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Corpses revealed: The staging of the theatrical corpse in early modern drama

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CORPSES REVEALED: THE STAGING OF THE THEATRICAL CORPSE
IN EARLY MODERN DRAMA

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
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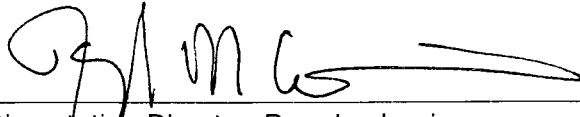
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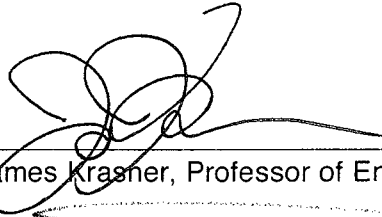
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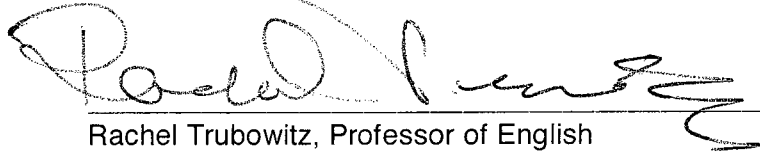
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ABSTRACT

CORPSES REVEALED: THE STAGING OF THE THEATRICAL CORPSE IN EARLY MODERN
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N. M. Imbraccio

University of New Hampshire, September, 2010

My dissertation examines the theatrical depiction of corpses as both stage-objects for theoretical speculation and as performance phenomena of the early modern English stage. Investigating popular drama on the London stage from 1587 – 1683, I demonstrate that the performance of the dead body by the living actor (what I term the “theatrical corpse”) is informed by early modern secular and religious polemics over the materiality of the body, the efficacy of performative behavior, and emerging theories of theatrical presence.

Previously, literary scholars have approached the performance of death on the stage using the insights of psychoanalysis or medical science, arguing for a rise of the subject and a growing sense of the individual via the emergence of empirical science and anatomical dissection. By contrast, my dissertation focuses on the material realities of the performance event such as staging, sets, and performance objects. In so doing, my dissertation reveals the theatrical corpse on stage—much like the early modern corpse off stage—to function as an active narrative agent beyond its death.

CHAPTER 1

BRING OUT YOUR DEAD:

REVEALING THE EARLY MODERN CORPSE

IN THE GRAVE, FROM THE PULPIT, AND ON THE STAGE

At the end of 3.4 Hamlet exits his mother's closet "*tugging in Polonius*," whom he has just inadvertently killed through the arras. Hamlet admits that he will "lug the guts" (210) and "draw" the dead man "toward an end" (214) and he seems to head toward the tiring house with the body.¹ The stage direction detailing Hamlet's exit varies in description: in Quarto 1 Hamlet "*exits with the dead body*," in the Folio he *tugs* the body in—the verb "tug" connoting the struggle and effort required of the action. In both of these scenarios we are presented with the challenge—and possible awkwardness—faced by the actor playing Hamlet in getting the body of the actor playing Polonius off stage, and the unceremonious nature of the operation is highlighted in those two texts' directions. But why? Why does Shakespeare call attention to what can easily be left behind? Why does the playwright encourage his audience to direct their attention to the leaden materiality of Polonius' body? Why does Hamlet not just cover it up again with the arras and walk off? Why must he address it, saying "This councilor/ is most still, most secret, and most grave,/ Who was in life a most foolish prating knave" (211-13), before dragging it out? What function can Polonius' body possibly have in this scene, as it lies dead for over 180 lines of dialogue and waits patiently through a ghostly apparition?²

¹ All quotes refer to William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Thompson Ann and Neil Taylor, 3rd ed. (London: Thompson, 2006).

² The original actor who portrayed Polonius (John Heminges) likely had experience with this sort of patience. Polonius admits in 3.2 that he was an actor himself, at one time playing Julius Caesar who was "killed i'th/ Capitol. Brutus killed me" (99-100) to which Hamlet immediately replies, "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there" (101-2). The puns on Brutus/brute

As this short scenario from *Hamlet* demonstrates, characters who have “died” in their roles on stage present a basic dramaturgical quandary: what do you *do* with them since they embody inaction? How are “living corpses” performed on stage? And how do other characters treat them? How can you convince an audience that what they are seeing on stage—a living breathing actor—is, in fact, a dead person? Or are they merely a signifier of death; a sign that we recognize *as a sign*? Despite the many practical concerns over staging corpses, the early modern theatre seems especially intent on repeatedly portraying dead characters—and calling deliberate attention to them. With such portrayals one cannot help but notice the proliferation of dead bodies on the stage, whether through the re-appearances of corpses, or through character resurrections, or through the dismemberment of the corpse and a diffusion of its severed parts. This sense of movement originates from the practical theatrical challenge of staging a corpse, i.e. the need for the corpse to either be disposed quietly or placed strategically in a scene. I argue that, concurrent to this practical regard of the corpse, the early modern staging of the theatrical bodies choreographs the cultural anxieties over the meaning and influence of the dead body in post-Reformation England.

Despite the fact that London popular drama between 1580 and 1642 includes over one hundred examples of stage directions indicating a corpse, mostly dealing with the introduction and removal of corpses, theatre scholars have only nominally considered the performance issues raised by corpses.³ Noting that the presence of the corpse provides a particular concern in early modern theatre, Mariko Ichikawa argues in his article “What to do with a Corpse?” that, “the removal of dead bodies from the stage was a theatrical necessity, owing to the absence of a

and Capitol/capital exist in all versions and likely allude to Shakespeare’s recent *Julius Caesar* (first performed in 1599) in which John Heminges probably played Caesar and Richard Burbage (now Hamlet) was Brutus. In this sense, the audience may see “double” when they recognize that the actor has played both roles. Especially since Polonius lies bleeding throughout the closet scene, a fate similar to Caesar’s in Act 3.

³ See Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) and Alan C. Dessen, “Body of Stage Directions,” *Shakespeare Studies* 29 (2001).

curtain between stage and audience.”⁴ Surveying French drama from 1150 to 1621, Kathleen Hall asserts in her essay, “How to Get the Corpse off the Stage?”, that dummies provided no solution to the problem: “animate or inanimate, five or six cubic feet of horizontal matter get equally in the way of the remaining actors.”⁵ However, judging from the stage directions cited for “body” and “corpse” in Dessen and Thomson’s *Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, actors most often portrayed corpses in Elizabethan and Jacobean productions. Therefore such “horizontal matter” is vital, as Homer Swander argues in his article “No Exit for a Dead Body: What to do with a Scripted Corpse?”, that “corpses demand attention.”⁶ I find revealing that all of these studies are overtly concerned with *what to do* with a corpse on stage, as evidenced by their interrogative titles. This pattern is indicative of the previous scholarship that treats the corpse in performance as a mere object to be managed. Although I will address such practical matters, my project is primarily interested in confronting the theoretical concerns attending the theatrical corpses, i.e., *what corpses do* when they are on stage: how do corpses influence and alter the performance? How does the corpse reflect early modern beliefs and practices of death and burial? How does the performance and staging of dead bodies illuminate early modern ideas of bodily integrity? This tension between my interests in the practicalities of performance and in the ritual efficacy of such performances informs my work as I endeavor to attend to these questions as well as the textual, performance, and historical conditions of the dead body in early modern drama in order to articulate both the function and the significance of the theatrical corpse.

I

The early modern corpse is a fascinating site from which to explore concerns over the body and performance in the early modern period. Early modern English culture is positioned between a dying theology of the body and an emerging scientific empiricism which attests to the pervasive curiosity in the culture regarding not only the significance of the body, but also the ways

⁴ Mariko Ichikawa, "What to Do with a Corpse? Physical Reality and the Fictional World in the Shakespearean Theatre," *Theatre Research International* 29.3 (2004): 201.

⁵ Kathleen M. Hall, "How to Get the Corpse Off the Stage," *French Studies* (1974): 282.

⁶ Howard Swander, "No Exit for a Dead Body: What to Do with a Scripted Corpse?" *Journal of Dramatic Theory & Criticism* 5.2 (1991): 139.

in which the body might be *made* to signify. In other words, the religious upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulted in a heightened awareness that the body's signifying capacities were malleable and open to dispute. Ultimately the body—and by extension the corpse—is a vulnerable text for cultural and political inscriptions. The messages written on the body do not only include religious and scientific discourses, but political as well. The spectacles of hanged bodies, disemboweled and quartered corpses, and decapitated heads that were frequently displayed on stakes attest to the power of the state over the bodies of its citizens.⁷

Operating in this climate, writers of the time period seem especially attuned to challenges of representing the dead body and what such representations may signify. Accordingly, scholars of early modern drama have paid particular attention to such acts of bodily violation on the stage⁸—i.e. what is *done to bodies*: enclosing, blazoning, dismembering, dissecting—and aligning the depiction of the theatrical body with the assumed experience of the early modern body.⁹ However, very few critics look to the material result of such violence—i.e. the corpse. Only

⁷ A close alliance between theatrical spectacles of the body and public displays of state punishment frames a great age of drama in England: beginning with the first permanent structure for hangings in London erected at Tyburn in 1571 during the decade which saw the construction of the first public theatres, the period culminates with the greatest theatrical spectacle of all: the public execution of King Charles I. For descriptions of public executions and hangings in early modern England, see John Laurence, *A History of Capital Punishment* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960). For connections between early modern dramaturgy and public executions see Karen Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death," *PMLA* 105.2 (1990) and Molly Smith, "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992).

⁸ By far, the most influential text on the violated body is Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). For early modern scholars' treatment of the subject, see Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed", *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret Ferguson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995), Stephen Greenblatt, "Mutilation and Meaning," *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), Pascale Aebischer, *Shakespeare's Violated Bodies: Stage and Screen Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Maurizio Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), and Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

⁹ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England*

recently have two studies assessed the staging of the corpse in relation to early modern theatre's participation in the ongoing concern over the significance of the body. The first, Hillary Nunn's *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy*, examines a variety of forms of violence against the body and situates that violence within the context of medicine and dissection. Nunn's focus is not aimed at a historical understanding of the influences of anatomy science on drama, but rather "the scenes of bloodshed...[which]... call upon playgoers' curiosity about the physical makeup of the human body not only to provoke their horror, but to invoke their sympathy and even their contemplation."¹⁰ While not centered exclusively on the corpse, Nunn's study examines ways in which Jacobean and Caroline dramas imagine their audiences as responding to the presentation of vulnerable bodies in plays such as *Coriolanus*, *Sejanus*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Atheist's Tragedy* and *The Duchess of Malfi*. Her readings focus on the exposed wounds of the corpses in these plays and observe that, like the bodies in anatomical illustrations, corpses on the Jacobean stage display a disturbing liveliness. Concentrating on early modern medical history, Nunn suggests that anatomical texts intimate that cadavers retain an animating force in anatomical discourse and medical performances. My project extends the potentials of Nunn's observation to the theatrical performance of the corpse on the early modern stage as I demonstrate how the body continues its performative function and influence beyond its theatrical death.

The second study to "take up the corpse" is Susan Zimmerman's *The Early Modern Corpse in Shakespeare's Theatre*. In her book Zimmerman endeavors to demonstrate how Protestantism, anatomy, and drama were engaged over the meaning attached to the material body. Her analysis is largely focused on how the early modern theatre's practice of cross-dressing complicates stage representations of the corpse because often "the personification of death [is] a visual emblem of collapsed genders." Bringing together the theories of Georges Bataille and Julia Kristeva, with Walter Benjamin's concept of the *Trauerspiel*, Zimmerman

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Calbi, *Approximate Bodies: Gender and Power in Early Modern Drama and Anatomy*

¹⁰ Hillary M. Nunn, *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005) 3.

demonstrates the ways in which the female body emblemizes death and marginality as staged through the transvestite corpse in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, *The Duke of Milan*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and *The Duchess of Malfi*. As Zimmerman argues, the corpse in these plays "signifies the body/ not-body that resists impersonation all together."¹¹ Thus, the "impossible" representation of death becomes further complicated with the representation of the female corpse in a transvestite theatre.

