Revenge Tragedy and the Drama of Commemoration in Reforming England*, (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 38.

All these examples demonstrate that Hieronimo experiences emotions that evoke his inner speeches; sometimes these inner speeches represent mental tensions in which his “inner hearing” or “inner voices” are in conflict with his “inner speaking” or contradict what he generates in his self-addressed speech; other times, his interior monologue, which represents his emotional “inner hearing” simply instructs him to reinforce his decisions and perform his actions. His anger and agony are powerful enough to evoke his interior monologue and are capable of manipulating his thinking and recollections about his family. This analysis highlights Kyd’s artistic work in depicting Hieronimo’s mind responding to his emotional impulses to engage in all these cognitive activities, including the consideration of his sorrowful instances in order to strengthen his decision and determine his destiny. Hieronimo becomes this tragic hero who falls victim to his own mind because, in his revenge state, he experiences mental obligations that are accompanied by the feeling of mental pain,⁴⁸¹ and this pain persists until he satisfies it by attempting to harm others: “When we seek revenge, we *seek satisfaction by attempting to harm other (or associated persons) as a retaliatory measure....* We seek to make people suffer because they have made us suffer.”⁴⁸² Thus does Hieronimo reaches a point where he is resolute in his decision; he has to express his *revenge thoughts* in *revenge acts*, and he does so with the help of self-deliberation that Kyd reveals to us through Hieronimo’s soliloquies, which reinforces his decision for a successful execution.

⁴⁸¹ Salman, Akhtar, *Sources of Suffering: Fear, Greed, Guilt, Deception, Betrayal, and Revenge*, (London: Karnac, 2014), 144.

⁴⁸² Cognitive psychology claims that the intention of revenge is to see the transgressor suffers as the key defining element of revenge because “revenge is personal and non-instrumental: with revenge we seek to make people suffer because they have made us suffer, not because their actions or values require us to bring them down.” Michael E. McCullough, Robert Kurzban, and Benjamin A. Tabak, "Cognitive Systems for Revenge and Forgiveness," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, no. 1 (2013): pp. 2.

4.4 Hieronimo's Execution of *Revenge Acts*

The play demonstrates that Hieronimo reaches a point where he has to execute his revenge thoughts; his emotions instigate them, and his soliloquies reinforce them until he becomes ready to act against his son's killers. Since many scholars agree that *The Spanish Tragedy* is connected to or an adaptation of Seneca's tragedy, it is worth exploring if Kyd's dramatization of anger as an emotional force behind Hieronimo's vengeful action has been treated the same way Seneca does in his work before I introduce contemporary insights on anger by cognitive psychologists that allow us to interpret the hero's mental obligation from a new perspective. The way the play shows Hieronimo moved by his anger to seek revenge differs from Seneca's theory of anger in degree, although both treat anger as a destructive emotional force. According to Seneca, anger "occurs when the mind abdicates its control and allows free rein to the emotion."⁴⁸³ For him, anger "overleaps reason and sweeps it away... when the mind chooses and determines to take revenge... This means that the mind has closed itself off from its own reasoning power, intent only on its subject."⁴⁸⁴ According to this belief, Seneca's character who is instigated by anger will carry on his vengeance immediately without consulting his reason in order to gratify his vengeful desires because Seneca clearly states that a "man thinks himself injured, wishes to take vengeance, but dissuaded by some

⁴⁸³ Gertrude Gillette, *Four Faces of Anger: Seneca, Evagrius Ponticus, Cassian, and Augustine*, (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 2010), 4.

⁴⁸⁴ Gillette, *Four Faces of Anger*, 4.

consideration immediately calms down. This I do not call anger.”⁴⁸⁵ Kyd seems to dramatize Hieronimo with a vigorous anger because we see him determined to avenge his son’s death until the last moment of the play. However, Kyd supplies his protagonist with “a kind” of reasoning power to navigate his anger toward a strategic and successful revenge. Several scenes, most of which I covered in the previous section when Hieronimo speaks soliloquies, have shown how he evaluates his situations and self-deliberates his decisions, and in this particular section Hieronimo executes a play-within-a-play stratagem in order to gratify his anger.

Distinguished from the Seneca’s theory of anger, current research in cognitive psychology suggests that in a revenge state the human cognitive systems motivate the person to produce contingent punishments and rewards that benefit the retaliator; it also tends to view anger as an evolved motivational program designed to motivate the angry individual to react and behave to regain equilibrium.⁴⁸⁶ As we have already observed, Antonio Damasio adds to this the claim that revenge, as a regulatory function, is actually beneficial to the individual’s mind because it helps the revenger “regain an inner psychic balance.”⁴⁸⁷ So, from this perspective, Hieronimo’s execution of revenge is interpretable as the means by which he attempts to alleviate his mental pain, for his psychic world is recreated through this process of taking revenge. Contemporary cognitive psychology, then, shows us something new with respect to how Hieronimo’s anger drives him to perform certain actions; by seeking revenge, he seeks mental balance or equilibrium that

⁴⁸⁵ Gillette, *Four Faces of Anger*, 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Michael E. McCullough, Robert Kurzban, and Benjamin A. Tabak, “Cognitive Systems for Revenge and Forgiveness,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, no. 1 (2013): pp. 3.

⁴⁸⁷ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 31.

is beneficial for his psyche.

The climactic action and language of the play bear out such a conceptualization of revenge as an anger-motivated route to psychic relief.⁴⁸⁸ Instead of repressing his revenge thoughts, Hieronimo expresses them in action, executing his plan to harm and destroy the killers. His vindictiveness towards them in an expression of his belief that the act of revenge is his right, and since he cannot think clearly concerning his own loss, his feeling of righteousness is born out of the rage that organizes his inner world:

What is there yet in a son
To make a father dote, rave, or run mad?
.....

There is Nemesis and Furies,
And things call'd whips,
And they do meet with murderers—
They do not always 'scape,
.....

till violence leaps forth
Like thunder wrapped in a ball of fire.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁸ Leonard Berkowitz defines anger as “the sensations of an activated aggression-related motor program and its associated bodily changes” that the angry person expresses in his “desire to attack a particular target in order to punish a misdeed, and/or to achieve justice.” In “Anger: Its Nature and its Relation to Aggression,” in *Multiple Facets of Anger: Getting Mad or Restoring Justice?*, edited by Farzaneh Pahlavan (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2011), 28; Gerhard Stemmler details these changes and argues: “anger provocation elicits strong changes in... blood pressure, heart rate... and muscle activity... these coordinated changes have a functional value for the pursuit and finally the attainment of a goal of anger: to motivate individuals to avoid failure and pain.” “Somatovisceral Activation During Anger,” in *International Handbook of Anger: Constituent and Concomitant Biological, Psychological, and Social Processes*, edited by Michael Potegal, Gerhard Stemmler, and Charles Spielberger, (New York: Springer, 2010), 103.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.11.9-10, 41-44, 46-47.

Anger, in other words, is both motivational and cognitively distorting for Hieronimo. In these lines, he feels driven to satisfy his emotional needs to overcome his pain and find equilibrium at any cost; in so doing, he expresses his *revenge thoughts* in *revenge acts* by committing harmful actions against Lorenzo and Balthazar in order to overcome his mental misery and find equilibrium: “wherefore waste I mine unfruitful words, / When naught but blood will satisfy my woes.”⁴⁹⁰ His shift from thinking to acting epitomizes the consoling affective power revenge seems to promise: to stop or “avoid thinking and instead give rage more or less full rein.”⁴⁹¹ In other words, in order to escape from his anguish over his son’s shocking murder and the tormenting sense of unfairness this produces, Hieronimo allows his emotions to overleap his reason; he gives his anger the full rein of his actions, bringing his revenge quest to fruition and leading to his own destruction.

Some literary scholars, such as Gregory Semenza and Simone Weil, similarly consider Hieronimo a protagonist who strives for vengeance in order to regain his equilibrium: “[his] desire for vengeance is a desire for essential equilibrium.”⁴⁹² My own argument that Kyd dramatizes a desire or force that drives Hieronimo to seek equilibrium concurs with their reading, but further suggests that a cognitive-psychological approach allows us to characterize such an insight more accurately by saying that the motivational force Kyd depicts in Hieronimo’s revenge act is the disruption of his emotional system. More particularly, it is Hieronimo’s anger that pushes him to achieve the equilibrium he is seeking. This is made evident when he performs a court play that he and Bel-imperia

⁴⁹⁰ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.8.67-68.

⁴⁹¹ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 20.

⁴⁹² Semenza, “The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge,” 51.

convert into reality by stabbing Lorenzo and Balthazar.

The vengeful thoughts that occupied Hieronimo's mind throughout the play—"here I vow / ... / I will ere long determine of their deaths / That causeless thus have murdered my son"⁴⁹³— are now expressed in action, and this shift from the play to reality (from the play-within-a-play to actual stabbing of the murderers) seems like an allegory of the cognitive processes that Kyd represents in Hieronimo's mind. Hieronimo's revenge thoughts are similar to the imaginative characters taking roles in the play-within-a-play, and when Hieronimo finally stabs them because they are the actual killers in his real world, his revenge acts step out of the imagination world to become reality. Soon after, Bel-imperia stabs herself, but Hieronimo delays his own suicidal act until he has explained his fabulous counterfeit to his audience, showing them the body of his dead son: "Behold the reason urging me to this: *shows his dead son*."⁴⁹⁴ In showing his dead child, Hieronimo confirms, once again, that this whole play is a dramatization of the theories of cognitive-psychological processes because the scene demonstrates that Hieronimo's anger and grievance had not left his mind until he achieved equilibrium:

here behold this bloody handkerchief,
Which at Horatio's death I weeping dipped
Within the river of his bleeding wounds:
It as propitious, see I have reserved,
And never hath it left my bloody heart,
Soliciting remembrance of my vow
With these, O these accursed murderers—

⁴⁹³ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.1.42, 44-45.

⁴⁹⁴ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.4.88.

Which now performed, my heart is satisfied.⁴⁹⁵

This scene marks the climax of the play as a tragedy of mind precisely because in it Hieronimo's agony is finally alleviated and his anger is somehow expressed.

4.5 Hieronimo's Suicidal Act

There are several factors that push Hieronimo to commit suicide after he perpetrates his crimes, but Kyd ultimately presents his suicide as a means of dealing with his lingering negative emotion: pain. In their book *Pain: Psychological Perspectives*, Thomas Hadjistravropoulos and Kenneth Craig define pain as "primarily a psychological experience. It is the most pervasive and universal form of human distress and it often contributes to dramatic reductions in the quality of life."⁴⁹⁶ Hieronimo experiences such psychological pain, and he also feels an overwhelming sense of failure for no longer being able to do his duties as a father and husband, duties that he has been fulfilling for many years, caring for and protecting his son in order to bring him comfort:

Being born, it pouts, cries, and breeds teeth.
 What is there yet in a son? He must be fed,
 Be taught to go, and speak.

.....

my Horatio

.....

He loved his loving parents,
 He was my comfort, and his mother's joy,

⁴⁹⁵ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.4.122-129.

⁴⁹⁶ Thomas Hadjisavropoulos and Kenneth D. Craig, *Pain: Psychological Perspectives*, (Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 1.

The very arm that did hold up our house:
Our hopes were stored up in him.⁴⁹⁷

Moreover, he finds it difficult to understand how their deaths will fit into the scheme of his new life.