While my study is not invested in recuperating the complex psychological concepts involved in the staging of the corpse in early modern drama, Zimmerman and I align in our view that nature of representation in the early modern theatre was "profoundly ritualistic, foregrounding the liminality of performance."¹² However, for Zimmerman this liminality presents "problems" in staging the corpse because, for her, the sensational plays of the Renaissance—with their emphasis of blood, revenge, incest, and patricide—"preclude serious symbolic import" and "almost trivialize the horrific subject matter" so that the dramatic corpse's potential is never fully realized. Zimmerman is disappointed to find that the staging of the corpse in early modern drama "fails to disrupt the psychic programming of spectators" and that in the corpus of English Renaissance tragedy—apart from Shakespeare—such "sophisticated exploitation of the possibilities of liminality is exceptional."¹³ Zimmerman seeks to reconcile this "trivialization" through her application of psychoanalytic theory that, she argues, helps us to understand the corpse as a fetishistic object in early modern culture.

However, what Zimmerman sees as a problem of the early modern theatre I see as a fascinating staging phenomenon that does not fail but repeatedly and successfully represents

¹¹ Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 12, 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 11-13. Despite excluding Shakespeare from the those dramatists who fail to successfully stage the corpse as a means of psychic disruption, Zimmerman only devotes one chapter to Shakespeare's corpses and in it only addresses the corpses of Duncan in *Macbeth* and the ghost in *Hamlet*. For Zimmerman these two examples demonstrate the "insubstantiality of Shakespeare's corpses" (172) as the reincarnation of the female Medusa (173-80). Zimmerman ignores the countless other corpses present in Shakespeare's dramas and in a work that largely claims to focus on the transvestite corpse, does not consider the dead female in Shakespeare.

liminality in such a manner as to fully engage with early modern cultural assumptions concerning the dead body. For example, in regards to the scene in *Hamlet* that opened this chapter: Polonius' corpse in the closet scene functions to visually oppose the supposedly ethereal form of the Ghost. In so doing, spectators are presented with two different imagined states of death: the material corpse and the insubstantial spirit. Polonius' dead body has more theatrical power than Hamlet Sr.'s ghost, as it is Polonius' corpse that releases the building tension in the play and unblocks the plot, inciting every other character's eventual death. In other words, Polonius' corpse transforms Hamlet's violent rage against Claudius and turns it onto the play itself; the corpse serves as both a conduit and the catalyst for the violence and annihilation performed in the rest of the play. However, on stage physical, living actors represent both states, questioning not only cultural beliefs in the integrity of the body and the life of the corpse beyond the grave, but in many ways avowing tangible reality as a more efficacious presence than an imagined apparition.¹⁴

In her use of the word "liminal," Zimmerman cites Victor Turner's anthropological theory of performance as ritual, but she does not fully consider its implications for the theatrical corpse. According to Turner, the "dominant genres of performance in societies at all levels of scale and complexity tend to be liminal phenomena," that is, phenomena that move beyond the *limen*, or threshold, of the ordinary, to evoke the unfamiliar and the imperfectly understood:

[drama] may be likened to loops in a linear progression, when the social flow bends back on itself... and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice. Just as the subjunctive mood of the verb is used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility... so do liminality and the phenomena of liminality dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their components and 'play' with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception.¹⁵

Turner emphasizes performance as a generative and potentially transformative representation process, one that is marked by the "subjunctive mood" of the liminal experience. I argue that early

¹⁴ Shakespeare constantly calls into question the physical efficacy of ghosts in his plays. For more on Shakespeare's treatment of ghostly apparitions, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988) 25.

modern theatre participates in such a ritualistic performance. Moreover, with its indifference to illusionist machinery and its propensity for theatrical self-reflection, early modern theatre works against a sustained suspension of disbelief in order to “play” with the “factual and commonsense systems” found in the surrounding culture. By continually playing with the boundaries of reality and mimesis, the early modern theatre explores the limits and possibilities of representation. The theatrical corpse—that is a dead character portrayed by a living actor—is a major component in that exploration, existing as a liminal entity between life and death, between action and inaction. This understanding of liminality informs my analysis of the dead body on stage in that I view the theatrical corpse as both producing and produced by cultural convictions over the status and efficacious potential of the dead body.

Both Nunn and Zimmerman focus their investigations on the corpse’s relationship to early modern conceptions of subjectivity as evidenced through Renaissance anatomical treatises and modern psychoanalytic theory, respectively. However, although Nunn and Zimmerman address dead bodies as symbols of corporeal identity, they do not fully appreciate the presence of dead bodies on stage as theatrical events, enacted by living actors before live audiences. Despite these studies’ sophisticated theoretical engagement, both tend to treat the corpse exclusively as objects for hypothetical speculation. In fact, at times Zimmerman and Nunn seem to forget that staged bodies are living bodies that exert both theatrical presence and influence. Continuing my earlier example of *Hamlet*, Zimmerman’s analysis of the closet scene fails to address the presence of Polonius, focusing rather on the “leprous, disintegrating body”¹⁶ of Hamlet Senior. Zimmerman seems to forget that Hamlet Senior, while a ghost, is portrayed by a *living actor*. Moreover, when that ghost appears in the closet scene, the audience becomes especially aware of his physical materiality, since Polonius’ recently “dead” body lies on the stage: presenting two post-mortem states: ethereal and physical. However the audience knows that both bodies are entirely tangible in that they are portrayed by *living* actors. This perhaps is made more explicit in performance when the Ghost exits: Hamlet tells his mother “Look where he goes even now out at

¹⁶ Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) 173.

the portal!" (134). This specific reference to the "portal," found in both Quartos and the Folio, makes clear that in the original staging of this scene the Ghost did not use a trapdoor but left by one of the usual stage doors. I agree with Andrew Gurr that the Ghost likely enters and leaves the scene via the central space (i.e., the discovery space, from which Polonius was hiding, and now lies in front of), thereby stepping over the corpse of Polonius on his way out.¹⁷ As this brief analysis demonstrates, by considering the function of the theatrical corpse's staging we witness the theatre's endeavor to stage the shifting cultural signifiers of the dead body.

Although Nunn and Zimmerman account for the cultural rituals of death neither address the *performances* involved in such ritualistic expressions. I argue that it is only through performance, with all its attendant materiality and presence, that the full meaning and impact of corpses on stage becomes apparent. Therefore, rather than treating plays as thematic containers I will be considering early modern dramas as physical *conditions* of performance—the staging and material realities of the playhouse—while also considering early modern beliefs over ritual efficacy and the function of the dead body within that ritual, all of which consolidates to inform dramatic representations of the corpse.¹⁸

II

In order to establish the theatrical corpse as participating in cultural articulations about the dead body, the remainder of this chapter will discuss how the corpse is a fundamental rhetorical device in the early modern polemics over performance. By looking at the Service for the

¹⁷ Andrew Gurr, "Staging at the Globe," *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*, ed. J.R. Mulryne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 162.

¹⁸ In discussing the "performativity," or "theatricality" of the corpse, two terms, "performativity" and "materialization," are central to my argument. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Judith Butler brings these two terms together and argues that performativity is "the vehicle through which ontological effects are established" (23). Butler specifically considers the way in which the performative speech act brings into being that which it names. In her elaboration on performativity, Butler argues that materialization emerges through performance, as a process of sedimentation that results from iteration or citation (15). In her account, repetition and recitation (i.e. performance) constitute our being in the world and it is through this productive performativity that ontological effects are installed. While most critics are concerned with the materiality of the body and its relationship to gender identification and sexuality formation, I am interested in how bodily materialization occurs—and is disrupted by—theatrical performance.

Burial of the Dead, the Homily Against Idolatry, and various anti-theatrical tracts, I will examine how writers of such texts return again and again to the image of the corpse as a central problem of both representation and performance. The body itself was a major focus of theological speculation throughout Christian history, and during the sixteenth century Protestant reformers in England reconfigured the ontological terms of the relationship between the body and the soul by repudiating the Catholic Church's persistent foregrounding of the body and its images in ritual practices—including funerary and burial rites. But Protestant resistance to Catholic anthropomorphism, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, reveals a more fundamental anxiety over the potentially active materiality of the corpse.

It is common for scholars such as Zimmerman to look at liturgical texts in order to articulate the anxieties over death as annihilation so prevalent in early modern literature.¹⁹ My reading of these same texts differs in that I will illuminate a distinct association of the corpse with theatricality. While early modern liturgical texts and liturgically inspired anti-theatrical texts have their own moralizing agendas they often intersect at pivotal arguments. In reading of these texts I identify the corpse as such a site of intersection, a common denominator that is depicted across liturgical and theatrical polemics. My analysis of these texts results in a re-evaluation of early modern corpses not as dead, material stage objects but as potentially transformative, active, and disruptive agents of influence.

Historians Claire Gittings, David Cressy, and Ralph Houlbrooke have demonstrated that the corpse poses distinct problems in a post-Reformation society that seeks to distance itself from Catholic ideologies of the body and worship.²⁰ All early modern Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, agreed that the *sine qua non* of their faith was the sacrificial death of Christ and his subsequent Resurrection. The body of Christ was thereby deeply enmeshed in the Christian

¹⁹ In many ways, Zimmerman follows in the steps of other literary scholars such as Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), and Robert N. Watson, *The Rest as Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁰ Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London & Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984), David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (New York: Calrendon Press, 1998).

mysteries, and its transfiguration and ascension into heaven only reinforced the centrality of the hypostatic union to Christian theology. It was, in fact, the transfiguration of Christ's resurrected body that served as a model for the fusion of body and soul in the heavenly beatification of the redeemed believer. Fundamentally, then, all the Christian mysteries were about bodily transformations: the generation of life from death. Therefore, the generative corpse was an unavoidable center of the Christian theory of transcendence. From this perspective the Catholic and Protestant struggles over the iconographical and sacramental differences in representing the body can be seen as a controversy over the meaning attached to the material body in the Christian system of belief.

To the great discomfort of reformers, late medieval Catholicism focused intensely on the implications of the Incarnation, on the profoundly ambiguous and sacred connection between the corporeal and spiritual in the figure of Christ.²¹ Because medieval Christianity conceived of the self, in Caroline Walker Bynum's phrase, as a "psycho-somatic unity," the intricate relationships among body parts provided a symbolic map for the relationship between body and soul.²² And because this same body was paradoxically destined for changeless eternal life, medieval theologians were heavily invested in interrogating the signification of the corpse, that is the raw material of beatification. For Protestant reformers, however, the Catholic preoccupation with the corporeal dangerously distorted the relationship between the body and the soul by implying that generative power might be a constituent property of materiality. That is, a fear that the material body could have an independent and autonomous viability, i.e. a "life," without benefit of informing spirit. Their anxiety about the consequences of this distortion prompted an effort to reformulate materiality as definitively *dead*. Therefore, several Tudor texts, laws, and practices worked to

²¹ For example, the redemptive blood that flowed from the side of the crucified Christ was seen as a material form of spiritual nourishment, as was, of course, the Eucharist.

²² See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 11. My summarization of medieval and early modern theological history is informed in large part by Bynum's work. See also Carolyn Walker Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion of Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," *History of Religions* 3.1 (1990).

reconfigure the prevailing concept of the body/soul dichotomy so to counteract the materiality of Catholicism.

The practices of preaching funeral sermons and erecting commemorative monuments in churches betray, according to Claire Gittings, “an anxiety which resulted from a desire to separate the living from the dead and the increasing horror at the idea of physical decomposition.”²³ This horror results in the marked increase in coffin use at burials in the sixteenth century, becoming a standard practice by the seventeenth century.²⁴ Coffins present a significant material artifact in the burial ritual: they serve to enclose the corpse and protect it from decomposition, and they also act as a means to conceal the corpse from the visual gaze of mourners. According to Nigel Llewellyn, the main function of these coffins and commemorative monuments made popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are to resist the inevitable progress of decay.²⁵ Previously in late medieval burials, corpses were buried only in a winding sheet and monuments often realistically depicted the decay of the corpse in the form of the “*transi*,” both serving as potent visual reminders of the mortality of the body, its eventual decay, and its status as a vehicle for the spirit.²⁶ Despite the common sixteenth and seventeenth century practices of confining the dead, very few early modern dramas present the dead body on stage within a coffin.²⁷ Rather, in the theatre, the corpse is always exposed, discovered, and revealed, suggesting that the early modern theatre appropriates earlier burial practices not only for stage practicality but also for theatricality. The corpse in the grave possesses transformative potential which is harnessed by the theatre in its staging of the theatrical corpse. In other words, the theatre presents that which is imaginatively repressed by confining the body: the indeterminate potential of the corpse as a vessel for transformation.

²³ Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* 102.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 240.

²⁵ See Nigel Llewellyn, *Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, C. 1500-1800* (London: Reaktion, 1991).

²⁶ For more on the “*transi*” see Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 113-114.

²⁷ The only notable exception is Thasia in Shakespeare’s *Pericles*.

While the corpse is visually removed from Protestant burial, it is replaced by the language of the burial service and accompanying funeral sermons which serve to displace the imaginative focus put upon the corporeal decay and emphasize the future of the resurrected body. For Protestant reformers the body, though materially dead, deserved reverential treatment both in respect for what it had been (a human life) and for what it would become (a spiritual inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven). As David Cressy states, “funeral ritual was not so much a question of dealing with a corpse as reaffirming the secular and spiritual order *by means of a corpse*.”²⁸ This is why Jacobean minister Robert Pricke, preaching at the burial of Sir Edward and Lady Lewkenor, contrasts the body's present corruption with its future resurrection in glory, a common theme in funeral sermons.

The body lieth in the grave senseless and without motion, even as a block of stone... the majesty and beauty of the face and the whole body departeth, and a pale, deformed, and ugly form succeeds... the body putrifieth and rotteth, and from thence proceeds a most horrible and stinking savour, and in the end is wholly turned to dust.

According to Pricke, despite this putrescence and decay, the bodies of the faithful will be “quickened and raised up, their souls restored to them.”²⁹ Funeral sermons such as this one were vehicles for expounding the established doctrine and provide an educational occasion to prepare listeners for death.³⁰ In Pricke's sermon we can see the effort of a reformist preacher to contrast the material, decaying body with the spiritual, glorious body. Pricke's sermon represents one of the many Tudor texts that seek to establish the corpse as the epitome of material deadness, a “block of stone” without an animating spirit. Yet the repeated presence of the

²⁸ Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* 421, my emphasis.

²⁹ Robert Pricke, *A Verie Godlie and Learned Sermon, Treating of Mans Mortalitie* (STC 20338: 1608), Dv-D3.

³⁰ Protestant funeral sermons began in the 1560s and increased in number leading to the great age of funeral sermons in the seventeenth-century. A informal survey of the on-line *English Short Title Catalogue* finds that just three funeral sermons were published in the 1560s, while twenty-nine were printed in the 1600, 117 in the 1650s, and 150 in the 1690s. These numbers indicate the rise in the publication of funeral sermons in the seventeenth-century represent only a fraction of the thousands that were likely delivered.

corruptive corpse in such texts—and the insistence on its deadness—reveals that the corpse was indeed no mere “dead object” but an amorphous, performative entity with function and agency, and one that was increasingly difficult to displace from the early modern imagination.

One of the most influential cultural texts that works to define the performative function of the material corpse is the Order for the Burial of the Dead found in the Book of Common Prayer.³¹ As a liturgical form, the Book of Common Prayer can be viewed as a performative text in that it strives to effect a transformation of the individual’s inward condition through an outward, repeated gesture. Moreover, it implicitly demands a regimented subordination of private to public (“common prayer” means prayer that is shared by or distributed to, or demanded, of all) articulating a temporary, political, and social *order*, one that imposes a vision of a unified, stable, national, religious identity. In performing the liturgical order the performer participates in—and becomes—part of the social order. Therefore, the Prayerbook is a script that enacts the reformed church’s emphasis on external public conformity and a belief in the power of outward practices to transform and influence inward states of being.³² That being said, the Book of Common Prayer’s Order for the Burial of the Dead demonstrates how the liturgical order acts as a performative text that cultivates a community of pious mourners while deflecting attention away from the corpse. Within this communal performance the corpse is available as a physical prop, resulting in a cultural dialectic between the living and the dead over the status of the body after death, one that is later represented on stage.

³¹ The Book of Common Prayer was first published in 1549 under Edward VI and revised in 1552. The 1552 edition was later revised and reinstated by Queen Elizabeth in 1559 and backed by the statutory authority of the Act of Uniformity. All citations here refer to John E. Booty, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: The Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1976) and appear parenthetically.

³² For more on the reformed church’s belief in the performative power of prayer, see Ramie Targoff, “The Performance of Prayer: Sincerity and Theatricality in Early Modern England,” *Representations* 60 (1997) and Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). For a discussion on the social and political dimensions of the Book of Common Prayer, see Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Like the Book of Common Prayer, The Order for the Burial of the Dead received many alterations throughout the various revisions between 1549 and 1559.³³ In the Elizabethan version, funerals were curtailed radically from their traditional antecedents, omitting service in the house and much of the processions through villages and towns to the church. For example, writing in 1600 Francis Tate explains the once-customary funeral practice in England where “the body was laid forth, as they terme it, upon a floore in some chamber of the house covered with a sheet, and candels set burning over it on a table day and night, and the body continually attended or watched. Though [this custom] be now grown into disuse, being thought superstitious.”³⁴ Tate’s account reveals describes a tradition that relies upon and emphasizes the presence of the dead body as an element of the ritual performance of mourning: it is attended and watched. However, his use of the past tense indicates that such “superstitious” acts are no longer credible. Indeed, the Prayer Book of 1549 excludes many gestures of ritual watching and observing, provides only for a procession through the churchyard to the church or grave, burial, and service in the church. However it explicitly—and controversially—allowed for the celebration of Communion.³⁵ The 1552 and 1559 versions abbreviated the service by making no provision for Communion, omitted the psalms from the church service, and removed the recitation of the “Our Father.” The goal of these omissions is to remove any semblance of the burial service to a requiem for the dead. As Eamon Duffy eloquently observes, the “oddest feature of the burial rite is the disappearance of the corpse.”³⁶ In the absence of the corpse, the service turns its attention to the living mourners. As Jacobean preacher Robert Hill cautions, funerals “are not for the bare commendation of the dead,

³³ For a brief overview on the differences between the 1552 and 1559 Prayer Books, see Gordon Jeans, “Cranmer and Common Prayer,” *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Hefling Charles and Cynthia Shattuck (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Plays* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999). For a more detailed discussion see Henry Gee, *The Elizabethan Prayer Book & Ornaments* (London: MacMillan, 1902).

³⁴ Francis Tate, “Of the Antiquity, Variety, and Ceremonies of Funerals in England,” *A Collection of Curious Discourses Written by Eminent Antiquaries*, vol. 1 (1771) 216.

³⁵ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* 265.

³⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) 475.

but for the instruction and consolation of them that are alive.”³⁷ That “instruction and consolation” takes the form of a repeated insistence on the inevitability of the final resurrection of the faithful and the belief and trust in bodily continuity after death. As the service declares:

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, and in that moment, in the twinkling of an eye by the last trump. For the trump shall blow, and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed (312).

The emphasis on the future tense of “shall” expresses a strong assertion of the belief not only in the resurrection, but also in the integrity of the self at the time of resurrection. Here is Victor Turner’s “subjunctive mood” that connotes a potentially transformative process. Yet, there is a clear tension between the stasis of the body (it is the same body) and the metamorphosis of the body (yet changed). The whole of the service operates to reinforce this tension, which entails using language and imagery that mixes the experience of life with the inevitable experience of death, leading to the conclusion that, “in the midst of life we be in death” (309), combining the two contradicting states of being.

With the corpse enclosed in a coffin and with all intercessory dialogue removed, the service is then able to ventriloquize the corpse:

I shall rise out of the earth in the last day, and shall be covered again with *my skin*, and shall see God *in my flesh*: yea, and I myself shall behold him, not with other, but with *these same eyes* (309).

There is a clear assertion that material continuity is essential for individual identity. The repetition of “shall” connotes the inevitability the restitution of the body, maintaining the “sure and certain hope” (310) of the resurrection.³⁸ This hope that is beyond a hope provides an abstract mystery to death and combats the gruesomeness of decaying bodies. Echoing the words of Job 19: 26-

³⁷ Robert Hill, *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (1610), STC 13473, 276.

³⁸ Marshall studies of a sample of 424 wills granted probate in Suffolk between 1625-1626. While wills are, of course, primarily focused on the dispersal of goods and therefore not concerned with spiritual matters, 251 (59 percent) wills expressed an explicit assurance of hope in salvation. What I find interesting is that when testators made reference to the resurrection of the body, they echoed this contentious phrase from the burial service: “sure and certain hope.” Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) esp. 228-29.

27, the use of first person stresses the stability of the intact resurrected body (“my skin,” “my flesh,” “these same eyes”), despite its known biological corruption in the grave. Moreover it is the corpse that is the vehicle for such transformation.

The burial service provides a performative moment in the life of an early modern English mourner where he/she must contemplate the materially dead and decaying body enclosed within a coffin yet, through the language of the service, envision it as an incorruptible spiritual body. The service resembles the theatrical staging of the dead body in reverse: the playgoer must watch the living actor, yet envision him dead. The same mediation of the corpse at the gravesite occurs on the stage when living actors contemplate theatrical corpses. Such as when Hamlet describes Polonius’ body as “This councillor,/ Is now most still, most secret and most grave,/ Who was in life a most foolish knave” (3.4. 211-13). Hamlet’s address to the actor’s body emphasizes the transformation that “death” has enacted: who was once “prating” in life, is now “most still... most secret... most grave.” Hamlet’s words function as a performative speech act that transforms the living actor into a dead body and induces the audience to believe in that transformation. The burial service and the theatre both participate in a dramatic suspension of visual proof. Both seek to convince participants that the potential of the corpse lays in its transformative abilities. While the burial stresses the integrity of the body after death despite its decay in the grave, and envisions the corpse as a vessel for regenerative power, the theatre repurposes the efficacy of the corpse to affect the dramatic energy of the play.

III

Working in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer is the state-sanctioned homily, “Against Peril of Idolatry and Superfluous decking of Churches” (also known as the “Homily Against Idolatry”), which represents the monarchy’s official position on the materiality of anthropomorphic idols and images and was intended for delivery in churches throughout the

country.³⁹ As I have demonstrated, in the view of Protestant reformers, the Catholic system of worship privileged the material body over the spirit. Therefore with the Reformation, a reformulation of the prevailing concept of the body/soul dichotomy was necessary to counteract the materiality of the Catholic Church. This prompted an effort by reformers to articulate materiality as definitively *dead*, as can be seen in the rhetoric of the “Homily Against Idolatry.”

In the homily’s argumentation images and idols are figured as “dead things.” Although the homily never uses the word “corpse,” the corpse is conjured with every utterance of the word “dead,” rendering it omnipresent throughout the text.⁴⁰ The encapsulating metaphor of the corpse is evidenced in the repeated varied use of “dead”—as in “filthy dead images,” “dumb and dead images,” “dead and unmovable things,” “dead as stocks and stones,” “dead as stiff bodies”—as well as in the illustrative stories of idol worship that are firmly situated in corpses. For example, the recounting of a story from the Book of Wisdom in which the “blind love of a father” who “framing for his comfort, an image of his son being dead, and so at last the men fell to worshipping of the image of him whom who they did know to be dead” (247).⁴¹ The homily insists that the corpse is axiomatically dead; it is, in fact, the only material entity that can fully demonstrate what “dead” means.