Ultimately, however, his desperate need to escape from the ongoing mental pain of sheer loss is what pushes him to commit suicide. Having to cope with the violent deaths of his son and wife is surely one of the hardest situations a man can go through, causing excruciating emotional and psychological pain. Modern research in cognitive psychology indicates that in such situation, the individual's cognition is affected by the experience of pain, leading them to the experience of two cognitive contents: hopelessness and unbearableness.⁴⁹⁸ Hieronimo's speech signals his experience of both of these states, expressing his hopelessness and the negative expectations for his future:

Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end;
Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain;
Here lay my treasure, and here my treasure lost;
Here lay my bliss, and here my bliss bereft;
But hope, heart, treasure, joy, and bliss
All fled, failed, died, yea all decayed with this.
From forth these wounds came breath that gave me life;
They murdered me that made these fatal marks.
The cause was love, whence great this mortal hate.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁷ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 3.11.11-13, 28,

⁴⁹⁸ Amy Wenzel and Megan Spokas, "Cognitive and Information Processing Approaches to Understanding Suicidal Behaviors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Suicide and Self-Injury*, edited by Matthew K. Nock, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 237.

⁴⁹⁹ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.4.90-99.

He has lost everything he appreciates in life, from hope and love to happiness and family; he feels hopeless in the absence of these life's treasures. In the line "Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain," Hieronimo uses "my heart" as a metaphor for his "slain" child or wife and also ironically hints at his own imminent suicide, since he plans to really "slay" his own heart if he takes his own life. He considers his son and wife the source of true happiness and love, but since they no longer exist to supply him with such emotions—"All fled, failed, died, yea all decayed with this"—he does not see himself surviving without them. He refers to his son and wife as his "wounds" because he is psychologically hurt to know they are dead; these wounds, he says, gave him life and hope, which again indicates that his life will come to an end with the absence of his providers.

Cognitive psychologists highlight the state of hopelessness as "a key cognitive factor associated with increased suicide risk" because individuals "are at risk for suicidal behavior when they have pessimistic views of their future."⁵⁰⁰ Hieronimo feels hopeless and this state contributes to the activation of his acute suicidal crisis. Besides hopelessness, moreover, Hieronimo is also motivated to commit suicide by the felt unbearableness of his situation. He knows that he cannot tolerate the psychological and emotional pain that fate has imposed on him, and as the play's tragic outcome indicates, his unbearable situation increases his risk of suicide.⁵⁰¹ Like contemporary cognitive psychologists, Kyd seems to understand suicide as an escape from the negative emotions that keep haunting the anguished sufferer because the intensity of his extreme pain stimulates and manipulates his own thoughts and cognitive decisions. Moreover,

⁵⁰⁰ Wenzel and Spokas, "Cognitive and Information Processing Approaches," 237.

⁵⁰¹ Wenzel and Spokas, "Cognitive and Information Processing Approaches," 239.

Hieronimo's morbid capacity to reflect upon himself and his situation evokes all sorts of additional negative emotions, such as "self-derogation, and feelings of shame, guilt and hopelessness,"⁵⁰² which further drive him to perceive suicide as the only escape from his unbearable situation.

As much as mental pain is unbearable for Hieronimo, physical pain, too, is a factor that contributes to his suicide. Hieronimo is aware of the inevitable punishment that awaits him for killing Lorenzo and Balthazar. He knows that he will be punished for the crimes he has committed, for he has executed his revenge against royal officials and highly ranked individuals who have the full power to torture him: "Fetch forth the tortures. / Traitor as thou art, I'll make thee tell."⁵⁰³ So besides his emotionally devastating losses, there is also another cognitive awareness that preoccupies him in the form of his pervasive sense of suffering that these royal figures will impose on him. Influenced by these complementary factors—current emotional misery and the anticipation of future tortures which the king and his heads of State threaten—Hieronimo commits suicide as a means of securing an ultimate escape.

4.6 Hieronimo's Exaggerated Revenge Acts

Cognitive psychology explains that exaggerated behavior in revenge is common because in a revenge state, people tend to behave in a way that is exaggeratedly destructive both for those who are acting upon and for themselves, even though they do

⁵⁰² Jesse Bering, *Suicidal: Why We Kill Ourselves*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 38.

⁵⁰³ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 4.4.183-84.

not think in such terms.⁵⁰⁴ Böhm and Kaplan argue that as soon as people put revenge thoughts to work, it is as though they become “another person.”⁵⁰⁵ They do things they perhaps never thought they would ever do, and the result is that their self-image is changed; they see themselves as avengers.⁵⁰⁶ Prior to committing suicide, Hieronimo performs several violent and grotesque acts that many literary scholars have either found confusing or exaggerated in the play. These extended acts begin when Hieronimo bites out his tongue; because he was stopped from hanging himself, and because he was ordered to speak and comply, he bites out his tongue to avoid revealing what his inquisitors require from him. In such moments, the play begins to imply the powerful proximity between revenge acts and violent exaggeration. Meanwhile, contemporary psychological insights on exaggerated revenge acts explain two things in the play: first, Hieronimo’s moment of self-harming, especially because there is nothing to hide from the king (he has already told the king everything he needs to know); second, why Hieronimo’s revenge acts do not remain within the principle of “measure for measure,” but rather extend to kill other bystanders.

Once Hieronimo commits his first murder, he is caught in a revenge spiral that leads to more murders than we ever anticipated, including the Duke of Castile and the taking of his own self.⁵⁰⁷ After self-mutilating by removing his own tongue, Hieronimo is forced by the king to write instead. He seems to agree and motions for a knife to mend his pen, which upon receiving, he instantly and surprisingly uses to stab the Duke of

⁵⁰⁴ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 20.

⁵⁰⁵ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 20.

⁵⁰⁶ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 20.

⁵⁰⁷ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 4.

Castile to death and then to commit suicide. Some critics regard these exaggerated acts as a sort of tasteless dramatic excess that can be explained only as errors on Kyd's part, indications of his weaknesses as a dramatist. In his article "'Vindicta Mihi!': Meaning, Morality, and Motivation in 'The Spanish Tragedy,'" however, Michael Henry Levin qualifies this kind of objection, acknowledging it but also praising this gory scene for creating an elaborate image of destructive emotions in a state of revenge:

Critics have traditionally grown fat by battenning on these weaknesses, but they have done so by refusing to recognize the play's central strengths. Kyd was a more-than-competent dramatist; as the first English tragedian to write dramatically, he could not help making mistakes, but those he makes pale to insignificance beside the exciting swirl of action and emotion that encloses them.⁵⁰⁸

Neill, likewise, argues that Hieronimo's over-extension of revenge through the gesture of biting out his tongue and the use of the pen-knife as a weapon to kill the Duke of Castle and himself are "a symbolic expression of the chaotic destructiveness of revenge."⁵⁰⁹

Similarly, Semenza maintains that Kyd designs the grotesque violence of the final scene in order to display the ugliness of revenge and the pain that it can only cause to the self and others:

The play loudly declares that there is no such thing as a clean act of revenge. And just as Hieronimo is debased by his decision to murder himself and others and thereby to cause more pain, the audience members, who cannot help but identify with him, are debased by the experience of witnessing and being indirectly complicit in the inhuman spectacle that marks the end of the play.⁵¹⁰

As all of these critics suggest, then, in Hieronimo's revenge state, his emotional system motivates his behavior, and he is compelled to perform a range of exaggerated actions to

⁵⁰⁸ Michael Henry Levin, "'Vindicta Mihi!': Meaning, Morality, and Motivation in 'the Spanish Tragedy,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 4, no. 2 (1964): pp. 307.

⁵⁰⁹ *The Spanish Tragedy* (Neill), 112.

⁵¹⁰ Semenza, "The Spanish Tragedy and Revenge," pp. 51.

satisfy his emotions and ease his pain.

The sheer grotesquerie of Hieronimo by the end of the play hints at a terrifying transformation of the self that cognitive psychology perfectly explains in terms of the image of an avenger who does not act as he or she does in normal states when their cognition is unimpaired by extreme emotional turmoil and suffering. Insofar as Hieronimo sees himself as an avenger, his cognitions and actions are so driven by the overwhelming force of negative emotions that they become irrational and, at the same time, destructive—both to those who are around him and to himself: As Böhm and Kaplan put it, “As the primitive psychic force that it is, revenge can contribute to primitive brutality in cases ranging from individual... to collective mass murder.”⁵¹¹ He kills the Duke not because he deserves it, but because Hieronimo has momentarily lost his capacity to think rationally. At this climactic moment, Hieronimo does not seem to have time for self-examination that might lead him to consciously renounce revenge or reflect on the vanity of his action. He is simply driven by his pain and anger to murder and abuse, which are “normal reactions” in moments of revenge.⁵¹² In this regard, Hieronimo’s revenge contributes to the collective brutality for which his emotions are responsible; he becomes the tragic hero who falls victim to his own mind because he follows the rhythm of emotional forces beyond his control until they destroy him. *The Spanish Tragedy*, in other words, reveals a mind in the throes of emotional impulses that muddle their way through to decisive and irrevocable actions and affirms Kyd as a folk psychologist and a tragedian of the mind whose profiling of the early modern avenger

⁵¹¹ Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, xxviii.

⁵¹² Böhm and Kaplan, *Revenge*, 20.

both anticipates and resonates revealingly with the emerging understanding of revenge by contemporary cognitive psychologists. However, generically conventional Kyd's revenge tragedy might seem, my reading has endeavored to show that Kyd is a dramatist of character motivation par excellence whose intuition and introspection yield a dramatization of the psychology of revenge that is far more than "a repository of 'patterned' speech."

CHAPTER FIVE

Titus's Aggression and the Sequence of
Violent Actions and Events Leading to His Downfall

In *Titus Andronicus*, it is hard to overlook Shakespeare's depiction of aggression. It is true that Shakespeare's use of violence and aggression is abundant and significant in his work and mostly in his tragic plays, as Lisa S. Starks-Estes argues in her book *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays*: “[Shakespeare's work is] rife with sexual violence, pain, suffering, brutal aggression, and savage revenge – that is the most predominant in his work.”⁵¹³ However, *Titus Andronicus* is considered Shakespeare's most revealing play with regard to the use of violence because it presents an extreme form of aggression, including assault, rape, murder, suicide, and mutilation. Stephanie Bahr argues that the play “holds a mirror to the most grotesque aspects... rape, murder, and dismemberment... heads and hands...

⁵¹³ Lisa S. Starks-Estes argues that Shakespeare weaves traumatic events throughout his poems and plays. He does that particularly in those based on Roman myth, legend, and history, from the early *Titus Andronicus* to the late *Cymbeline*. Starks-Estes argues further that Shakespeare articulates the unspeakable in order to examine the “erotics of aggression” and to investigate the tragic effects of violence. In her view, Shakespeare reveals a fascination with literature and a plethora of visual images, closely investigating the interrelationships between violence and vulnerability, “culminating in his treatment of the traumatic anxiety generated by the newly bounded self.” *Violence, Trauma, and Virtus in Shakespeare's Roman Poems and Plays*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 2.

mak[ing] these body parts the objects of a macabre punning.”⁵¹⁴ Similarly, Steven Gregg characterizes the play as a representation of “bloody revenge, dismemberment, miscegenation, rape and cannibalism.”⁵¹⁵ Shakespeare dramatizes such grotesquerie in scenes of aggressive behavior between characters who have conflicting interests. Randy J. Nelson defines aggression as an “overt behavior with the intention of inflicting physical damage upon another individual,” noting that the possibility for aggressive behavior occurs whenever the interests of individuals conflict.⁵¹⁶ Such definition helps the audience when reading *Titus Andronicus* to realize that the entire play revolves around conflicting interests between individuals and that their aggressive behavior is based on this particular notion of interests that Shakespeare artistically dramatizes at the outset of the play.

Right from the beginning of the play, Shakespeare establishes the exaggerated concept of aggression that will function as a crucial element in the entire play. He begins the play with a dramatization of a conflict between the Roman Empire and the Germanic people: a ten-year war between the Romans and the Goths. The display of aggression is

⁵¹⁴ Stephanie M. Bahr, “Titus Andronicus and the Interpretive Violence of the Reformation,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2017): pp. 248.

⁵¹⁵ Steven Gregg, “*Titus Andronicus* and the Nightmares of Violence and Consumption,” *Moveable Type UCL Press* 6 (2010): pp. 2.