The homily’s agenda is to “demystify” the body and it proceeds from an argument about the corpse, which is used to define dead material. The homilist appropriates the corpse—the most indeterminate of material entities—as the standard for dead. Therefore, the homily places an emphatic association of materiality with insentience. Because the project of the homily is to prove that images and idols are dead, establishing what dead signifies is an essential part of the text. I argue that the theatre’s staging of the theatrical corpse consistently works to disrupt the Protestant agenda of defining the material body as dead and without agency. In fact, every time a

³⁹ The first edition of *Certayne sermons, or homilies* was published in 1547 (STC 13639), six months after the death of Henry VIII and under the direction of Thomas Cranmer. The second tome of homilies was published in 1563 (STC 13663) and included the Homily Against Idolatry. All citations to the homily will appear parenthetically.

⁴⁰ In the one hundred-page document, the homily uses the word “dead” 42 times.

⁴¹ Wisdom 14:15.

living actor performed a corpse he staged the theatre's antipathy to the Protestant idea of dead materiality. In order to demonstrate this ongoing contention between the theatre's staging of "living" corpses, and the reformer's iconoclastic objective of "killing the corpse," I will trace the homily's formulation of "dead idols" as "puppets of performance." This equivalence between puppets and idols becomes a powerful justification for later Puritan critics of the theatre. In this way, the homily foreshadows later Puritan polemics against the performance of the physical, material body—especially the dead body—on the early modern stage.

In her exploration of how the Reformation "attempts to demystify the Catholic *gestalt* of the dead," Susan Zimmerman offers a reading of the homily and views it as a "propagandistic text" that articulates a new and strongly felt Protestant anxiety about the body: "the need to envisage its materiality, like that of the idol, as dead."⁴² Generally, Zimmerman's study exerts a feminist-psychoanalytic approach to texts and therefore her analysis of the homily is specifically concerned with connecting dead materiality with the presentation of the female body in early modern culture. Neglecting that death and putrefaction (both on and off stage) are not restricted to gender, Zimmerman traces the "symbolic potential of the bi-gendered corpse" by pointing to the homilist's gendering the insubstantial spirit and the material body as male and female respectively, and connects the homily with the psychological theorization of "women's customary function as a scapegoat for death." For Zimmerman, the "painted face" of the idol and the "painted face" of the harlot are both "dead" and "fornication with the strumpet can be viewed as a form of necromancy."⁴³ Zimmerman's reading of the homily demonstrates the complex relationship between the body's materiality and gender, and the homily does provide a historically specific account of how the female body can be read as an emblem for death and annihilation (and, as the homilist often insists, the Roman Catholic Church). I, however, wish to extend Zimmerman's analysis by focusing on larger issues of *theatrical performance*—not just early modern stage practices of cross-dressing. The homily explicitly connects to theatre in its

⁴² Zimmerman, *Early Modern Corpse*, 17, 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.* Zimmerman spends a great deal of her analysis focusing on the "sustained, sensational representations of necrophilia" as the transvestite corpse represents an idolatrous object of desire, "the most taboo form of idolatry." 12, 52-53.

conflation of the puppet, as a theatrical object, with the corpse. In so doing it uses distinct metaphors of the theatre in order to articulate the dangers of idols/objects..

There is much in the homily on the “decking of saints,” a central area of analysis for Zimmerman, who focuses on a specific passage which equates the “decking of images and idols” with “enticements to spiritual fornication” (261). For Zimmerman the “decking of saints” is “indistinguishable from the body of the harlot with the painted face.”⁴⁴ However, in her analysis she does not attend to a description appearing soon after this passage that likens the “decking of images and idols” to puppets. Quoting the early Christian writer Lactantius, the homilist declares that “as little girls play with puppets, so be these decked images great puppets for old fools to play with” (264). The homilist continues, “and in plays they bring in great and well decked puppets... Upon these puppets they put attiring and precious apparel... [and] give gold and silver” (265). The homilist goes on to describe the “making, setting up, painting, gilding, clothing, and decking of dead, dumb images, which be but great puppets” (270). While the homilist may likely be describing the pageantry and processions of the Catholic Church or the celebration of Mass, the link to the actual theatre is conspicuous, especially since, according to the *OED*, the use of “puppet” to mean a “model of a person or animal that can be manipulated to mimic natural movement, a figure with jointed limbs” was in current use by 1538, twenty-five years before the publication of the homily.⁴⁵

The homilist evokes puppets for their materiality, their displacement of gesture and voice, and their potential for animation despite being inanimate objects. The puppet—like the corpse—mediates between extremes of de-animation and re-animation. Both are threshold entities: a thing that, in its theatricality, is at once living and nonliving; appearing dead but with the potential for movement. There is clearly an anti-theatrical discourse operating here which has at its center the

⁴⁴ Ibid, 56.

⁴⁵ The connection between puppets and corpses is made even more culturally explicit later, in 1612 when Henry, Prince of Wales’ effigy was created as such a “lively representation” that it did not only “draw teares form the severest beholder, but cawsed a fearful outcrie among the people...” as its limbs could be moved and it had “several joints... in the arms, legges, and bodie to be moved in sundrie acciones.” For this and more manuscript references to Prince Henry’s funeral procession, see Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986) 7, 229.

distinction between dead/alive and the theatre's ability to enact "false resurrections" of dead things. Moreover, the theatrical corpse is an essential participant in the theatre's inherent reliance on and performance of duplicity, disguise, and dissembling, and thereby challenges the Protestant insistence on the integrity and the continuity of the resurrected body.

When reading the homilist's condemnation against figurative puppets, one cannot help but think the actual puppets staged in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and their role in defending the theatre.⁴⁶ At the end of the play, Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy rushes to denounce the puppet show as an "abomination" and blasphemous idolatry. He directly engages in a debate with one of the puppets, a figure identified as "the ghost of Dionysus."⁴⁷ This hard-headed specter defends the theatre to Busy who, in the language of contemporary Puritan anti-theatricalist writers, admonishes: "you are an abomination: for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female male" (5.5. 84-5). The puppet-ghost of Dionysus retorts, "*You lie, you lie, you lie abominably...It is your old stale argument against the players but it will not hold against the puppets; for we neither have male or female among us*" (86; 88-90).⁴⁸ He then lifts up his garment to prove his case, showing Busy (and the rest of us) the no-thing below his skirts. But

⁴⁶ While Jonson is the only early modern playwright that stages an actual puppet play, Shakespeare references puppets and puppet theatre in many of his plays including *Hamlet*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*. For more on this, see Kenneth Gross, "Puppets Dallying: Thoughts on Shakespearean Theatricality," *Comparative Drama* 41.3 (2007).

⁴⁷ Dionysus, whose name invokes the god of the theatre, is actually not the Greek deity, but is identified as Dionysus the Younger, that is, a tyrannical king of ancient Syracuse and one-time recalcitrant student of Plato, who is also cited during the homilist's censure of puppets. The homilist falsely attributes Seneca for his "condemnation of Dionysus, King of Sicily, for his merry robbing of such decked and jewelled puppets" (265). However, the story actually comes from Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* (3. 34-35). Cicero tells the story of Dionysus pillaging various temples and pilfering the gifts made to the gods "without scruple." However, Cicero makes a clear point at the end of the tale to say that "neither did Olympian Jove strike him [Dion] down with his thunder, nor did Aesculapius cause him to die by tedious diseases and a linger death. He died in his bed and had funeral honors paid to him..." This, for Cicero, is not an authorization of evil, but rather a lesson that "without conscience man is contemptible."

⁴⁸ The text of this play included in Jonson's 1616 folio *Works* prints the puppets' lines in italics (a device followed in most modern editions), which somehow indicates their peculiar status in the drama, as often stage directions indicating motion, action, and property are italicized. Few human characters have their lines printed in italics in Jonson's folio. Although it is perhaps telling that the "windy words" vomited up by Crispinus in 5.3 of *Poetaster* ("*glibbery*," "*lubrical*," "*defunct*") are also printed in italics.

what is revealed for just an instant is the fleshy arm and hand of the puppet-player; a stark moment when puppet, idol, and the body of the actor converge. Jonson's puppet-play literalizes the debates over materiality and performance.⁴⁹ Dionysus, lifting his garments, reveals the puppet—like the theatrical corpse—to be that which receives and reanimates embodied intention. In the end, all of the characters of *Bartholomew Fair* turn out to be more like puppets than people.⁵⁰ It is this kind of reductive metaphor that one can find in anti-theatrical tracts that explore this same relationship between performance and the dead object of the corpse.

IV

The connection between dead materiality and performance is intensified in anti-theatrical tracts where the language of the Homily Against Idolatry is appropriated for the goal of eradicating the public theatres. The phrase “dead as stocks and stones,” is the most used phrased throughout the homily.⁵¹ However, it is also used more than thirty years later by John Rainolds in his attack against the theatres, *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (1599). Rainolds echoes the homily when he writes that the theatre encourages “men to be ravished with love of

⁴⁹ By identifying Dionysus as a *ghost*, Jonson clearly parodies the theatrical reality of the material ghost.

⁵⁰ Ever the controlling puppet-master, Jonson may not have appreciated Heinrich von Kleist's great essay “Über das Marionettentheater” (1810), where he argues that the peculiar, even redemptive life of puppets depends on the manipulator's yielding up of his human mastery and freedom to the gravity of his inhuman actors. Still, the early modern conception of the puppet prefigures what would later become a theoretical obsession in modern European drama, as the puppet and the marionette became part of the commentary on the impossibility of verisimilitude and the destabilization of authorship, something Ben Jonson begins to explore with his embedded puppet show in *Bartholomew Fair*.

⁵¹ The phrase “dead as stocks and stones” is possibly derived from Ezekiel 20:32, “...We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, and serve wood, and stone.” It is by far the most popular phrase invoking deadness, appearing twelve times throughout the homily. Its popularity is manifest as Foxe uses the phrase in his *Acts and Monuments*, published in the same year as the homily, when describing the acts of John Blomstone, persecuted in 1509 in Coventry as a heretic because he said it was “foolishness” to visit the images of the Virgin Mary and other saints on pilgrimage, “because they be no more but dead stocks and stones.” Milton incorporates the phrase in his “On the Late Massacre in Piedmont” (1655): “when all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones” (line 4).

stones, of dead stuff.”⁵² That such “dead stuff” has the potential “to ravish” spectators points to the very fear of the anti-theatricalists: that inanimate objects—idols, puppets, corpses—have the potential for transformative agency on the stage that will affect the spectator. In this way, anti-theatrical tracts make an important connection between the liturgical discourse on materiality and performance found in the “Burial of the Dead” and the “Homily Against Idolatry.” The performance of the corpse on the early modern stage proves to be the ultimate site where the questions of the materiality and representation converge.

Anti-theatrical tracts and pamphlets repeatedly attack the theatre as a place of immorality and death.⁵³ While scholars have attended to some of the common repetitions in anti-theatrical literature such as the use of dramatic or dialogic structure, statements of generic characteristics concerning comedy and tragedy, and the repetition of similar biblical arguments, the repetition of bodily metaphors—especially those invoking the dead body—as recurrent trope is overlooked by such scholars.⁵⁴ However, these metaphors that focus on the body are prevalent in most tracts

⁵² All of my citations to such polemical documents are cited from Tanya Pollard's anthology and appear parenthetically in my text. Tanya Pollard, ed., *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 176.

⁵³ The tracts' repetitious arguments have been derided by Jonas Barish who claims that no anti-theatrical pamphlet “makes an important dialectical contribution. Rarely do they pursue an argument closely; more often they disintegrate into free-associative rambles. They repeat themselves, and each other, without shame or scruple.” Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 88. This dismissive point of view is seductive, but it also potentially implies that the Puritans ought to have imagined the possibility of a pro-theatrical prejudice, and engaged seriously with the opposition—i.e. made a “dialectical contribution.” Jeremy Lopez points out that “if the anti-theatricalists repeated the same scriptures again and again as evidence for the Biblical proscription of play-going, it was generally not so much out of laziness as out of a sincere conviction that the players and playgoers had to be made to hear what was obviously true.” Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20.

⁵⁴ Much could be and has been made of the quasi-dramatic form in which anti-theatrical tracts are written, that Northbrooke's *Treatise* is the form of a dialogue between Youth and Age; that Gosson followed his *School of Abuse* with *Plays Confuted in Five Acts*; that Stubbes' entire book is in dialogue form and in fact creates an imaginary, anagrammatic land, Aligna, to stand in for Anglia; and that Prynne's *Historio-Mastix* is divided into two “tragedies,” each consisting of thirteen “acts,” complete with prologues and choruses. Elbert Thompson sounds a note of caution with regard to pursuing an ironic reading of the tracts not as explicitly “theatrical” as Gosson's or Prynne's: “to the Puritan, dialogue had no necessary connection with the drama. The Book of Job had that form; it was used by Grindal... and later by Bunyan.” See Elbert Thompson, *Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1903), 56. However, I find even more telling is that the pro-theatrical respondents to the Puritans do not take note of the potentially self-contradictory form of the writings. It seems hard to imagine that the irony would

(the theatre *is* full of bodies) and the pattern represents an assumption about theatre and bodily performance: bodily performance can affect—and infect—the non-performing body.

Although their interests are divergent, both the supporters and critics of the theatre respond to the respective practices of the stage with profound conviction in the transformative potential of performance. For both the supporters and opponents of the theatre, the performative practice of playing threatened to transform actors and audience members alike—and that transformation is a bodily one. In keeping with the Platonic understanding of imitation as a formative process, the anti-theatricalists warn of the permanent consequences of selecting a harmful mimetic model.⁵⁵ Therefore John Rainolds in *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes* describes how actual physical symptoms develop in response to the player's feigning a sickness on the stage:

Seeing that diseases of the mind are gotten far sooner by counterfeiting, then are diseases of the body: and bodily diseases may be gotten so, as appeareth by him, who, feigning for a purpose that he was sick of the goute, became (through care of counterfeiting) gouty indeed. So much can imitation and meditation do (175).

By using the rhetoric of contagion and the body Rainolds implies that an internal transformation is possible because of an external transformation. He illustrates the belief repeated in the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer: that performance has the power to alter the performer and the spectator. However, whereas the Order for the Service of the Burial of the Dead or the Homily against Idolatry provides a mimetic model for performing piety and virtue, the public theatre performs vice, which is equally infectious to the participants. Yet whereas the Burial service aims to encourage mourners to imaginatively identify with the corpse in its inevitable vulnerability to decay, the anti-theatrical tracts stress that such identification with the theatrical corpse leads to spiritual death. For Puritans, difference lies in the theatrical impersonation of the body, which that

not occasionally suggest itself to a reader. Jeremy Lopez does consider the repeated metaphor of eating and gluttony in the theatrical tracts, however he does not consider the transformative qualities of ingestion or the presence of the corpse. See Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* 27-34.

⁵⁵ On the Platonic model working in the debates on the theatre, see Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*.

leads to such contagion. For example, Anthony Munday's *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theatres* (1580) writes that "it is marvelous to consider how the gesturing of a player, which Tully termeth the eloquence of the body, is of force to move and prepare a man to that which is ill" (75-6). Consistently, transformation in the theatre is viewed as an infection that eventually leads to death. Moreover, that transformation is produced through performance and gesture, through the body.

The trope of sickness and disease found in these pamphlets easily prompts metaphors of death and the corpse. William Rankins states in *A Mirror of Monsters* (1587): "The temple of our bodies, which should be consecrated unto [Christ], is made a stage of stinking stuff" (126). Rankins continues this carrion metaphor forward when he writes that players, "such as they as in outward show seem painted sepulchers, but dig up their deed, and find nothing but a mass of rotten bones" (125). Philip Stubbes also envisions players are "painted sepulchers" (118) in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), and the phrase likely derives from Matthew 23: 27 "Woe unto you... hypocrites! For ye are like unto whitened sepulcher, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." For Puritans, it is *gestus* of the corpse that leads to such contagion of both player and playgoer.⁵⁶

Rainold's ends *Th' Overthrow of Stage-Playes* with this warning: "The manners of all spectators commonly are hazarded by the contagion of theatrical sights" (177). The power of the theatre lies in its ability to affect the lives—and bodies—of those involved in the performance event. For the anti-theatricalists, this power is negative and represents the mortal danger of impersonation, as in Thomas Beard's account in *Theatre of God's Judgment* (1597) where a woman who went to see a tragedy had a dream the following night of "the picture of a sheet (a presage of death) cast in her teeth what she had done; five days after, death himself seized upon her" (168). While players may appear virtuous—just like puppets which may appear alive—they

⁵⁶ My use of the term *gestus* clearly comes from Brecht's sense of the word as meaning an outward "physical gesture and 'gist' or attitude revealed through performance." See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willet (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964) 42. But I also intend Heiner Müller's evolution of the concept to include a having "the character of citation." See "The Geste of Citation" in Heiner Müller, *Germania*, trans. Bernard and Caroline Schutze, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (New York: Semitext(e), 1990) 177.

are nothing more than decked corpses. But for the defenders of the theatre, the theatre's power is beneficial. For example, Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612) speaks of the same blurring between the stage and reality in his numerous accounts of the power of performance, such as the performance of a battle scaring off actual Spanish invaders. Or of a murderess being moved to confess the killing of her husband, which was further proved by the sexton "in the ripping up of a grave (quoth he) what I have found, and shows them a fair skull, with a great nail pierced quite through the brain pan, but we cannot conjecture to whom it should belong, nor how long it hath lain in the earth, the grave being confused, and the flesh consumed" (246). Defenders of the stage actually seem to agree with their adversaries, arguing for the same assumptions about the efficacy of performance to transform its participants, and both engage with metaphor of the body/corpse in order to support their claims.

For both opponents and defenders of the theatre, the stage is imagined as a performative space that effects a powerful transformation of people and bodies and that transformation is achieved through physical gesture and performance. But most importantly the theatre is a place of death—and resurrection—where the actor and the corpse are confused. For the opponents of the theatre, death is the punishment for performance, for being "ravished with stocks and stone, with dead things," and the corpse is the result of such transgression. However, for the defenders of the stage, death—and its threat of inanimate oblivion—is the adversary that the theatre combats.

V

There is a compelling collision of these various discourses over the body, performance, and the corpse to be found in the contemporary account of Richard Burbage's death. On the occasion of his death in 1619, Burbage's verisimilar acting style was extolled by one of his elegists. The poem describes the effects of Burbage's performance of Hamlet's death: "the Spectators, and the rest of his sad Crew, whilst hee did but seem'd to bleed,/ Amazed, thought

even then he died in deed.”⁵⁷ So powerful is Burbage’s “seeming” death that the division between the audience and performers disintegrates simultaneously just as the boundary blurs between the famous living actor and the dying Prince of Denmark. For the elegist, the death of Hamlet is also the death of Burbage, and vice versa. Additionally, it is the audience who is implicit in that conflation; the “Spectators”—both the audience and his “sad crew”—believe Burbage’s performance of death to be so real that they are affected emotionally. Moreover, it is the *occasion* of Burbage’s actual death that brings to mind his other performed “deaths,” which were so realistic that his actual death is compared to his “playing dead.” This elegy also raises the possibility that Burbage has never truly died—but that he will rise up to play again. No doubt in a theatrical tradition that included conventions and circumstances of double casting within a rotating repertory schedule, such hints at the theatre offering immortality were well received and appropriate.

In the chapters that follow I will explore the function and significance of the theatrical corpse via its performance on the early modern stage. Because such early modern embodied representation is inherited from a rich and varied theatrical history, Chapter Two considers the dramatic influences on the early modern conception of the theatrical corpse. I argue that early modern writers are especially attuned to the performative power of bodies on stage, not only through the English tradition of medieval cycle dramas but through the works of Seneca, especially those tragedies translated into English for the first time in the sixteenth century. By looking at the early modern English translations of Seneca and their alterations of the original text which often fixate upon the corpse, I demonstrate how these translations, in influencing later dramatic treatments of the dead body, are central to understanding the theatrical corpse on stage. This chapter explores the depiction of corpses in the English translations of Seneca by Jasper Heywood and John Studley, published separately and then later collected in the popular anthology *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies* (1581), focusing particularly on each translators’ elaborations and exaggerations of Seneca’s corpses. Notoriously, Seneca’s violently mutilated

⁵⁷ Cited in Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 113.

corpses are created linguistically, existing in the realm of the messenger's account, yet they are ultimately "revealed" on stage to prove the horrific event true to audience. The Senecan technique of "corpses revealed" is an inspiration to early modern dramatists such as Kyd, Marlowe, and Shakespeare who not only bring onstage that which Seneca often keeps off stage, but also explore the dramatic potential of the theatrical corpse in their own works.

Chapters 3-5 examine representations of the theatrical corpse in plays in popular London dramas by Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Middleton and Ford, attending to early modern disputes over the dead and the challenge that the corpse poses to theatrical representation itself. In Chapter Three I examine the material concerns and theatrical function of the staged corpse in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Marlowe's *Tamburlaine The Great*, both of which present the dead body as confined within set pieces—such as bowers and cages—which are in turn contained within the discovery space of the theatre. Such visual staging effects a coffin-like enclosure for the corpse that provides a moment of stasis in the drama from which the audience may contemplate the dead body. My analysis of these stagings of theatrical corpses centers upon how they call attention to the dual spectacle of the theatre and the body and how that fusion is expressed within the theatrical space. Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine*—through their spectacular corpses—appraise the nature of bodily performance as well as the potential danger of the lingering corpse.

In Chapter Four I turn to the plays of Shakespeare where the corpse on stage is afforded added theatricality in that it lives beyond its death—returning as a ghost, or, most often, never actually dying. Looking at characters who appear to be dead to the audience but then revive, this chapter investigates the performance of the corpse through the performance of sleep in several of Shakespeare's works. I contextualize these examples within early modern liturgical texts that evoke the imagery of death as sleep in order to explain the resurrection of the dead as well as provide a comforting—and passive—vision of the grave for mourners and I argue that Shakespeare's theatrical resurrections problematize such a consolatory perspective of death. Focusing on the sleeping-corpses in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lear*, and *Cymbeline*, I demonstrate how Shakespeare uses the corpse as a dramatic device to define and subvert genre conventions.

In Chapter Five I explore the posthumous agency of the dead body by discussing those theatrical corpses which are dismembered and then transformed into stage properties. Focusing on Jacobean plays such as *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Changeling*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, I demonstrate that when a theatrical corpse is dismembered—resulting in a fake hand, heart, or finger—the fragment, through its active nature as a stage property, challenges the integrity of the body after death and comments upon the dislocated efficacy of the corpse, as well as the dislocated function of the Jacobean theatre.

Throughout this project, my performance perspective, my critical attention to text, and my studied consideration of the historical realities of the early modern theatre coexist to offer a new reading of these plays and their corpses. In so doing, I have discovered that the staging of theatrical corpse in early modern theatre—much like the early modern corpse imagined in the grave and from the pulpit—functions as an active agent beyond its death.

CHAPTER 2

THE AUGURIES OF DEATH: EARLY MODERN RENDERINGS OF SENECA'S CORPUS

Writing in the late 1580s, Thomas Nashe describes contemporary playwrights as “triviall translators” who do nothing more than copy the “tragicall speeches” out of Seneca. He supposes that while “English Seneca read by Candlelight yields many good sentences,” it results in “swelling bombast of bragging blank verse.” Nashe objects to “vaine glorious Tragedians” who borrow from Seneca’s corpus, arguing that, “The Sea exhaled by droppes will in continuance bee drie, and *Seneca*, let blood line by line and page by page, at length must needes die to our Stage.”⁵⁸ It is decidedly Senecan that Nashe envisions his contemporaries’ appropriation of Seneca as a slow, methodical bloodletting, leaving the Roman poet’s drained corpse upon the English stage.