⁵¹⁶ See more on aggression as an agonistic behavior in Randy J. Nelson’s book *Biology of Aggression*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), v. Nelson argues that aggression is known as “behavior patterns having the common functions of adaptations to situation involving physical conflict between members of the same species,” 3; this may include offensive, defensive, parental, and predatory aggression. The defensive behaviors serve the function of protecting one’s self from injury by others and the offensive ones serve the functions of obtaining and retaining survival and reproductive resources. In his thorough study of aggression, Nelson takes into consideration the effects of genetic variants on aggression that are often dependent on environmental or experiential factors (genetic background, maternal environment, peer environment, early experience, sexual experiences, wins and defeats, observational learning, and type of opponents).

further intensified with the arrival of Titus as a conquering Roman general, with royal captives from his latest brutal war against the Goths. Once he arrives, he and his son Lucius create a horrific scene of aggression in which they slaughter one of the prisoners in front of his mother Tamora: queen of the Goths:

LUCIUS

Give us the proudest prisoner of the Goths
 That we may hew his limbs, and on a pile
Ad manes fratrum sacrifice his flesh
 Before this earthly prison of their bones,
 That so the shadows be not unappeased,
 Nor we disturbed with prodigies on earth

TITUS

I give him you, the noblest that survives,
 The eldest son of this distressed queen.

LUCIUS

Away with him, and make a fire straight,
 And with our swords upon a pile of wood
 Let's hew his limbs till they be clean consumed.⁵¹⁷

What accounts for such extreme displays of violence in the play? Paul Innes contends, in his article "*Titus Andronicus* and the Violence of Tragedy," that violence and aggression are to be expected in such a play because "tragedy is a gory genre."⁵¹⁸ He argues that *Titus Andronicus* presents a particularly severe challenge to a critical approach that "privileges psychological character coherence," especially if the audience is to identify with the flawed tragic hero, something that Titus's aggression and violence in the play

⁵¹⁷ Stanley Wells, *The Oxford Shakespeare Titus Andronicus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.1.96-102, 127-9.

⁵¹⁸ Paul Innes "Titus Andronicus and the Violence of Tragedy," *Journal of Literature and Trauma Studies* 1, no. 1 (2012): pp. 28.

render impossible.⁵¹⁹ For Innes, the fact that Titus kills Mutius and then Lavinia—“as part of the glorious excess of tragic violence with which the play ends”—makes it impossible for critics to decipher his psychological coherence, for “such extreme violence is a generic requirement for tragedy on the Elizabethan stage, and it has nothing to do with the tragic awareness of the protagonist.”⁵²⁰ He further argues that the play “*tends* by its own excessive violence to attract extreme responses,” while maintaining that its violence differs only in degree to genre norms, not in kind.⁵²¹ Of course, this play seems to operate as an exaggeration of the violence that occurs in most tragedies of the period as far as possible because Shakespeare deploys unexpected events consisting of shocking actions—the burning of the prisoner, the rape and mutilation of the daughter, the slaying and baking of the queen’s two sons. Other critical approaches to the play may have as well been to see aggression in *Titus Andronicus* in terms of a generic feature of tragedy, arguing that Shakespeare panders to mob tastes for blood, especially for the Elizabethan audience that sought to see violence in theater because it matches the violence of their culture and the cruelty of the events happening during that time. Martha Rozett, for instance, argues that “Shakespeare... wrote about... violent occurrences to suit the tastes of unrefined audiences.”⁵²² Similarly, Francis X. Kuhn believes that “the ‘brutal,’ violence... was a staple of the Elizabethan playhouse and culture”⁵²³; Kuhn further

⁵¹⁹ Innes, “Titus Andronicus and the Violence of Tragedy,” 28.

⁵²⁰ Innes, “Titus Andronicus and the Violence of Tragedy,” 31.

⁵²¹ Innes, “Titus Andronicus and the Violence of Tragedy,” 28.

⁵²² Martha Rozett, “Aristotle, the Revenger, and the Elizabethan Audience,” *Studies in Philology* 76, no. 3 (1979): pp. 240.

⁵²³ Francis X. Kuhn, “‘My Cue to fight’ Stage Violence in *Othello*,” in *Othello: Critical Essays*, edited by Philip Kolin, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 425.

asserts that such aggression and violence that we identify in *Titus Andronicus* is meant to remind us that “the playhouse audience paid to see what the bearbaiting audience paid to see, cruelty, suffering, and courage displayed for its pleasure.”⁵²⁴

Another explanation for the extreme violence of this scene might be its political utility: Titus employs the dismembering of a son before his mother as a means of securing control over the Goths. As Kimberly Stratton argues in another context, violence is deeply ingrained in relationships of power and control.⁵²⁵ She believes that violence is instrumental in the sense that it “seeks to control another person through the use of force,” torture, threat, and pain that affect the psychology of the person: “Even the *threat* of pain or death can have this effect, making it a potent psychological weapon.”⁵²⁶ This too helps to account for the extremity of the violence this scene conjures, but, like Innes’s genre explanation and Rozett’s and Kuhn’s claims about audience’s tastes for blood, it remains inadequate as a means of accounting for the motive of a father killing his children. As we have seen from the arguments of these critics, there are many factors that Shakespeare includes to imply motives for Titus’s actions, but this very plethora of possible explanations has made it more difficult to understand the psychological motivation in enough detail. In this chapter, I do not claim to provide the only explanation or even the master explanation for Titus’s motive, but rather to explore his psychological motivations more deeply because if we examine closely Titus’s aggression from the lens of cognitive psychology, we are able to identify and better understand the

⁵²⁴ Kuhn, ““My Cue to fight,”” 425.

⁵²⁵ Kimberly B. Stratton, “Violence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality*, edited by Benjamin Dunning, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

⁵²⁶ Stratton, “Violence,” 2.

“psychological character coherence” in Titus that Innes claims to be impossible to approach. This psychological coherence further illuminates Titus’s behavior and subsequent actions toward his destruction.

The play presents Titus as a protagonist who, in moments of fury and desperation, perpetrates the most unexpected deed a father can commit: the murder of his own children. Many scholars acknowledge that the disobedience and dishonor of Titus’s children become such a terrible affront to him that he reacts aggressively, but even with this acknowledgement, these scholars feel so discombobulated by his actions that they have difficulty fully accounting for his motives. For instance, Dorothy T. Grunes questions Titus’s motive when she analyzes his filicides: “Is it simply order and honour that he is defending?”⁵²⁷ Likewise, Caroline Lamb questions Titus’s actions, especially toward the end of the play when he murders Lavinia, and she suggests one way to read it: “One approach to reading Lavinia’s [death] is not because the new Rome cannot tolerate [her] physical difference, but because... she has been both catalyst and accomplice in the murders of Chiron and Demetrius... [and] ‘the death of the revenger is a virtually unbreakable rule in English Renaissance revenge plays.’”⁵²⁸

In this chapter, I examine Titus’s aggression and violent behavior in order to understand his internal processes when performing actions that lead to his destruction. In

⁵²⁷ Dorothy T. Grunes admits that *Titus Andronicus* is a difficult play to interpret; she considers it a complicated play with grotesque imagery that is difficult to analyze. For Grunes, the difficulty stems from the extensive representation of violence, vanity, and aggression. “Madness and the Death of Self in *Titus Andronicus*,” in *What Shakespeare Teaches Us about Psychoanalysis: A Local Habitation and Name*, (London: Routledge, 2014), 121.

⁵²⁸ Caroline Lamb, “Physical Trauma and (adapt)ability in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Critical Survey* 22, no. 1 (2010): pp. 54-55.

my analysis, I rely on a cognitive platform and bridge between Titus's actions in the play and theories of aggression drawn from cognitive psychology in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's dramatization of Titus's psychological coherence and downfall. I particularly focus on Titus's actions in two of the most perplexing scenes of the play: the first, when he kills his son Mutius, and the second, when he murders his daughter Lavinia. I also trace the ramifications of his instigated aggression between these two acts, especially when he murders Tamora's two sons. By focusing on Titus's motivation in these scenes, I intend to show that Titus falls victim to his own mind since he cannot control his emotional impulses and aggression: once his aggression is instigated, he reacts to express it, and when he does, he becomes trapped in a circle of expressive aggressions that last long enough to cause his own death. Delving into Shakespeare's dramatization of Titus's aggression and examining its progression through the lens of cognitive psychological insights allow us to identify with this tragic hero and to recognize his psychological coherence in ways that Innes could not.

5.1 Forms of Aggression: Impulsive and Cognitive

Contemporary cognitive psychologists provide insights on aggression that are useful for an analysis of Titus and important to elucidate as a starting point. According to such insights, aggression, which is defined as a behavior that is carried out with the immediate intent to cause harm to others, is an adaptation whose original function was to enable the organism to defend itself against attack.⁵²⁹ The fact that aggressive behavior

⁵²⁹ Emil F. Coccaro, Jennifer R. Fanning, K. Luan Phan, and Royce Lee focus on understanding this type of aggression by extensively studying neurotransmitters and

has been preserved over evolutionary time has not been advantageous to human beings because they have become organized by cultural mores and norms, and, in their current societies, there are limited circumstances in which aggressive behavior is acceptable.⁵³⁰ Modern insights into aggression indicate that there are, in fact, two distinguishable forms of aggression; some aggressions are based on cognition, while others are triggered by emotions. The expressions of these two forms can either be physical because they involve physical harming (beating, stabbing, slaying, or shooting) or nonphysical because they are limited to verbal harm (shouting, cursing, and name calling).⁵³¹ Another form of aggression may involve “displaced aggression,” a term that I shall discuss shortly in the next section.

According to some cognitive psychologists, the first two forms—cognitive and emotional aggressions—are the most prominent ones. The emotional form is known as “impulsive aggression,” whereas the cognitive one is referred to as “instrumental aggression” or “cognitive aggression.”⁵³² The former is determined primarily by impulsive, mostly negative, emotions that the individuals experience or react to at the time they aggress. In other words, “aggression that is carried out impulsively or in anger

modulators that have been shown to have a possible role in aggression. They argue that serotonin is an important neurotransmitter underlying aggressive behavior, but they also maintain that it is not the only relevant neurotransmitter associated with aggression. They acknowledge that more work needs to be done to examine the role of other neurotransmitter systems in order to more comprehensively treat and deal with aggressive behaviors in “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” *CNS Spectrums* 20, no. 3 (2015): pp. 295.

⁵³⁰ Coccaro, Fanning, Phan, and Lee, “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” pp. 295.

⁵³¹ Kelvin Ford, Richard Byrt, and James Doohar, *Preventing and Reducing Aggression and Violence in Health and Social Care: A Holistic Approach*, (England: M&K Update Ltd., 2010), 6.

⁵³² Coccaro, Fanning, Phan, and Lee, “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” pp. 295.

is termed impulsive or reactive aggression... [it] characteristically occurs in response to a provocation (which is often social), threat, or frustration.”⁵³³ The latter “is carried out with the primary goal of obtaining some benefit or reward.”⁵³⁴ This cognitive aggression is deemed intentional and planned, and it is processed cognitively than affectively; it aims at hurting someone to gain something in return, such as power, reward, or even satisfaction.⁵³⁵

A further study has been conducted on the differences and interface between impulsive and cognitive information processing which concludes that impulsive and cognitive aggressions are not as distinct categories but rather as “endpoints on a continuum.”⁵³⁶ Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson reached this conclusion because in the process of cognitive aggression, impulsion serves some need for the perpetrator. They do draw a distinction between the two aggressions, arguing that impulsive aggression “is, by definition, automatic—it is unreasoned, uncontrollable, and spontaneous. By contrast, instrumental aggression is, by definition, controlled—it is reasoned, calculated, and premeditated.”⁵³⁷ However, they still maintain that there is an internal contradiction in

⁵³³ Coccaro, Fanning, Phan, and Lee, “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” pp. 295.

⁵³⁴ Coccaro, Fanning, Phan, and Lee, “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” pp. 295.

⁵³⁵ Coccaro, Fanning, Phan, and Lee, “Serotonin and Impulsive Aggression,” pp. 295.

⁵³⁶ Brad J. Bushman and Craig A. Anderson, “Is It Time to Pull the Plug on the Hostile Versus Instrumental Aggression Dichotomy?” *Psychological Review* 108, no. 1 (2001): pp. 276.

⁵³⁷ Bushman and Anderson acknowledge that aggressive behavior is triggered by anger and that its aim is to harm the target that caused the initial harm. However, they present a new definition of aggression that differs in three ways from most traditional definitions: “First, it distinguishes between proximate (immediate) and primary (ultimate, superordinate) goals.” The intention to harm is still a necessary feature of all aggression, but only as a proximate goal. Second, their definition still allows for distinctions between different types of aggression, but it does so at the level of primary goal. Finally, their

this dichotomous view of aggression because cognitive aggression is evoked by emotional triggers such as anger, which is a “concomitant of impulsive aggression.”⁵³⁸ Therefore, for Bushman and Craig, impulsive and cognitive aggressions cannot always be looked at as separate processes because “some obviously instrumental [or cognitive] aggression has automatic features.”⁵³⁹

To this point, I have presented some of the insights that cognitive psychology has on aggression, which I will use in my analysis of Titus’s emotional and cognitive processes. Such insights differ from early modern ideas about anger and its regulation because for the early modern philosophers, “anger is curbed by the will,” as a way to show that cognition controls such emotion. Conversely, the function of cognition within modern cognitive psychology is not only to suppress the emotions, but also to intensify them, as we shall see in Titus’s case. In his book *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, David Hoeniger argues that the early modern theory of passion and its regulation was adopted by earlier philosophers, such as Aquinas. Hoeniger explains that anger for Aquinas was “considered a particularly dangerous and destructive passion” and that “many classical and later writers stressed the need to make a daily effort to curb it.”⁵⁴⁰ He further argues that Thomas Wright adopted Aquinas’s scheme of passions and stressed on how, in extraordinary states, “they perturb the soul and thus require... curbing

definition does not assume that any particular act of aggression has only one primary goal. An aggressive behavior may well be the result of two or more simultaneously active goals in “Is It Time to Pull the Plug,” 276.

⁵³⁸ Bushman and Anderson, “Is It Time to Pull the Plug,” 276.

⁵³⁹ Bushman and Anderson, “Is It Time to Pull the Plug,” 276.

⁵⁴⁰ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 162.

by the will.”⁵⁴¹ Likewise, Irving I. Edgar argues, in his book *Shakespeare, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, that the early modern system of psychology-physiology maintains that a person speaks “of his veins as rivers... [but] his brain [is] the governor.”⁵⁴² In this chapter, I shall use contemporary cognitive psychological insights on aggression to provide a new interpretation for Titus’s emotional experiences and to show how the role of his cognition differs from these early modern ideas.

Having laid the psychological groundwork for this chapter, I turn in the next sections to examine Titus’s actions in the play and explain them in light of these insights showing how Titus seems to follow the two types of aggression that modern cognitive psychology distinguishes: his impulsive aggression—instigated by anger—has lasting effects and creates new actions which become motivated by his cognitive aggression. For this reason, the contemporary distinctions between types of aggressions are methodologically useful for interpreting the play. Approaching the play from this perspective highlights Shakespeare’s dramatization of aggression and presents a new interpretation of Titus’s downfall that can be added to the vast body of criticism on Shakespeare’s depiction of violence in his plays. The concept of aggression in question has always been perceived as dangerous and consequential in Shakespeare’s work, and thus, it is necessary to interpret it in relation to the destruction of this tragic hero.

5.2 Mutius’s Killing Scene and Titus’s Impulsive Aggression

⁵⁴¹ Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare*, 168.

⁵⁴² Irving I. Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry: an Historical Study in Criticism and Interpretation*, (London: Vision, 1971), 205.

The way the play presents Titus, it seems that his mind manifests a disposition toward spontaneous emotional reaction against his son Mutius that cognitive psychologists refer to as impulsive aggression. In the scene where Titus murders Mutius, the action itself happens so rapidly that it is made to seem more like a reflex of his mind than a deliberate act (unless he has already decided how to act in a situation like that). The killing act takes only twelve uttered words (nine by the offender and three by the victim):

MUTIUS

My lord, you pass not here.

TITUS

What, villain boy,

Barr'st me my way in Rome?

MUTIUS

Help, Lucius, Help!

*Titus kills him.*⁵⁴³

The time between the triggering words and Titus's emotional response in this scene begins right after Mutius's words: "My lord, you pass not here." It shows that Titus had no time to cognitively process his impulses before he actually acts. This particular line becomes the trigger of a stimulus, provoked by many unpleasant and challenging events between Titus and his confronters (Saturninus, Bassianus, and Tamora) that ignites his frustration. His ignited emotions, in turn, block his vision to identify his own blood and disconnect him from his righteousness. A specific reading calling for evidence is Leonard Berkowitz's; Berkowitz argues that people "are much more likely to become openly aggressive at someone's blocking their goal attainment if they believe their frustrater had

⁵⁴³ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.289-291.

deliberately and unjustifiably attempted to keep them from reaching their goal than if they think the thwarting had not been intentional or had not been directed at them personally.”⁵⁴⁴ This is most likely what Titus experiences because Mutius deliberately and unjustifiably stops him from reaching the goal of saving his daughter Lavinia from a kidnapping: “Traitors, my lord! Lavinia is surprised.”⁵⁴⁵

Titus’s immediate anger-based action is evidence that his impulsive aggression is in control of his mind because his action seems unreasoned, uncontrolled, and spontaneous. He watches the emperor’s brother Bassianus seizing his daughter without being able to do something about it, so he is moved by his emotional impulses that provoke him to act swiftly: “Follow, my lord, and I’ll ... bring her back.”⁵⁴⁶ However, his act is halted by Mutius who becomes his obstacle because he blocks his way to bring Lavinia back—“with my sword I’ll keep this door safe”⁵⁴⁷—so he executes him. Gregg regards “Titus’s judgment... against his own son Mutius [as] little more than willful vengeance, [and rather an] example of faulty reason and blindness.”⁵⁴⁸

Titus also seems furious because Mutius stood in his way in Rome, the place where he feels most honorable and respectful, because he utters: “What villain boy, / Barr’st me

⁵⁴⁴ In the study of frustration-aggression behavior, Berkowitz emphasizes two important components: “Aggressive behavior will be generated (1) to the extent that a person perceives the mistreatment as intentional and (2) to the degree that the frustration experienced is aversive.” 115; Curt R. Bartol and Anne M. Bartol, *Criminal Behavior: A Psychological Approach*, (New Jersey: Pearson, 2014), 115.

⁵⁴⁵ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.284.

⁵⁴⁶ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.289.

⁵⁴⁷ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.288.

⁵⁴⁸ Gregg, “*Titus Andronicus* and the Nightmares,” pp. 6.

my way in Rome.”⁵⁴⁹ In this speech, his anger seems to be instigated by the fact that his honor is somehow discredited. Grunes believes that Shakespeare allows glimpses into the character’s inner self through violence, but that he also portrays Titus with internal instinct that lies beneath an exterior façade. She argues that Shakespeare portrays Titus with a filicidal instinct beneath his patriotic exterior that stems from his desire to eliminate potential rivals: Titus leads his son to death, driven by “a murderous instinct displaced and projected in a manner he can rationalize and defend against.”⁵⁵⁰ Similarly, this exterior rationalization of honor against interior emotional experiences explains Titus’s impulsive aggression. As a way for him to express his impulsive aggression, Shakespeare seems to portray him defending his honor to rationalize his filicidal act. This scene depicts the power of emotions to overwhelm reason—as hinted by Gregg and demonstrated in the text—in its characterization of Titus as a character who fails to control his anger that induces impulsive aggression—a matter that similarly appears in contemporary cognitive psychological accounts of how individuals’ behavior is driven by overpowering emotions. As much as “honor” seems to be one of the reasons for which Titus slays his son, the shortness of the scene and the time between the trigger and reaction allows for an interpretation in relation to interior emotions and impulsive aggression. In his book *The Feeling of What Happens*, Antonio Damasio emphasizes emotions as controllers of people’s action. He argues that “without exception, men and women of all ages, of all cultures, of all levels of education, and of all walks of economic

⁵⁴⁹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.291-92.

⁵⁵⁰ Grunes, *What Shakespeare Teaches Us*, 121

life have emotions” that greatly affect their behavior.⁵⁵¹ He presents an illustration on the influence of emotions through neuronal pathways within the brain that change and reflect our state and behavior. He states that when we experience a typical emotion, the commands take “the form of electrochemical signals which act on other neurons or on muscular fibers or on organs (such as the adrenal gland) which in turn can release chemicals of their own into the bloodstream.”⁵⁵² As a result of these chemical and neural commands, our muscles, which receive and respond to these commands, may actually execute awful behavior, such as killing and slaughtering if not filtered or prevented by reasoning. Titus’s impulsive aggression seems to be motivated by his emotions, which lead him to execute his own son without rationally calculating or controlling his impulsive behavior; he claims to be motivated by honor only after the fact in order to justify his action.

Another way of looking into what lies beneath this façade of honor exterior is to examine the scene with reference to the psychological concept of “displaced aggression.” This term is used when the target is innocent of any wrongdoing but is unfortunately in the wrong place and at the wrong time. Bartol and Bartol indicate that “displaced aggression can occur when an individual cannot aggress against a source of provocation,

⁵⁵¹ Antonio R. Damasio argues that human emotion is not just about sexual pleasure or fear of snakes and danger. It is also about the horror of experiencing and witnessing suffering, and it is “about the satisfaction of seeing justice served.” The function of emotions is twofold: The first function is the production of a specific reaction to the inducing situation. The reactions are essentially tempered and disposed to either to become immobile or to beat the hell out of the enemy; the second function of emotion is the regulation of the internal state of organism such that it can be prepared for the specific reaction in *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*, (New York: Harcourt Inc, 2000), 35, 42.

⁵⁵² Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 67.

such as a boss at work, but feels less constrained about being aggressive toward an innocent non-provoking, or mildly provoking individual”⁵⁵³ In other words, displaced aggression occurs when someone takes the aggression out on individuals who are inferior and can be controlled, and Mutius happens to be that mildly provoking individual in front of Titus. Looking closely at what really happens in that scene, we cannot firmly judge whether Mutius is acting against Titus because he is supporting the marriage or because he wants to protect his father from any irrational decision. Both seem to be valid interpretations and the latter can be supported by the idea that Mutius and Titus know very well that they cannot confront and challenge the emperor’s brother by force or aggression; Saturninus and Bassianus have clearly declared their social power over Titus: “we have power.”⁵⁵⁴ However, one thing is certain: Mutius happens to be in the wrong place and at the wrong time, and Titus’s “displaced aggression” is impulsive and unjust against his own son.

Titus’s impulsive aggression is triggered by his anger, which may have been evoked by the feeling of being dishonored by the emperor and the empress; he feels impotent (because of his social position) to take it out on them, and therefore, his

⁵⁵³ The phenomenon of *triggered displaced aggression* is defined thus: “Following an initial provocation, the target commits a minor provocation, the triggering event, which in turn prompts an aggressive response.” The “displaced” aggressive response is usually an exaggerated behavior or far in excess of what might be expected to be directed at the minor provocation, but it is probably in proportion to the perceived severity of the initial provocation. In his regard, the initial provocation in this scene is Lavinia’s kidnapping, which Titus considers ‘rape,’ and Mutius is the target who commits the minor provocation when he stops his father from going after his daughter. The displaced aggression against Mutius, killing him, is the far excessive one and beyond expectations because it is directed at Mutius’s minor provocation, but it is in proportion to the perceived severity of Lavinia’s “rape/kidnapping.” Bartol and Bartol, *Criminal Behavior*, 117.