The corpus of Seneca—whether intact or disjoined—was highly influential to early modern playwrights. For years, scholars have demonstrated the debt that Kyd, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and others owe to Seneca for his plot devices, stock figures, language, and form.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ronald B. McKerrow, ed., *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols. (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1904-10) 3: 315-16. I am grateful to Professor Scott Smith for sharing his comments and insights on Seneca, translation, and my work.

⁵⁹ As far back as 1893, Cunliffe had traced many of the direct borrowings. John W. Cunliffe, *The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1893). Lucas, who describes Seneca “an ancient ruin turned into a Renaissance quarry,” also offers a thorough account of popular early modern plays that bear Seneca’s influence. F.L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922). Rather than searching for direct lines of comparison, more recent scholarship has investigated the *nature* of Seneca’s influence on early modern drama. See Robert S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992) and A.J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). A recent example is Arnd Bohm’s insightful investigation of Marlowe’s inspiration for the character of Bajazeth in Seneca’s

In this chapter I argue that early modern dramatists were also influenced by Seneca's theatrical treatment of the corpse. In Seneca the corpse is "created" off-stage by a messenger's account and then "revealed" on-stage as proof of the report; once on stage the corpse engenders further chaos and destruction. In other words, Seneca's corpses act as narrative agents that later serve as catalysts for destructive action. This vision of the corpse is highly influential to early modern dramatists who strive to articulate the performative power of the dead body: for example, Hieronimo's use of his son's corpse in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*; the expectant resurrection of the dead Cordelia in the arms of her father in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, or Ferdinand's revelation of waxen corpses in order to psychologically torture his sister in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Seneca is a crucial place to begin an analysis of the early modern theatrical corpse because one of the innovations of the English stage was not just to stage Senecan-inspired plots, but to bring on stage what Seneca often leaves off-stage: the corpse. For early modern playwrights familiar with Seneca, the corpse has a material potency that can be appropriated for theatrical effect.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Seneca's tragedies provide important source material for early modern playwrights' articulation of the performative power of the corpse. Moreover, this chapter will chart the early modern dramatic fascination with the theatrical corpse as not only originating in Seneca's plays, but in the early modern English translation of those works. Performed and published in the 1560s and reprinted in the 1580s, early modern English translations of Seneca adapted, altered, and embellished the Roman poet's texts in order to emphasize the theatrical corpse and its performative power. This chapter seeks to expose the foundation of early modern depictions of the theatrical corpse by examining Seneca's dramatic treatment of the dead body as envisioned by two of the most prolific of those early modern English translators, Jasper Heywood and John Studley.⁶⁰

writings: Arnd Bohm, "Seneca's Influence on the Construction of Bajazeth in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*," *Notes and Queries* 55.253 (2008).

⁶⁰ Heywood and Studley translated seven out of the ten plays included in Newton's 1581 collection *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into English*.

It is important to note that the Elizabethan reception of Seneca occurred in two distinct phases.⁶¹ The first of these took place in the 1560s with the translation of Seneca into English by Jasper Heywood, Alexander Neville, and John Studley. The second phase occurred in 1581 when Thomas Newton compiled and reprinted these earlier translations along with others into the anthology, *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into English*.⁶² During this second phase, Kyd, Shakespeare, and Marlowe began adapting elements of Senecan drama into their own, original works.⁶³ The first phase of early translations bears directly upon the second of early modern playwrights appropriating Seneca, and while many scholars have looked to the latter, few examine the early English translations of the plays as autonomous works. At first glance it would seem that the translators whose versions were collected in the *Tenne Tragedies* in 1581 merely rendered Seneca's plays into the current vernacular for the benefit of those that, "never yet could Latin understand" as the ghost of Seneca says to Heywood in a dream.⁶⁴ While the dream suggests a communion with the past, Elizabethan translators did not simply conceive of their work as a restoration of dismembered fragments to an original unity—as Theseus says in

⁶¹ For more on the stages of Senecan influence in England, including translation and performance history, see H.B. Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy, a Re-Issue of an Essay Published in 1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1946) 138-47 and Jessica Winston, "Seneca in Early Elizabethan England," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006).

⁶² Newton was the chief instrument in bringing about the general translation of Seneca in English and translated one tragedy himself, Seneca's unfinished *Thebais*. Besides translating, writing Latin elegiacs, and (mistakenly) being attributed by Phillips in his *Theatrum Poetarum* as the author of *Tamburlaine*, Newton studied and practiced medicine, translating many medical texts. Perhaps Seneca's attention to the body resonated with Newton's own medical interests and inspired his aspirations to publish the anthology.

⁶³ While Seneca in Latin was readily available and likely read by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Kyd, it is generally acknowledged that they also knew Newton's *Tenne Tragedies*. As M.L. Stapleton notes, the anthology was "probably Shakespeare's crib for his Latin." M.L. Stapleton, "'Shine It Like a Comet of Revenge': Seneca, John Studley, and Shakespeare's Joan La Pucelle," *Comparative Literature Studies* 31.3 (1994): 231. On the availability of Seneca in England, see Charlton, *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy, a Re-Issue of an Essay Published in 1921* 30-37.

⁶⁴ In Heywood's "Preface," line 57. Seneca, *Thyestes*, trans. Jasper Heywood, ed. Joost Daalder (London: New Mermaids, 1982).

Hippolytus, to “patch up his body rent”—but a refashioning of Seneca’s fragments into a new, and newly problematic, whole.

It was inevitable that English translations of Seneca’s tragedies would be published given the prominence of his writings in academic circles in the sixteenth-century: the exercise of translating Seneca’s plays in grammar schools, his place in the curriculum at the universities, and the performance of his plays in some colleges. In fact, the first published translation of Seneca in English came from young scholars at the universities. As Howard B. Noland comments, these Elizabethan translators “played a major role in the transfer of Seneca from the classroom to the theatre.”⁶⁵ Although modern scholars debate whether Seneca wrote for the stage, in the sixteenth-century students, scholars, and readers of Seneca believed that the plays were originally written for performance. Moreover, there is strong evidence of that Seneca was performed in England.⁶⁶ For example, Alexander Neville prefaces his translation of *Oedipus* in Newton’s anthology as “meant for tragick and Pompous showe upon the stage,”⁶⁷ and both John Northbrooke in his *Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes with Other Idle Pastimes* (1577) and Philip Stubbes’ *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583) defend the use of Seneca in

⁶⁵ Howard B. Noland, “Adapting to the Times: Expansion and Interpolation in the Elizabethan Translations of Seneca,” *Classical and Modern Literature* 16.3 (1996): 263. This essay is reprinted as chapter two in “Elizabethan Translations of Seneca” in Howard B. Noland, *Neoclassical Tragedy in Elizabethan England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009), 46-68. All quotes come from the previously published journal article.

⁶⁶ For the Elizabethan stage-history of Seneca, see Bruce R. Smith, “Toward the Rediscovery of Tragedy: Productions of Seneca’s Plays on the English Renaissance Stage,” *Renaissance Drama* 9 (1978). This essay does not have the space or the scope to address the issue of whether Seneca’s dramas were produced during his lifetime or if they were intended to be. For more on that argument, see George W.M. Harrison, ed., *Seneca in Performance* (London: Duckworth, 2000). On implicit stage directions in Seneca, see Dana Ferrin Sutton, *Seneca on the Stage* (Lieden, Netherlands: EJ Brill, 1986). It is important to note that Seneca in English has seen modern successful performances including Ted Hughes’ brilliant adaptation of *Oedipus* at the Old Vic Theatre in London (1968) and Caryl Churchill’s acclaimed translation of *Thyestes* for the Royal Court Theatre in London (1994).

⁶⁷ Thomas Newton, ed., *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1932), 1: 187.

performance as “very honest and commendable exercises” seeing the stage as an educational instrument.⁶⁸

The early modern English translations provide us with versions of the plays that were not only influential to early modern playwrights, but, as Joost Daalder argues, that can be studied as thoroughly *English* plays in their own right: “from a literary point of view, the style of the translations establishes them as artistic creations rather than perfunctory renderings.”⁶⁹ For example, some of the translators amended the plays with additional scenes (in the case of Heywood’s *Thyestes*), altered style (such as Neville’s choruses in *Oedipus*), or elaborated speeches (as John Studley does to Phaedra in *Hippolytus*).⁷⁰ In effect, the 1581 collection gathers together various Senecan dramas and interprets them in an *English* manner,⁷¹ providing a model for later Elizabethan playwrights to appropriate, alter, and domesticate Seneca in language and theme. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, through their elaborations of Seneca’s original texts, English translators establish performative modes around the presentation and treatment of the corpse.

Newton’s collection had a major impact on the development of tragedy in England. Not only did he reissue the seven Senecan tragedies that had been published fifteen to twenty years earlier, but he also made available to the public three plays ascribed to Seneca that had not been previously published in English. The effect was to make the Senecan dramatic canon accessible to a much larger reading audience.⁷² However, I contend that the translations also direct *how*

⁶⁸ Stubbes, Sv-6. However, in subsequent editions of *Anatomy* Stubbes removes his defense of Seneca to fulminate against all theatrical productions.

⁶⁹ Joost Daalder, “Madness in Jasper Heywood’s 1560 Version of Seneca’s *Thyestes*,” *Classical and Modern Literature* 16.2 (1996): 119.

⁷⁰ For a thorough analysis of how the English translators altered Seneca’s original texts, see Frederick Kiefer, “Seneca Speaks in English: What the Elizabethan Translators Wrought,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 15.4 (1978) and Norland, “Adapting to the Times: Expansion and Interpolation in the Elizabethan Translations of Seneca.”

⁷¹ Besides incorporating Christian ideology into much of Seneca’s stoic philosophy, the translators also used the characteristic and popular English verse, the fourteener, in their transcriptions.

⁷² For the popularity of *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*, see E.M. Spearing, *The Elizabethan Translations of Seneca’s Tragedies* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., 1912) 4-7.

Seneca was perceived by the way in which English translators emphasized particular grotesque qualities of his drama—specifically, their extension and expansion of the sensational elements associated with the corpse in Seneca, adding details to the physical nature of the body that later inspire early modern English dramatists. Studies that expose the main lines of the Senecan tradition in early modern drama point to similar features of vivid and powerful verse, psychological insights, highly effective staging, and intellectually demanding verbal and conceptual framework that operate in both dramatic traditions. However, as I will observe, there is also a prevalent preoccupation with the performative power of the theatrical corpse in Seneca that can be seen in later Elizabethan tragedies. In this chapter I argue that Seneca’s theatricalization of the corpse—achieved through a complex interaction of words and bodies—prefigures the early modern theatrical corpse’s power not only as an important element of dramaturgy, but as a device for articulating the powerful potential for annihilation as it inspires other characters to commit acts of self-destruction. The corpse carries with it the chaos and violence that was “written” upon it by the narrative, and once on-stage that chaos is transmitted and diffused throughout the drama. While I will consider all the plays translated by Heywood and Studley, my analysis will pay particular attention to *Thyestes* (translated by Jasper Heywood and originally published in 1560) and *Hippolytus* (Seneca’s *Phaedra*, translated by John Studley and originally published in 1567), both of which reappear in Newton’s 1581 anthology. I focus on these plays because of their immense influence on later early modern dramatists and because both plays exhibit the early modern translators’ compulsion to elaborate upon Seneca’s treatment of the corpse as a vehicle that retains the performative power of its off-stage narrated experience of violence and brutality, and later conveys it to the drama once it appears onstage, thereby inspiring annihilation.