⁵⁵⁴ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.403.

aggression can be seen as displaced because Mutius is somehow presented as a good son. The play helps identify this virtuous quality of the son in two moments: the first occurs when Marcus blames Titus for his horrible deed, “O Titus, see, O see what thou hast done! / In a bad quarrel slain a virtuous son,”⁵⁵⁵ referring to Mutius as a “virtuous” son; and the second occurs when Lucius disapproves Titus’s unjust behavior saying: “My lord, you are unjust, and more than so, / In wrongful quarrel you have slain your son.”⁵⁵⁶

The early modern theory of anger revolves around the idea of humors that run within the body and affect individual’s mind and actions. For instance, Robert Burton writes: “the Body works upon the mind, by his bad humours, troubling the spirits and sending gross fumes into the Brain; and so *per consequens* disturbing the Soul, and all the faculties of it... so... the mind effectually works upon the Body, producing by his passions and perturbations, miraculous alterations.”⁵⁵⁷ According to this theory, Titus acts according to his emotional impulses but in consultation with his disturbed cognition. Modern insights on aggression presents a new perspective to Titus’s action because, as Berkowitz argues, aggression-related reactions are “manifested in an open impulsive attack on an available target, independently of cognitive meditation, although appraisals and other high order cognitions can come into play somewhat later to suppress or intensify the aggressive inclinations.”⁵⁵⁸ In this regard, Titus’s killing act can be seen as an aggression-related reaction to his emotional impulses that his mind performs independently of his reason.

⁵⁵⁵ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.341-342.

⁵⁵⁶ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.292-293.

⁵⁵⁷ Edgar, *Shakespeare, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 208.

⁵⁵⁸ See more on anger and its association with aggression in Leonard Berkowitz, “Anger: Its Nature and Its Relation to Aggression,” in *Multiple Facets of Anger: Getting Mad or*

Although Shakespeare depicts Titus as an aggressive and violent protagonist throughout the play—from beginning to end—he also presents him as a loving father with fatherly traits toward his children, providing another validation that his action against his own son was impulsive and unreasoned. The reason I am dwelling on this explanation is because other scholars, such as Brian J. Harries, argue that Titus deliberately kills his son, fully conscious of his action to defend honor “in Rome.” Harries argues that “[i]n his strict adherence to Roman honor,” “Titus maintains that his own son Mutius must not have burial because he has dishonored Rome.”⁵⁵⁹ Harries’s claim can be supported by the scene where Titus refuses to bury his son, “he rests not in this tomb,”⁵⁶⁰ but what do we make of his actual action and his approval despite his exterior cause in relation to honor and dishonor? Titus eventually approves Mutius’s burial:

The dismall’st day is this that e’er I saw,
To be dishonoured by my sons in Rome.
Well, bury him, and bury me the next.

*They put Mutius in the tomb*⁵⁶¹

The third line is crucial in his speech because it contradicts his principle of honor.

Despite the fact that his sons have “dishonored” him, he gives Mutius a proper burial.

Restoring Justice?, edited by Farzaneh Pahlavan, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), 27. Berkowitz gives a definition to anger as a drive impelling aggression that is engendered by the perception of a deliberate offense or misdeed. He thinks of anger experiences “as *largely* the sensations of an activated aggression-related motor program and its associated bodily changes along with whatever primed ideas come to mind about the instigating situation” 28.

⁵⁵⁹ Brian Harries, “The Fall of Mediterranean Rome in Titus Andronicus,” *Mediterranean Studies* 26, no. 2 (2018): pp. 199.

⁵⁶⁰ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.349.

⁵⁶¹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.384-6.

This is actually an equivocal statement that implies two different, even opposed possibilities: First, it gives us a sense of regret and disapproval of his own impulsive action against his son—a possibility that contradicts the putative honor motive and further supports my claim about his interior impulses that lie beneath his exterior cause. Second, when he says, “bury me the next,” it might also suggest that it is against honor principle that his son deserves the burial. The latter seems more appropriate, but less compliant with the standards of humanity. The significance of these two suggestions is that both present Titus as a loving father.

Titus shows that he loves his children so dearly that he would not harm them if his impulsive aggression was not ruling his action. In one scene, Titus sheds tears like a river over his two sons Martius and Quintus, for knowing that they will be executed: “let me say, that never wept before, / My tears are now prevailing orators.”⁵⁶² He also weeps over Lavinia when he sees her mutilated, comparing her to a helpless object that affects him emotionally: “This object kills me.”⁵⁶³ Stratton argues, quoting Simon Weil, that this type of violence that has the ability “to transform a subject into an object—a living body into a thing... [and] a person into a thing [or] an object... [is a] demonstration of power... [and] a tool of intimidation.”⁵⁶⁴ In Titus’s case, this violence reveals Tamora’s expression of power over him. Moreover, Titus expresses his intensified grief in the following lines right after mutilated Lavinia appears to him in the moment he is weeping over Martius and Quintus:

What fool hath added water to the sea,

⁵⁶² *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.25-26.

⁵⁶³ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.64.

⁵⁶⁴ Stratton, “Violence,” 2.

Or brought a faggot to bright-burning Troy?
 My grief was at the height before thou cam'st,
 And now Like Nilus it disdaineth bounds.
 Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too,⁵⁶⁵

Titus's expression of love for his children is not limited to weeping and lamenting because he also sacrifices his own hand in order to save his sons. Deceived by Aaron who promises to bring back his two sons alive in return for his hand, Titus actually cuts his hand off in the following scene:

Good Aaron, give his majesty my hand;
 Tell him it was a hand that warded him
 From thousand dangers; bid him bury it.
 More hath it merited; that let it have.⁵⁶⁶

This all assures the audience that Titus cares for his children and that his action against Mutius is unreasoned and a reflexive reaction—rather than an action to defend honor—which is triggered by his own anger, leading his mind to a state of impulsive aggression in which he slays his son without consultation with his reason.

5.3 Titus's Impulsive Aggression Supported by His Experiential Violence

Shakespeare's dramatization of Titus's background and his social position as a Roman General is, again, shrewd because the expression of aggression depends greatly on individuals' experiences and observations. Some contemporary specialists on aggression confirm that aggression is inborn in all human beings, but the way they

⁵⁶⁵ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.68-72.

⁵⁶⁶ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.192-195.

express it is related to other experiential factors. Farzaneh Pahlavan's recent views on aggression confirm that impulsive aggression is innate in all human beings; it "arises from our genetically prescribed capacity for anger... a *primary-process* emotion that is aroused by certain types of irritation and restriction of freedom."⁵⁶⁷ In this regard, Titus, like many other individuals, is subject to this emotional state when he is in a state of anger. However, having this innate tendency toward aggression does not determine that Titus should or must express his behavior aggressively. The way people express their aggression differs from one person to another, and the contemporary insights on violence hold that most violent behavior "is learned through both experience and observation of one's own and other's behavior."⁵⁶⁸

The expression of aggression and its relation to experiential factors is further studied by Richard Gelles, whose theory on aggression and behavior suggests that

⁵⁶⁷ There has been a debate over whether aggression is learned or innate. The intensity of this argument has declined, however, as scholarship has increasingly noticed that both evolution and learning contribute much to our disposition to be aggressive in various distinct ways: "impulsive anger, premediated predatory behavior in its many forms, as well as our seeking of dominance as exemplified best in inter-male jousting." In his book, Farzaneh Pahlavan focuses almost exclusively on the biological roots of the type of impulsive aggression that arises from the genetically human capacity for anger, "and affective state that we label the RAGE circuitry of the brain." *Multiple Facets of Anger: Getting Mad or Restoring Justice*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), 47.

⁵⁶⁸ According to the theory, violent behavior is learned through both experience and observation, individuals who have experienced or witnessed violence are more likely to use violence to express their aggression than those who have experienced little or no violence at all. Expressed aggression through violence can be learned within the family—children watching their parents' violent behavior—or in social groups or positions in which individuals learn the roles of a parent, a child, a boss, a ruler, or even a leader. Violent behavior may be witnessed in any of these positions, and not only do individuals learn how to imitate the violent behavior, but they also learn how to justify being violent. Richard J. Gelles, "Family Violence," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*, edited by Daniele J. Flannery, Alexandre T. Vazsonyi, and Irwin D. Waldman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 410.

individuals who have experienced or witnessed violence in their life are more likely to use violence whenever their impulsive aggression is instigated than those who have experienced little or no violence at all.⁵⁶⁹ In this regard, Shakespeare's dramatization of Titus as a Roman General, a social position that entails a lot of killings and witnessing of killing, helps explain Titus's inclination to violence whenever his impulsive aggression is evoked. Shakespeare's dramatization of Titus's violence is not limited to such experiential inclination because he also portrays his violence as an act executed beyond his customary military experience that Eugene Giddens categorizes as savage as the Goths who are represented "as barbaric, uncivilized, and racially other"⁵⁷⁰ because, for Giddens, "Romans and Goths are similarly savage or vicious"⁵⁷¹ He contends that if Titus was adhering to the principle of honor, "the slaying of Alarbus represents one of the greatest crimes against early modern honour, as killing the captured – unless necessitated by battle-field emergency – was universally condemned by early modern military theorists."⁵⁷² These insights help explain Titus's foundation of his violence as a Roman General who is accustomed to a pattern of violence over his life course, and also as an extended act of violence beyond his duty as a military leader who is expected to adhere to the principle of honor.

Beyond experiential factors that support Titus's inclination to brutality, his tendency to express his impulsive aggression through violence is also related to his

⁵⁶⁹ Gelles, "Family Violence," 410.

⁵⁷⁰ Eugene Giddens, "Masculinity and Barbarism in Titus Andronicus," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): pp. 6.

⁵⁷¹ Giddens, "Masculinity and Barbarism in Titus Andronicus," pp. 2.

⁵⁷² Giddens, "Masculinity and Barbarism in Titus Andronicus," pp. 5.

“reward system.” Shakespeare depicts him as a character who enjoys receiving positive reinforcement whenever he performs good deeds for his people; we see him praised by the captain for winning the war and defending his community:

Romans, make way. The good Andronicus,
Patron of virtue, Rome’s best champion
Successful in the battles that he fights,
With honour and with fortune is returned
From where he circumscribed with his sword,
And brought to yoke, the enemies of Rome.⁵⁷³

Similarly, his reaction, as depicted in the play, demonstrates that he is joyful to be rewarded with such expressions of admiration, especially when he says, “Cometh Andronicus, bound with laurel boughs / To re-salute his country with his tears, / tears of true joy.”⁵⁷⁴ In this speech, “honor” seems to be valued for its status as a socially approved value, another reason why scholars interpret Titus’s honor as the main cause behind his actions. However, if we look more closely at what lies beneath his honor motive, such dramatization could be interpreted as hinting at similar ideas of reward system that contemporary theory might explain in relation to positive and negative reinforcements.

According to Burrhus F. Skinner, the idea of reward system is a system of reinforcements that increases the possibility of future responding. For him, positive reinforcement strengthens a certain behavior by providing a consequence that an individual finds rewarding, and therefore, he or she is more likely to repeat this behavior

⁵⁷³ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.64-69.

⁵⁷⁴ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.74-76.

in the future to receive the same pleasant feeling. Whereas, negative reinforcement, he suggests, is the removal of an unpleasant reinforcer that can also strengthen behavior. In other words, the removal of an adverse stimulus is also rewarding; negative reinforcement strengthens behavior because it stops or removes an unpleasant experience.⁵⁷⁵ In light of this explanation, we may find Titus's dramatization in the play aligning with Skinner's two types of reinforcement: positive and negative. These two rewards are the most applicable to my analysis of Titus's filicide scenes because it seems that his mind acts according to his positive reinforcement against Mutius and in conformity with his negative reinforcement when he murders Lavinia. I intend to postpone my analysis of Titus's negative reinforcement to the section dedicated to Lavinia's killing. Meanwhile, I turn to Titus's positive reinforcement to explain how the dramatization of his customary violence as a commander of an army exemplifies the positive reinforcement that supports his more private impulsive aggression against Mutius.

When examining Titus in the play, Shakespeare depicts him accustomed to gaining positive reinforcement when he is regularly honored for killing the Goths and protecting Rome. The more he kills, the more his people consider him a brave general who deserves honor and respect. Titus seems to be one of those who strive for honor, respect, gratitude, nobility, pride, strength, triumph, and fame. As Steven Pinker puts it in his book *How The Mind Works*, "People go hungry, risk their lives, and exhaust their

⁵⁷⁵ B. F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, (Riverside: Free Press, 2012), 81.

wealth in pursuit of bits of ribbon and metal.”⁵⁷⁶ The audience becomes conscious of Titus’s desire right from the beginning of the play when many honor him for his success in wars and his victory over the Goths. Honor, according to Robert Ashley, is defined as a testimony “given of some man by the judgment of good men.”⁵⁷⁷ Besides the captain’s praise that I referred to earlier, Titus is also honored and praised in a long speech given by his brother, who is also a tribune of the people:

For many good and great deserts to Rome.
 A nobler man, a braver warrior

 And now at last, laden with honour’s spoils,
 Rewornèd Titus, flourishing in arms.
 Let us entreat, by honour of his name
 Whom worthily you would have now succeed,
 And in the Capitol and senate’s right,
 Whom you pretend to honour and adore,⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁶ Steven Pinker argues that in all societies people seek validation for their achievements because it is a kind of display of the dominance hierarchy, particularly among men. High-ranking men are inclined to have a power because they are by nature disposed to have a greater voice and greater share of resources within their groups: “Men strive for rank, and achieve it in some ways that are familiar from zoology books and other ways that are uniquely human. Better fighters have higher rank, and men who *look* like better fighters have higher rank” in *How the Mind Works*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 493, 495.

⁵⁷⁷ Alexander Welsh believes that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were very much aware that honor was a classical theme; these Renaissance playwrights deliberately dealt with the motive of honor in their period. They employed the theme of honor in most of their writing, and they were able to do that “not merely as a general indication of social relations but as the proximate cause of the main action.” *What Is Honor?: A Question of Moral Imperatives*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008), 55, 57, 58.

⁵⁷⁸ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.24-26, 37-42.

Again, he is praised by the emperor's brother Bassianus when he addresses Marcus: "Thy noble brother Titus and his sons."⁵⁷⁹ All the praise and honor that Titus receives gratify his desire and, in turn, contribute to his on-going set of killings. Such dramatizations of approval and admiration for Titus's violent actions, from which he receives emotional satisfaction, seem in compliance with Skinner's description of positive reinforcement. This is not to say that soldiers who perform violence on the battlefield tend to execute such violence in domestic settings because they are accustomed to such violent behavior; my argument here is that such customary violence facilitates the violent behavior in other settings. According to Skinner's belief, positive reinforcement is the process of encouraging or establishing a pattern of behavior by offering reward when the behavior is exhibited: "we gain something we desire as a consequence of certain behavior."⁵⁸⁰ Therefore, when Titus's impulsive aggression is instigated by his frustration against Mutius, his experiential violence as an army leader and the positive reinforcement his mind is accustomed to receive every time he behaves violently support the expression of his impulsive aggression against any available target, irrespective of whether this target happens to be his beloved son.

⁵⁷⁹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 1.1.50.

⁵⁸⁰ The simple principle of reinforcements is that it strengthens behavior. Individuals behave in a way to seek pleasure and they repeat their actions because the response they get "finds the consequences 'pleasant' or 'satisfying.'" Reinforcement is not limited to the feeling of the pleasant though, it is also associated with the avoidance of the unpleasant. What defines pleasant and unpleasant is people's behavior toward a thing: "a thing is pleasant if an organism approaches or maintains contact with it and unpleasant if the organism avoids it or cuts it short." In this regard, individuals' behavior may be classified according to these terms when it comes to reinforcements. To consider a stimulus pleasant in the sense that an individual tends to approach or extend it may be another way of saying that the stimulus has reinforced the individual's behavior of approaching or prolonging in Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, 81, 82, 84.

5.4 Titus's Instrumental Aggression against Tamora's Two Sons

Whether Titus's impulsive aggression is misplaced against his son or not, it does lead to his downfall because once aggression is instigated, it lasts longer than the short-term in which it was experienced and expressed, and in turn, leads to subsequent actions and events that determine Titus's downfall. Instead of curbing his anger using his cognition—as early modern philosophy maintained when emphasizing the role of the will in restraining emotions—Titus's aggression strives to collaborate with his cognition for a stronger form of expression. Contemporary cognitive psychological approaches to aggression actually provide more explanatory power than the early modern ones because they show aggression having a kind of domino effect that drives cognition into becoming an abettor. Shakespeare's characterization of Titus indicates an intuitive awareness exactly such as cognitive aggression being an extension of a previously experienced impulsive aggression because the play acknowledges this extension when Titus continues to express it in later scenes; besides slaying Mutius, Titus expresses aggression, again, against Tamora's two sons: "I will be revenged. / And now prepare your throats; / ... / *He cuts their throats.*"⁵⁸¹ In this scene, however, he performs a different type of aggression because—as I will show below—he uses his cognition and waits for the right moment to express it after he strategizes a plan to kill the two sons. In this regard, Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* presents us with a character who seems conceptually following suggestive insights with contemporary accounts of aggression that confirm its persistence after being instigated. Berkowitz's study illustrates that automatically activated reaction

⁵⁸¹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.2.195-196, 205.

of aggression (impulsive one) is not necessarily very short-lived because the aversive conditions can automatically evoke angry reactions that persist for some time: “Angry reactions... can last for some time, especially if the aversive occurrence is very intense, their self-regulatory controls are fairly weak, and the aroused persons ruminate about the disturbance they have suffered.”⁵⁸² Titus’s aggression remains active in him since Lavinia’s kidnapping and Mutius’s murder and is further intensified as a reaction to Lavinia’s rape and mutilation. He is so horrified by Chrion’s and Demetrius’s aggressions and what they did to her that his emotions go wild:

It was my dear, and he that wounded her
 Hath hurt me more than had he killed me dead;
 For now I stand as one upon a rock,
 Environed with a wilderness of sea,
 Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave,
 Expecting ever when some envious surge
 Will in his brinish bowels swallow him.
 This way to death my wretched sons are gone;
 Here stands my other son, a banished man,
 And here my brother, weeping at my woes;
 But that which gives my soul the greatest spurn
 Is dear Lavinia, dearer than my soul.
 Had I but seen thy picture in this plight,
 It would have madded me; what shall I do
 Now I behold thy lively body so?
 Thou hast no hands to wipe away thy tears,
 Nor tongue to tell me who hath martyred thee.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸² Berkowitz, “Anger: Its Nature and Its Relation to Aggression,” 31.

⁵⁸³ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.91-107.

In these lines, Titus expresses the deterioration of his situation and his intensified anger, “maddened me,” visualizing it as a waxing tide that grows wave by wave. He ruminates the disturbance he has suffered over his son’s death and the banishment of his other sons while contemplating the horrific disfiguring of Lavinia, who helplessly stands in front of him. He feels bewildered how to perceive or react to this dreadful scene that he utters: “what shall we do?”⁵⁸⁴ His son’s death and his daughter’s mutilation have brought him a great misery, and such misery exacerbates when Aaron sends back the heads of his two sons with a messenger in return for his sacrificed arm: “Worthy Andronicus, ill art thou repaid / For that good hand thou sent’st the Emperor. / Here are the heads of thy two noble sons.”⁵⁸⁵

At this moment, he perceives Aaron’s deception and his anger is so enflamed that he sees revenge as the only solution to ease his emotional pain: “O sweet Revenge, now do I come to thee.”⁵⁸⁶ In his decision to take revenge on Tamora and her sons, Titus is one more time in an aggressive state, but his current aggression differs from the impulsive one he has experienced and performed against Mutius because it involves appraisal and cognition. He processes his situation cognitively and appraises his options in order to express his aggression:

I shall never come to bliss
Till all these mischiefs be returned again
Even in their throats that hath committed them.

⁵⁸⁴ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.133.

⁵⁸⁵ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.233-335.

⁵⁸⁶ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.2.67.

Come, let me see what task I have to do...⁵⁸⁷

Some philosophers of aggression refer to this form as “instrumental aggression,” and they indicate that it arises after experiencing and performing spontaneous aggression: “The angry persons’ expressed desire to attack a particular target in order to punish a misdeed, and/or to achieve justice could well be a—second stage development, arising after the first automatic reactions, when the higher order cognitions go into operation.”⁵⁸⁸ As I mentioned earlier, Berkowitz’s view indicates that the appraisals and other high-order cognitions come into play either to suppress or intensify the aggressive inclinations, and Titus’s appraisal of his situation certainly intensifies his aggressive behavior because his mind turns to repulsively ugly and barbaric thoughts of revenge. In the following scene, his mind prefigures the torment it will bring, and he informs his two victims—Chiron and Demetrius—how his revenge plan against them will be grotesque:

I will grind your bones to dust,
And with your blood and it I’ll make a paste,
And of the paste a coffin I will rear,
And make two pasties of your shameful heads,
And bid that strumpet, your unhallowed dam,
Like to the earth shallow her own increase.
This is the feast that I have bid her to,
And this the banquet she shall surfeit on,⁵⁸⁹

These lines demonstrate that Titus’s instrumental aggression has a stronger influence on his action than his impulsive aggression had against Mutius because it

⁵⁸⁷ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.271-274.

⁵⁸⁸ Berkowitz, “Anger: Its Nature and Its Relation to Aggression,” 27.

⁵⁸⁹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.2.186-193.

involves planning and deceiving which he expresses by monstrous slaughtering. As a contemporary cognitive psychologist would observe, this stronger influence is due to the fact that “the higher order cognitions, such as appraisal-based decisions, activated after the first automatic anger-related responses, may well have a greater influence on aggressive behavior than on the anger experience.”⁵⁹⁰ Shakespeare’s characterization of Titus seems to follow a similar rhythm of aggression to what Berkowitz offers because eventually Titus expresses his instrumental aggression by cutting Chiron’s and Demetrius’s throats and cooking them as a meal to serve their mother: “So now bring them in, for I’ll play the cook, And see them ready against their mother comes.”⁵⁹¹

Putting this psychological examination of aggression in practice to examine Titus, we are able to identify to what degree it explains his subsequent violent actions in the play—even though they are shockingly barbaric—against Tamora and her sons; it provides us with a new and empirical examination of his emotional experiences that affect his cognition and action. Such examination is helpful for understanding one of the many causes and explanations that Shakespeare dramatizes in order to set the tragic trajectory of the play in motion because it shows that Titus’s inclination towards aggression and his reactions may have been one of the causes that leads to destruction. Indeed, the play demonstrates many paths for its tragic ending, from factional quarrels at Rome, “opposing sides in feuds and factional violence,”⁵⁹² and defending family honor with violence, to the living owe to the spirits of the dead in the way of sacrifices, as

⁵⁹⁰ Berkowitz, “Anger: Its Nature and Its Relation to Aggression,” 31.

⁵⁹¹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.2.204-205.

⁵⁹² Deborah Willis, “‘The Gnawing Vulture’: Revenge, Trauma Theory, and ‘Titus Andronicus.’ (Critical Essay),” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2002): pp. 24.

Willis puts it when she says, “Titus’s chaste family of self-sacrificing ‘servitors’ of Rome.”⁵⁹³ By reexamining Titus’s aggression, we are able to realize that it takes him from one event to another, driving him in one direction: his ultimate death. From the outset of the play, his expression of aggression is deemed destructive for him because executing Tamora’s son, Alarbus, backfires in vengeful reprisals against his sons and Lavinia. These events, in turn, move him to react, and his reaction—as we will see in next section—causes his own death. He becomes trapped in a vicious circle that seems almost impossible to get out of only because he is following the rhythm of his mind when aggression is activated. In the following section, I will show that his expression of cognitive aggression in which he kills Chiron and Demetrius brings him to another event that determines his and his daughter’s death.