II

In Seneca’s dramas there is an undeniable focus on the body, its inner and outer parts, their penetration and dismemberment. This chaotic fracturing of the body is often juxtaposed with the ideal of self-containment, which has its roots in stoic philosophy’s regard of the entire

universe as material and, often, corporeal.⁷³ The prominence of the body distinguishes Senecan drama where characters are identified by their bodies. For example, *Oedipus* with its gruesome attention to bodily organs, their disease, and their ectopic monstrosity reflect an emphasis on the body and physicality that A.J. Boyle argues is “both ideological and pervasive” in Seneca’s dramatic works.⁷⁴

What is so fascinating about Seneca’s focus on the body’s physicality is the manner in which the playwright treats the corpse: Seneca hides the physical violence that creates the corpse, yet eventually reveals the carnage at the end of the play. This approach to narrating violence that occurs off-stage adheres to Hellenic models and standards of Roman practice. However, Seneca’s revelation of the result of violence onstage breaks many rules of classical dramaturgy, as articulated by Horace approximately forty years before Seneca:

*...non tamen intus
digna geri promes in scaenam, multaque tolles
ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praesens;
ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,
aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus,
aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi.*

(*Ars Poetica* 179-188)

Do not bring upon the stage what should be performed behind the scenes, keep much from our eyes which an actor’s ready tongue will relate immediately in our presence; Medea should not *butcher* her children before the public, nor wicked Atreus *cook* human flesh in the open, nor Procne be turned into a bird, nor Cadmus into a snake. If you show these things to me, I will disbelieve and loathe them.⁷⁵

⁷³ See Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) 118-20 who notes that Renaissance anatomy was indebted to many aspects of stoic cosmology. Seneca’s attention to the body in his non-dramatic works is expressed most clearly in his *Epistles*. Phillippe de Mornay’s *Excellent discours de la vie et de la mort* (1576) is largely influenced by Seneca’s philosophies of life and death found in the *Epistles*, and centers much of its discussion on the body’s experience of death. Moray’s text saw two English translations: as *The Defence of Death* in 1576 by London printer and bookseller Edward Aggas and then as *The Discourse of Life and Death* by Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, when it was published in 1592 along with her translation of Robert Garnier’s neo-Senecan drama *Marc Antonie*.

⁷⁴ Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* 134.

⁷⁵ My translation. It is interesting to note that *Ars Poetica* was first translated into English by Ben Jonson in 1640. Jonson follows Horace’s advice in his early tragedy, *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603).

Horace “loathes” such gruesome spectacles of stage violence, aligning the violated human body with meat, the “butchering” and “cooking” of animal carcasses. However, Horace also “disbelieves” such spectacles; he refuses to accept that they are true. The use of the Latin word “*incredulus*” insinuates not only disbelief, but also mistrust and doubt. According to Horace, bodily annihilation depicted on stage disrupts mimesis because that which is presented on stage is not what it appears to be, and in fact such depictions calls attention to their lack of similitude.⁷⁶ This sense of *disbelief* that results from the rupture of mimesis is centered upon the corpse and its physicality on the stage

Despite Horace’s warnings, such spectacular corporeal annihilations are common in Seneca: Medea breaks Horace’s prescriptions by killing her children on stage; although the messenger narrates the cooking of Thyestes’ son’s flesh, their severed heads are displayed on stage by Atreus in the final act; and Jocasta commits suicide on stage at the end of *Oedipus*, just as Phaedra does in *Hippolytus*—a bloody act that is compounded by Theseus’ attempt to reassemble the scattered fragments of his son’s corpse. While there is scholarly speculation as to whether Hercules kills any of his children on stage in *Hercules Furens*, the Chorus at the end of the play addresses their dead bodies and his wife’s beheaded corpse, which are brought on stage in the final act.⁷⁷ These corporeal annihilations are almost always embedded within spectacular ritual: the bodies are objects of sacrifice that contain and transmit ritual—and therefore theatrical—power. While the corpses are often described in grotesque detail via a

⁷⁶ The gap between appearance and reality that theatre creates, or highlights, was a source for anxiety for Greeks, Romans, and Elizabethans. However, most of this changed in the Roman Empire as dissembling became a survival strategy. See Anne Duncan, *Performance and Identity in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 188-217. For the Elizabethan equivalent, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁷⁷ Such violence and bloodshed could have represented through the use of artificial blood-bags, a practice in the Roman theatre since the time of Caligula. See Sutton, *Seneca on the Stage* 63-67.

messenger, who controls and moderates the audience's perception of the violated corpse, the controlled creation of the corpse later appears on stage and initiates chaos.⁷⁸

Much has been made of Seneca's depiction of violence in relationship to the "spectatorial cruelty" of the Romans. However, A.J. Boyle argues that Seneca's theatrical violence is not an attempt to cater to the appetites of popular aesthetics of his time. In fact, by describing violent death verbally and representing the reaction to it theatrically, Boyle argues that Seneca is "able to control the perception and evaluation of death in a way that the [gladiatorial] arena could not do."⁷⁹ That type of control is demonstrated in the manner in which the off-stage verbally constructed corpse is defined through the messenger's narration, thereby creating a powerful off-stage corpse that is later revealed theatrically on-stage.

Much like Seneca's tragedies, the violence in Renaissance drama is not simply the indulgence of gory aesthetic tastes; it is a self-conscious reflection of and on the ritualized and legally sanctioned violence of the Elizabethan and Jacobean culture, exposing that violence as itself a theatre of power.⁸⁰ And while Renaissance stage violence is deeply indebted to the poetic violence found in the Roman poets,⁸¹ it must be noted that it was not simply a classical import but owed much to medieval pageant where the murder of the innocents, the torture of martyrs, and other biblical atrocities were popular themes. Yet, whereas the violated bodies in medieval pageants contrast corporeal sacrifice with spiritual absolution as part of God's plan, Seneca's violated bodies are never afforded absolution nor do they operate within a metaphysical

⁷⁸ Charles Segal argues that Seneca's linguistic hallmark of lengthy narrative description of violent events is a form of "ecphrasis" which is generally considered to be a rhetorical device in which one medium of art tries to relate to another by describing its essence or form. In this way, Seneca's violent scenes are viewed as illuminated illustrations. Charles Segal, "Senecan Baroque: The Death of Hippolytus in Seneca, Ovid, and Euripides," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 114 (1984).

⁷⁹ Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* 135-6.

⁸⁰ For an excellent brief synopsis of this effect, see Molly Smith, "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992).

⁸¹ While the focus of this essay is on Seneca's dramatic works, Ovid's influence upon early modern dramatists is equally powerful. For a full discussion on Ovid's depiction of the fractured body and both a rhetorical and aesthetic model for early modern writers, see Lynn Enterline, *Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

framework of divine justice.⁸² With this dramatic legacy, early modern writers are attuned to bodies on stage as a performance medium, especially in a culture concerned with how bodies signify through performance on and off the stage.

III

Jasper Heywood translations of Seneca were published separately—*Troas* (1559), *Thyestes* (1560), and *Hercules Furens* (1561)—and then published together in Newton's 1581 anthology.⁸³ Heywood's translation of *Troas* appears "with diverse and sundrie additions..." including a new scene at the top of Act 2 in which he introduces the spectre of Achilles raised from Hell and demanding the sacrifice of Polyxena. Heywood explains in his preface "To the Reader" his view of Seneca as well as his treatment of the text, specifically his procedure of translation and the nature of his alterations:

Now as concerninge sondry places augmented and some altered in thys my translacion. Fryst forasmuch as thys worke seemed unto me, in some places unperfyte...I have for my sclender learninge endeavored to kepe touche with the Latten, not woorde for woorde or verse for verse as to expounde it, but neglectynge the placinge of the wordes, observed their sence" (7-8).⁸⁴

Insisting that he has "observed" the "sense" of the words, Heywood declares that his alterations and augmentations occur where he finds the text "unperfect." For Heywood, as I will illustrate, the

⁸² Early modern dramatists may have been inspired by medieval pageant's stage techniques for visual spectacle, however the signification of corpse—especially in revenge tragedies—aligns more with Seneca's stoic treatment.

⁸³ There are several editions of Newton's 1581 collection: Thomas Newton, ed., *The Tenne Tragedies of Seneca Translated into English*, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1887) and Thomas Newton, ed., *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, London 1581* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969). The most accessible is Thomas Newton, ed., *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1927), which is famously introduced by T.S. Eliot's essay on "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation." All quotations here, referring to volumes and page numbers, are taken from this edition and appear parenthetically.

⁸⁴ Not all of Heywood's prefaces can be found in Newton's 1581 collection, however they do appear with the individually published octavos. For a convenient reprint of these original publications, see Henry de Vocht, ed., *Materialien Zur Kunde Des Älteren Englischen Dramas*, 44 vols. (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1963). All quotations of Heywood's prefaces here are taken from Vocht's edition and appear parenthetically.

“unperfect” places are those moments where the corpses seem to have an agency beyond their deaths, which Heywood works to expand and make more explicit.

Heywood’s original preface to his 1560 translation of *Thyestes* represents a much different approach to describing the translator’s process. The preface takes the form of a dream vision in which the ghost of Seneca visits Heywood and demands him to translate his work:

And here I come to seeke some one
that might renewe my name
And make me speake in straunger speache
and sette my woorks to sight,
And skanne my verse in other tongue
then I was woont to wright.

(99, lines 173-78)

That the inspiration for this translation takes the form of a dream vision of the Roman poet is significant, as it seems that Heywood must materialize the text into the embodied form of Seneca. Moreover, as a ghost that bids one to translation, Seneca’s ghost is much like his own dramatic ghosts that speak from the underworld commanding revenge. In other words, for Heywood the act of translation is much like a revenge tragedy, and translation is a means of poetic justice.⁸⁵ Additionally, Heywood translation involves not only the acts of reading and writing but also the physical body, including the organs of eyes and tongues. Therefore the act of translation comes to fully affect Heywood physically when he awakes from his dream and finds himself alone, to which he cries out to the furious muse Megaera to help him in his task of translating *Thyestes*:

Enspyre my pen: with pensyvenes
this Tragedie t’endyght,,
And as so dredfull a thyng beseemes,
with dolefull style to wryght.
This sayd, I felte the furies force
enflame me more and more,
And ten tymes more how chafte I was
then ever yet before.

⁸⁵ Beyond merely adopting the modesty topos, Heywood admits to the many faults of his previously published translation of *Troas* in his conversation with Seneca and places the blame squarely on the printers. In many ways, his translation of *Thyestes* is an act of recuperating his competence as a translator. For more on the use of the use of the dream poem to justify poetic worth and combat slander in early modern manuscript culture, see William E. Sheidley, “the Autor Penneth, Wherof He Hath No Prooffe’: The Early Elizabethan Dream Poem as a Defense of Poetic Fiction,” *Studies in Philology* 18.1 (1984).

My heare stoode up, I waxed woode,
my synewes all did shake,
And as the furye had me vext,
my teeth began to ake.
And thus enflamde with force of hir,
I said it shoulde be doon,
And downe I sate with pen in hande,
and thus my verse begoon

(120, lines 759-774)

Heywood's experience of poetic inspiration is an embodied—and painful—experience. His catalogue of bodily responses registers not only the supernatural nature of the encounter (his hair on end), but also the symptoms of illness (shaking sinews and aching teeth). This preface foreshadows the attention to the body found throughout the play. As Heywood's preface suggests, the only way that the "doleful style" of this "dreadful" tragedy can be translated successfully is by embodying it fully.

Heywood's physical response to translation is much like Thyestes who experiences a "tumbult tumbleth" (5.3. 30) in his guts, "a quake within" (31) before he is made aware of the fate of his children. The similarity is especially striking since Thyestes harkens to "another voice than mine bewails my dole breast," indicating his consumed children (30-2). The act of translation is similar to the experience of viewing the revealed corpse in Senecan tragedy: it is physical, possessive, and potentially destructive.