5.5 Mixed Motives and Multiple Deaths: Lavinia’s and Titus’s

In the previous sections we have seen how Titus’s aggression has been manifested in two forms: either impulsive or cognitive. In the scene where he executes his beloved Lavinia, he expresses two different but mixed motives before he actually takes her life: he expresses that he wants to kill her to ease his pain, but at the same time because he appraises her situation and finds it hard for her to stay alive in her condition. Right before he kills her, he addresses Saturninus, the Emperor, to confirm a similar deed of Virginius who murders his daughter to end his shame; cognitively paving the way for his upcoming action that alleviates his sorrow:

⁵⁹³ Willis, “The Gnawing Vulture,” 39.

My lord the Emperor, resolve me this:
 Was it well done of rash Virginius
 To slay his daughter with his own right hand,
 Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered?

.....
 A reason mighty, strong, and effectual;
 A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant
 For me, most wretched, to perform the like.
 Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee,
 And with thy shame they father's sorrow die.

*He kills her*⁵⁹⁴

Many scholars, such as Vernon Guy Dickson and Emily Detmer-Goebel, read this scene with perplexity; they are not sure whether it is a mercy killing because Lavinia can no longer function properly in society in her mutilated condition, leading Titus to mitigate her ascribed pain in an euthanasic act, or whether it is rather an attempt to use violence to terminate his own shame and the sorrows that her presence still renews: “Die, die, Lavinia, and thy shame with thee, / And with thy shame thy father's sorrow die.”⁵⁹⁵ The former is strongly to be suspected after the outpouring of emotions, showing his paternal love toward his children. Despite expressing his love and attachment to Lavinia in a couple of scenes—“But that which gives my soul the greatest spurn / Is dear Lavinia, dearer than my soul”⁵⁹⁶—he does not seem to adhere to this conception by clearly offering a sympathetic rationale to his daughter's murder; instead, he justifies it as a

⁵⁹⁴ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.35-38, 42-46.

⁵⁹⁵ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.45-46.

⁵⁹⁶ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.101-102.

termination of his renewal of shame and sorrow and a cessation of the weeping that causes him blindness: “killed her for whom my tears have made me blind.”⁵⁹⁷

Because of these different motives, scholars speculate about Titus’s main motive and see his act as so horrific and outrageous that it requires further explanation and justification. Dickson, for example, considers it “[a] monstrous and inhuman [act], inappropriate for Titus as both father and person.”⁵⁹⁸ Dickson’s confusion lies in the motive behind the killing act: Does Titus kill Lavinia to ease her pain or his pain?⁵⁹⁹ The question remains unanswered, and Detmer-Goebel simply juxtaposes the two motives when she analyzes this particular scene: “he kills her out of pity, but also to bury his sorrows.”⁶⁰⁰ Thomas Wright, in his book *The Passions of the Mind in General*,

⁵⁹⁷ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.48.

⁵⁹⁸ Vernon Guy Dickson studies the process of modeling actions based on prior precedents that have deep roots in the Renaissance, such as the context of *Titus Andronicus* that the play manifests. He argues that characters in the play are continuously “presented as modeling themselves on their history and historical fictions, forming their lives and actions in response to what has gone before, seemingly bound to communal precedents too ‘mighty, strong, and effectual’ to break away from.” His argument is based on Titus’s filicide act against Lavinia. He believes that Titus’s act represents the modeling of Virginius who kills his daughter “because she was enforced, stained and deflowered.” When Titus questions Saturninus on the propriety of the act, he gets the response he wants to proceed with his action based on Virginius’s similar act against his daughter, in “‘A Pattern, precedent, and lively warrant’: Emulation, Rhetoric, and Cruel Propriety in *Titus Andronicus*,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (2009): pp. 377.

⁵⁹⁹ Dickson, “‘A Pattern, precedent, and lively warrant,’” 377.

⁶⁰⁰ See more on the ambiguity of Titus’s filicide act against Lavinia in the absence of her voice to speak up and tell what happened to her in Emily Detmer-Goebel, “The Need for Lavinia’s Voice: *Titus Andronicus* and the Telling of Rape,” *Shakespeare Studies* 29, (2001): pp. 87. Detmer-Goebel attempts to explain the importance of Lavinia’s voice in order to explain what happened to her. She argues that since Lavinia is deprived of the ability to speak, to write, or even to give hints about her rape, most of her male relatives assume that she cannot tell them anything of importance; her ability to be a source of knowledge is undervalued in the play, although her disabilities do not make her incapable of communicating. Instead of giving her a chance to communicate “using the familiar

emphasizes the confusion in understanding characters' motives because he considers characters' cognition and emotions to be hidden, only traceable through external behavior:

We cannot enter into a man's heart, and view the passions or inclinations which there reside and lie hidden; therefore, as philosophers by effects find out causes, by proprieties essences, by rivers fountains, by boughs and flowers the core and roots; even so we must trace out passions and inclinations by some effects and external operations.⁶⁰¹

Dickson and Detmer-Goebel's uncertainty about Titus's motive, supported by Wright's claim about characters' hidden inwardness, make the motive of Titus's second filicidal act even more confusing and difficult to gauge. Shakespeare has certainly dramatized Titus with enough ambiguity to make critical consensus about the motives for his aggressive actions elusive; Shakespeare characterizes him as a caring father and a brutal slaughterer at the same time. Such a characterization anticipates many of the findings of contemporary cognitive psychologists for whom aggression is not always experienced as entirely impulsive or completely instrumental. These cognitive psychologists suggest that, sometimes, individuals may have different motives at work, and they are able to

texts of rape, her message is not immediately intercepted." This, in turn, gives Titus the role of speculating about what happens to her, and his speculation becomes more ambiguous when he utters different motives behind his filicide act.

⁶⁰¹ Katharine Eisaman Maus investigates the inwardness and invisibility of truth within the Renaissance characters. She places emphasis on the discrepancy between a character's outward appearance and inward disposition that greatly influences the ways Renaissance playwrights imagine and portray their dramatic characters and reflect upon their own writing creativity. She particularly focuses on the works of Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Milton, and she makes the connection among religious beliefs, sexual orientations, and theatrical ideas of inward truth. She indicates that writers in the early modern period were challenged to expose interior authenticity of characters through the external show they give to their audience. She believes that Renaissance dramatists continuously respected aspects of personal and inner life that they could not reflect or portray outwardly by their characters in *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 5.

serve this mix of emotional and cognitive motives by the same outward behavior. Such insights may provide an explanation for Titus's second filicide act, which Bahr considers as one of the most violent acts of the play: "one of the play's most direct instances of interpretive violence, he kills his daughter."⁶⁰²

For Bahr, the adoption to the phrase "interpretive violence" is based on two senses: "bodily violence *based upon* textual interpretation, and bodily violence itself then *subjected to* interpretation by onlookers and commentators."⁶⁰³ She adds saying that the play dramatizes:

recurring layers of emphatically interpretive violence... but constantly denies the possibility of stable meaning for any of these interpretations... [because] Lavinia is neither martyr nor antitype, merely the victim of senseless cruelty. In this brutality, interpretive modes, and patterns of speech, Titus becomes indistinguishable from his enemies.⁶⁰⁴

She further contends that "psychological violence," as a third aspect, comes into play and poses a threat to body and soul since the potential scenes of interpretation are "torture, execution, and damnation."⁶⁰⁵ Bushman and Anderson provide an explanation that seems suitable to clarifying the enigmatic nature of this scene because their insights hold that human aggression can have mixed motivation. They refer to this type of aggression as "impulsive-cognitive aggression," and they confirm that it can be the result of mixed motives—a combination of emotional impulses and cognitive processes all at once. They support their claim by pointing out that impulsive aggression, although it is induced by

⁶⁰² Bahr, "Titus Andronicus and the Interpretive Violence," 262.

⁶⁰³ Bahr, "Titus Andronicus and the Interpretive Violence," 244.

⁶⁰⁴ Bahr, "Titus Andronicus and the Interpretive Violence," 270.

⁶⁰⁵ Bahr, "Titus Andronicus and the Interpretive Violence," 245.

the emotional element anger, may sometimes be a well-rehearsed decision.⁶⁰⁶ This explanation is helpful for understanding Titus's action toward his daughter because Shakespeare presents him as a protagonist who is in agony (emotional experience) and as a father who perceives (cognitive activity) his daughter's agony in her disfigured condition—without hands and tongue. He is conscious that her situation will not get any better because of her irreversible physical and mental state: "I found her straying in the park, / Seeking to hide herself, as doth the deer / That hath received some unrecurrent wound."⁶⁰⁷ He thus seems to react cognitively by ending her misery with a mercy killing. The possibility that Titus regards his murder of Lavinia as "euthanasia" is validated when Titus is dramatized as desperate to alleviate her agony; he intreats her to give hints of any sort of relief that he may provide: "make some sign how I may do thee ease."⁶⁰⁸ Perhaps, Shakespeare imagined his audience as sympathetic to the idea that it was preferable for Lavinia to die than to live in her condition; yet it is a greater leap to imagine that they might expect her own father to carry out the act, even given Titus's insinuation that she needs to commit suicide. This point is raised by Emily Detmer-Goebel: "the play challenges that concept when Marcus silences Titus's seeming instruction to Lavinia that she might want to commit suicide: 'Fie, brother, fie! Teach her not thus to lay / Such violent hands upon her tender life.'"⁶⁰⁹ According to Bushman and Anderson's insights on impulsive-cognitive aggression, it seems that Titus expresses this type of aggression toward Lavinia because his aggression is induced by mixed motives: (1) an impulsive

⁶⁰⁶ Bushman and Anderson, "Is It Time to Pull the Plug," 276.

⁶⁰⁷ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.88-90.

⁶⁰⁸ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.1.121.

⁶⁰⁹ Detmer-Goebel, "The Need for Lavinia's Voice," 117; *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 3.2.21-22.

aggression to ease his pain—as a response to his emotional suffering and (2) a cognitively rehearsed decision that he had previously processed to ease hers.

Titus's impulsive-cognitive aggression, like his two previously expressed aggressions—impulsive and cognitive—leads to his downfall because his mind follows the rhythm of his emotional system that affects his cognition and action. He repeats a filicidal act because, again, his aggression has been previously driving him in this direction, ever since it was first instigated. The sequence of his aggressive actions leads him to unfortunate events, which, in turn, bring him to this scene where he has to execute his revenge plan against Tamora by inviting her and the Emperor to feast at his house; in that scene, however, he ends up engaging in a conversation that leads to Lavinia's death and then his own. All this happens because he is reacting to his aggression emotionally and cognitively.

Besides the impulsive-cognitive aggression that seems to give insight into Titus's motive for his second filicide act, Skinner has also indicated that negative reinforcement is crucial in understanding behavior that wards off negative emotions. Titus, in this scene, seems to act in conformity with the negative reinforcement that strengthens his behavior to stop or remove an unpleasant experience. Lavinia's presence in her mutilated condition obviously "renews his sorrow," as Titus declared more than once, and therefore, he feels obliged to stop this unpleasant feeling by ending her life. As I mentioned earlier, Skinner's insights on reinforcements is that positive reinforcement aims to obtain pleasant feeling as a consequence of a certain behavior, whereas negative reinforcement, he argues, happens when someone "avoid[s] an unpleasant event or stimulus as a

consequence of certain behavior.”⁶¹⁰ This negative reinforcement may actually illuminate Titus’s second filicide act because Titus is undoubtedly avoiding the unpleasant feeling of watching Lavinia mutilated; he strives to put an end to the negative emotions his mind keeps generating by the presence of her disfigured body. His negative emotions stimulate his cognitive aggression, and therefore, he reacts to his emotional impulses that compel him to execute his daughter.

Compelled to react and respond to his emotional impulses, Titus becomes ready to express his impulsive-cognitive aggression, which drives him even closer to his death because once he murders Lavinia, Tamora questions him about the motive behind his action: “Why hast thou slain thine only daughter thus?”⁶¹¹ In response to her question, Titus reveals to Saturninus that it was Tamora’s sons who caused her death, not he: “Not I; ‘twas Chrion and Demetrius. / They ravished her and cut away her tongue, / And they, ‘twas they that did her all this wrong.”⁶¹² Having mentally gone through this dreadful reality one more time while telling the truth, Titus’s impulsive aggression is induced again; he reveals the monstrous actions he carried out against his two victims—Chrion and Demetrius—and stabs Tamora right away:

There they are, both baked in this pie,
Whereof their mother daintily hath fed,
Eating the flesh that she herself hath bred.
‘Tis true, ‘tis true; witness my knife’s sharp point.

*He stabs the Empress*⁶¹³

⁶¹⁰ Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, 84.

⁶¹¹ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.54.

⁶¹² *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.55-57.

⁶¹³ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.59-63.

For one last time, Titus's aggression in the play demonstrates that it is destructive for him because the Emperor does not show him any mercy for his actions; he kills him immediately after realizing and witnessing his horrible actions against Lavinia, Chrion, Demetrius, and Tamora: "Die, frantic wretch, for this accursed deed. / *He kills Titus.*"⁶¹⁴

5.6 Conclusion

Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's most revealing play with respect to the use of violence because it involves a surplus of aggression and violent actions; it portrays numerous grotesque scenes of blood, slaughter, and mutilation: "[It is] a play preeminently concerned with the mutilation of the human body."⁶¹⁵ Paul Innes argues that the play is a challenging one if approached from a psychological perspective because it does not have "psychological character coherence" that allows us, as audience, to

⁶¹⁴ *Titus Andronicus* (Wells), 5.3.64-65.

⁶¹⁵ Albert H. Tricomi studies *Titus Andronicus*'s tragic events and actions through Shakespeare's use of language that indicates the imminence of the tragedy. He points out that Titus makes many references to parts of the body that will eventually get mutilated: "*Titus* makes nearly sixty references, figurative as well as literal, to the word 'hand' and eighteen more to the word 'head', or to one of its derivative forms." Tricomi argues that the figurative language indicates that lurid events that govern the whole tragedy. For him, Shakespeare deliberately uses metaphor in order to unite language and action in order "to render the vents of the tragedy more real and painful." "The Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," in *Shakespeare and Language*, edited by Catherine M. S. Alexander, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 226-227; likewise, Emily Detmer-Goebel argues that the play displays "barbaric" actions that involve blood, mutilation, and grotesque killing. She argues that *Titus Andronicus*—"Shakespeare's bloody play"—is notorious for the number of deaths that occur and the bloody scenes it presents. These deaths, in turn, "underscore the play's engagement with the larger issue of authorizing violence." "Then let no man but I / Do execution on my flesh and blood': Filicide and Family Bonds in *Titus Andronicus*," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 28, (2015): pp. 112.

identify with the flawed hero. Rozett and Kuhn believe that Shakespeare depicts extreme violence in the play because he was writing for a particular audience that is accustomed to and enjoys violence, indicating that the Elizabethan audience's attitude toward violence may have been so different from our own, and for this, we may find the play as a sort of exaggeration to what is considered to be tragic. Alan Hughes agrees with this statement, claiming that if the play "had not [been altered], it would never have been performed at all" and that because audiences have changed as well as their taste.⁶¹⁶ However, Shakespeare's plays still resonate with the modern audiences because, according to Roychoudhury, they "translate the epistemic and discursive confrontations between faculty psychology and science into literary conventions and form, thus imposing intelligibility and intellectual flux."⁶¹⁷ Roychoudhury also adds that modern audiences continue to be intrigued by Shakespeare's plays because "they decisively render the complicated quality of psychology a kind of beauty."⁶¹⁸ Rozett argues that one of the goals of the early modern tragedy is to present a character that audiences can identify with emotionally and cognitively: At the heart of the "Elizabethan tragedy was the single human protagonist who invited the audience's identification."⁶¹⁹

Having acknowledged that the play represents human nature in its characters—despite Shakespeare's depiction of exaggerated violence to please his audience—in this chapter, I have set out a number of explanations that trace and illuminate Titus's

⁶¹⁶ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, edited by Alan Hughes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 23.

⁶¹⁷ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 70.

⁶¹⁸ Roychoudhury, *Phantasmatic Shakespeare*, 484.

⁶¹⁹ Rozett, "Aristotle, the Revenger," pp. 243.

psychological coherence—which Innes claims to be a severe challenge to identify or even approach—through his aggression in several forms, from the instigation of his aggression at the beginning of the play, all the way to his downfall. I have also argued that Shakespeare’s dramatization of “honor” as a cause for Titus’s filicidal actions—an explanation many scholars have reached for—is little more than a façade that Titus uses to defend and justify his interior aggressions and their outward expressions. My main focus has been on the sequence of aggressions he expresses toward his children and enemies in various forms: impulsive, misplaced, cognitive, and impulsive-cognitive. Shakespeare’s dramatizations of Titus’s emotional and cognitive aggressions, which are embedded in his thinking and reflected in his actions, are among the many factors that he includes to imply motives for his actions. Because they seem intuitively to anticipate structures of the human mind, they have allowed me to explore his psychological motivations more deeply. The analysis I have offered here, which observes closely how Shakespeare’s dramatization of Titus’s mind is disposed to aggression and its consequences, suggests a number of interpretations, some of which are not completely new because scholars have already acknowledged violence in Titus’s actions, yet they are quite novel because they are drawn from contemporary cognitive psychology accounts that contribute to the understanding of Titus’s reward system—positive and negative reinforcements—and sequence of aggressions that lead to his downfall. Such accounts explain that impulsive aggression is not short-lived because once it is instigated, aggression-related reactions will be manifested overtly toward a target, whether the target has been attacked impulsively or chosen cognitively. Titus’s instigated aggression drives him toward his downfall because he reacts with explosive responses to situations that

exceed normal and appropriate levels of emotion for the situations, and therefore, he gets himself involved in a series of events that leads him to the last scene where he gets killed for his deeds.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing dissertation, I have sought to demonstrate that some early modern tragedies are a representation of the human mind and its complexity by analyzing the works of three of the most prominent playwrights of the period: William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Thomas Kyd. These three playwrights are known for their meaningful representation of the human complexity and action, as well as the representation of personhood; each of them has astutely dramatized a protagonist with fundamental characteristics and biases of human cognitive functioning. Such dramatization, I have argued, relies significantly on the playwrights' folk psychology—a human capacity to attribute mental states to self and others. The folk theories of psychology and the talent of these playwrights allow them to imagine themselves in their characters' circumstances; more precisely, they use their imagination and their knowledge of folk psychology to form a final image of their characters, the same way they perceive and understand other individuals in real life. Folk psychology, then, becomes the only tool by which we can understand the behavior of the characters in the plays because it allows these talented playwrights to depict an equivalent to reality that is meaningful for the audience (readers and spectators).

Through the examination and observation of their own mental and emotional processes and others, Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd collected folk psychological theories about emotional experiences and cognitive activities and assigned similar ones to the thinking and behavior of their characters. The intuitive folk psychology of these

talented early modern playwrights has equaled, and not just anticipated, the insights of cognitive psychology because through the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd, we are able to recognize the actual limits of cognitive psychology, as an “empirical” science. We are able to accept such limitations when these playwrights presented a series of events and scenes that cannot be explained in scientific terms, such as the presence of the ghosts and the dismembering of Faustus’s body toward the end of the play. In fact, these gaps and differences that we see emerging between the primary texts and the insights drawn from cognitive psychology allow us to see how the primary texts themselves are able to teach us something beyond the limitations of cognitive theories. However, the realization of the primacy of these early modern tragedies does not mean that we cannot study these tragedies through cognitive approaches because an outstanding feature of the chosen tragedies is their preoccupation with human nature. In this dissertation, I have sought to show that a referential framework drawn from cognitive psychology offers a potentially illuminating way of further clarifying (1) the early modern theories of passion, cognition, desire, and imagination, and (2) the dramatized thought and behaviors of the tragic heroes of these plays.

In this dissertation, I have argued that contemporary cognitive psychological insights can illuminate the early modern theories of emotion and the mind, and at the same time, they allow us to see the protagonists’ experience from a new perspective. For instance, I have argued that Shakespeare’s dramatization of Othello’s imagination in the play is in conjunction with contemporary cognitive psychological insights beyond the conception of the early modern theories on imagination, revolving around the range of thoughts that belongs to faculty psychology. I have also argued that examining Othello

through the lens of these modern insights enables us to further illuminate his experience of jealousy that was understood by the historicists of the period as a hybrid concept: partly humoral and partly psychological. My focus has been to show that with such examinations, we begin to sympathize more with Othello than when we deal with his jealousy from the early modern humoral perspective because contemporary insights on how jealousy is processed through the amygdala provides a new interpretation of the mental and emotional obligations that he feels compelled to follow.

Similarly, I have argued—in each of *Doctor Faustus*, *The Spanish Tragedy*, and *Titus Andronicus*—that modern insights drawn from cognitive psychology can illuminate the early modern period's particular understanding of desire and anger. I was able to present a new understating of Faustus's desire—which was understood by early modern philosophers as aroused by bodily needs and strengthened by the liver that produces red blood, filling the body with nutriment and vitality—in its two forms, intrinsic and extrinsic, which can activate all facets of cravings and obsessions in individuals who have tendency to respond to them or fall victims to their experience. Moreover, I have argued that anger—which was considered as a destructive force inherited and adapted from Seneca's tragedy—is actually an evolved motivational program that is beneficial for the psyche of the angry individual and is designed to motivate him or her to react and behave in order to regain mental balance. In *Titus Andronicus*, I have argued that anger comes in different forms, whether it is impulsive, cognitive, or a mix of both, which further illuminates the early modern theory of anger that revolves around the simple idea of humors that run within the body and affect individual's mind and actions. These insights on desire and anger allow us to see Faustus, Hieronimo, and Titus from a new perspective

because in his episode of desire thinking about necromancy, Faustus becomes such a victim, fixating on this imaginative craving for omnipotence, and Hieronimo's vengeful action can now be seen as his way of seeking a beneficial equilibrium rather than expressing vengeful anger. As for Titus, cognitive psychology helps set out a number of explanations that trace his anger through several forms of aggressions to illuminate the "psychological coherence" that some scholars consider a challenge to identify because of his inconsistent behavior.

While I have tried to provide a close examination of the protagonists' psychology and behavior through the lens of cognitively psychology in order to demonstrate that Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Kyd dramatized characters that seem to anticipate the fundamental characteristics and biases of human cognitive functioning, particularly when it comes to passion, desire, and imagination, I am aware that the work I was able to do within the scope of this project alone is limited to the dramatization of these four heroes. There are other tragedies and certainly secondary characters that need to be considered when implementing this approach. My approach would be pertinent to tragedies beyond the ones considered in this dissertation because it can provide new interpretations, particularly for *King Lear* and *Hamlet* because in the tragedy of *King Lear*, there are vivid depictions of mental illness and the downward spiral from sanity to insanity that is perceived to be a direct result of his own actions. As for *Hamlet*, the protagonist seems to suffer from depression that cognitive psychology might explain in terms of the betrayals and incestuous relationship of Gertrude and Claudius. Studying Iago's and Aaron's cognition and motivation would also be intriguing because these characters also have complicated effects on the psychological and emotional representation of the plays;

addressing their dramatization as antagonists with fundamental traits not only contributes to the downfall of the tragic heroes, but also their own.

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