In Seneca's play Atreus' murder of his brother's sons contains all the elements of ritual sacrifice. The messenger relates the events as he witnessed them to the Chorus and the audience and describes how "deck'd are the altars" (4.4. 62), how the children's heads "about he bound with purple bands" (64), how "There wanted no frankincense, nor yet the holy wine,/ Nor knife to cut the sacrifice..." (65-66), in fact "no rites were left of sacrifice undone" (73). Despite all these careful preparations, Atreus' sacrifice is a mocked one. The Chorus asks the messenger, "who doth his hand on sword then set?" (69), and they are surprised when they learn that it is Atreus who takes the sacrifice of his nephews upon himself, as no god or oracle has ordained it:

He is himself the priest and he himself the deadly verse
With prayer dire for mouth doth sing and oft rehearse

And he at th'altar stands himself; he them assign'd to die
Doth handle, in order set and to the knife apply.

(4. 69-72)

This use of “rehearse” is Heywood’s own addition to the text and Daadler notes that it is “likely a pun on ‘re-hearse,’ viz. ‘repeatedly bury with funeral rites.’”⁸⁶ However, Daadler misses the very clear performance aspects of the word.⁸⁷ It is clear that Heywood views Atreus’ ritual sacrifice not only as a gross imitation of a holy rite—but also as a theatrical performance.⁸⁸ For Atreus, the bodies of the children become the props of spectacular ritual sacrifice, as they later become the stage props in his revenge-tragedy. Heywood’s addition of “rehearse” emphasizes the blasphemous nature of Atreus’ performance and calls attention to the perverse manipulation of religion for private motives.

Seneca’s messenger continues to give a detailed account as to how Atreus kills each of Thyestes’ three sons. Heywood consistently alters the text to emphasize the active agency of the corpses. For example, “griping fast/ His throat in hand, he thrust him through” until Atreus removes the sword from the boy so that

...long the body had upheld itself in doubtful stay
Which was to *fall*, at length upon the uncle down it *falls*...
The carcass *headlong falls* to the ground:
A piteous thing to see.

(100-106, my emphasis)

⁸⁶ Seneca, *Thyestes* 61, n. 70.

⁸⁷ “Rehearse” as a transitive verb meaning “to recite or repeat aloud in a formal manner” was in use since the fourteenth century. However, the use of the word to connote a preparation for a formal, public performance became current around the same time as Heywood’s translation.

⁸⁸ Much of *Thyestes* is a metatheatrical performance that focuses upon the body. For example, when Tantalus enters and asks, “What god to Tantalus the bow’rs where breathing bodies dwell/ Doth show again” (1.3-4), the ghost may be referring to the living world, he might also gesture to the “bow’rs” of the theatre filled with “breathing boies” of the audience. Soon after the Fury instructs the “appointed” (13) ghost of Tantalus to “watch” his descendents’ cannibalistic drama. The Fury commands Tantalus to become the audience to the very play that she describes. In the original, the Fury instructs Tantalus “spectante,” meaning “to watch,” which is also a term used specifically for theatrical viewing, “spectators” being the Latin word for “audience.” For a discussion of metadrama as it pertains to *Thyestes*, see Alessandro Schiesaro, *The Passions in Play: Thyestes and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) who argues that the highly metadramatic, self-conscious nature of *Thyestes* “produces a sense of enclosure bordering on anguish” (13).

The repetition of “falls”—not found as frequently in the original—along with Heywood’s ironic addition of “headlong” is an alteration of Seneca’s original wording “the head rolled away,” adds dramatic movement to the corpse.⁸⁹ Heywood also includes the sympathetic commentary “a piteous thing to see” that addresses the audience’s response to such an act. Heywood’s additions emphasize Seneca’s attention to both the corpses’ post-mortem efficacy as well as the ritualistic performance and in so doing connect the two: the corpses, because they are created via ritual, now contain and transmit ritual power and violence.

The messenger’s narration culminates in the horrific account of the boys’ disemboweling:

From bosoms yet alive outdrawn the trembling bowels shakes,
The veins yet breathe, the fearful heart doth yet both pant and
quake:
But he the strings doth turn in hand and destinies behold,
And of the guts the signs each one doth view not fully cold.

(133-136)

The organs are viewed as a text to interpret—by examining the interiors of his victims Atreus hopes to discover his future. Since these entrails are objects of augury they possess an agency beyond their bodily function: the hearts are “fearful,” they “pant” and “quake”; the bowels “tremble” and “shake.” Daalder notes that Atreus’ “reading” of the still-living entrails is “outrageously abnormal,” as “he is not interested in what his victims might reveal to him about things to come, but only in killing them and feeding them to Thyestes.”⁹⁰ Daalder suggests that Atreus’ sacrifice is not a true religious sacrifice, but rather a performance of the gestures of sacrifice. Atreus self-consciously enacts or “rehearses” a ritual he knows is invalid, and in so doing he creates artifacts that are solely objects of performance, as seen in Atreus’ butchery of the children’s bodies. Despite that Atreus “lays abroad their naked limbs and cuts away the bones;/ The only heads he keeps” (141-2), these disemboweled and dismembered bodies retain their autonomy:

⁸⁹ *colla percussa amputat; cervice caesa truncus in pronum ruit, querulum cucurrit murmure incerto caput.* / He struck off the head. The trunk cut from the neck fell flat, while the head rolled away with an uncertain murmur (my translation).

⁹⁰ Daalder, “Madness in Jasper Heywood’s 1560 Version of Seneca’s *Thyestes*,” 126.

Some of the guts are broach'd, and in the fires that burn full slow
They drop; the boiling liquor some doth tumble to and fro
In mourning cauldron... The liver makes great noise upon the
spit;
Nor eas'ly wot I if the flesh or flames they be that cry
But cry they do.

(143-147)

Like the organs viewed as augury, these sacrifices to the ritual fire also have agency: they “perform” and “speak” their pain, the liver making a noise on the fire causing either the flesh or the flames to “cry” at the act. In the messenger’s account the children’s corpses become objects of violent sacrifice; therefore, when they “appear” in the final act as the feast’s “wicked meat” and their heads are revealed by Atreus to his brother as they centerpieces to the gory banquet table, they continue to act as stage-props and maintain their performative agency throughout the banquet scene.

Before Atreus reveals the heads of Thyestes’ children at the banquet, he calls attention to the absent, whole bodies of the dead boys:

...Even in thine arms, thy children present be
For here they are and shall be here; no part of them from thee
Shall be withheld .

(7-9)

Atreus not only builds dramatic tension for the eventual gruesome revelation, but he attends to the stage presence created by the physical absence of Thyestes’ children. It is the sons’ absence—and the audience’s awareness of their gruesome deaths and the nature of the feast—that fills the scene with the weight of their “presence.”

Atreus, showing Thyestes the heads of his sons, asks “With father’s arms embrace them quickly, now,/ For here they are, lo, come to thee” (5.3. 34-35). While the corpses of Thyestes’ sons are created linguistically through the messenger’s narration of their sacrifice in Act 4, their remains are spectacularly revealed in the final scene where they function as proof of the crime and property of the performance. Once Thyestes realizes what has become of his sons, he continues to describe their mutilated state: “Their heads cut off, and hands off torn, I from their

bodies see,/ And wrenched feet from broken thighs I here behold again” (5.3. 70-71). Here—unlike the messenger’s account—the linguistic description is experienced and expressed *simultaneously* as the physical representation of the corpses’ heads are displayed on stage. The on-stage theatrical corpses of the children embody the off-stage performance of torture and now serve as conduits for chaos and horror, as the result of this simultaneous narration and visualization is Thyestes’ own annihilation and fragmentation, which requires Heywood to amend an additional scene to the play.

Heywood writes an original, final scene for *Thyestes* that draws upon similar endings in Seneca such as those found in *Oedipus* and *Hippolytus* where characters express the wish to be part of the underworld and receive appropriate punishment for their crimes. The additional scene also emphasizes the body as the site of monstrosity while extending the horrors of Thyestean feast. In his lamentation, Thyestes repeatedly draws attention to his body as “...a more than monstrous womb,/ That is of his unhappy brood, become a cursed tombe” (5.4. 19-20). Thyestes invites the “foulest fiends of Hell” as well as his grandfather Tantalus⁹¹ to “come see these glutted guts of mine” (21), “my paunch is now replete with food” (22) “my belly is extent” (30) “my growing gutts” (34), eventually praying that “filthy fowles and snawing gripes” (32) will use their “clinging claws” (37) to tear at his “monstrous maw” (38) and “glutted gorge” (400). Heywood’s final scene extends the horrors of the banquet by revealing the destructive monstrosity not only of Thyestes’ act of eating his children, but of his grotesque body. In so doing, Heywood increases the dramatic energy of the son’s corpses by expanding upon the ways in which they affect the gorged body of their father.

The scene also extends the ongoing tensions of what is seen and unseen throughout the play. Heywood seems particularly interested in the verbal and visual tensions that are nascent in Seneca’s original text. While Boyle views Heywood’s additional scene as an attempt by the translator to “multiply revenge” as it heralds the vengeance to come, he also declares the added

⁹¹ This works to bring the action of the play full-circle, connecting Tantalus’ earlier descriptions of the horrors of the underworld to Thyestes’ own wish for punishment as well delivering the curses of the father upon the son.

scene to be “decidedly un-Senecan” as it moves toward an ending of “moral order and social reintegration... indicating a concern to return the audience to the more comforting world of conventional morality and law.”⁹² Norland seems to agree with Boyle’s view, as he sees Heywood’s modification as an imposition of a “Christian perspective of retributive justice.”⁹³ What Boyle and Norland miss is that Heywood’s elaboration of the Senecan text is decidedly early modern, in that it embellishes the performative aspect of the body that is essential in Seneca’s original text. In doing so, Heywood focuses upon the agency of the boys’ corpses—so that they extend their influence beyond their existence as narrative objects and assert their presence in the banquet scene when they are revealed to their father. This enhancement by Heywood illustrates the early modern translator’s sensitivity to what is nascent in Seneca: the corpses’ performative power as achieved through both verbal and visual spectacle.

IV

This tension between the verbal and the visual spectacle surrounding the corpse is attended to in John Studley’s additions and elaborations found in his translations of Seneca: *Agamemnon*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, and *Hercules Oetaeus*.⁹⁴ All but *Hercules Oetaeus* was printed previous to the 1581 anthology, between 1566 and 1567. Although in his prefaces to his earlier published work, Studley insists on the didactic use of Seneca, most of his expansions enhance the sensational, violent actions of the original texts. A particularly vivid example of Studley’s aesthetics can be found in *Agamemnon*. In Seneca’s play Cassandra describes in her vision the details of Agamemnon’s murder, culminating in his mismanaged decapitation where, after several strokes “There lies the face with its mouth still shouting.” Studley translates this stunning, vicious image as “...there the head doth lye,/ With wallowing, bobbling, mumbling tongue” (2:134). While Studley’s line loses some of Seneca’s vivid poetic brutality, it does add an active disposition to

⁹² Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* 180, 84.

⁹³ Norland, “Adapting to the Times: Expansion and Interpolation in the Elizabethan Translations of Seneca,” 247.

⁹⁴ *Hercules Oetaeus* was thought to be a work by Seneca, however is most likely written by one of his imitators.

the severed head that is merely subtle in Seneca; the repeated gerunds denoting action even after death. Studley's most significant change to *Agamemnon* is his addition of a long, final speech by Eurybates not originally found in Seneca's text to narrate the events that occurred after the play's end: the death of Casandra, the imprisonment of Electra, and the revenge of Orestes. This account not only completes the unfinished story of the house of Atreus, but also emphasizes the promised retribution on Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Studley's Eurybates concludes: "so after all these bloody broyle, Greece never shall be free:/ But bloud for bloud, death by turnes, the after age shall see" (2: 141). The repetition of "bloud" and the stress on the continued violence are characteristic of Studley's preoccupations with bodily violence in translating Seneca's texts.⁹⁵

Studley's translation of Seneca's "most ruthful tragedy," *Phaedra (or Hippolytus)* provides us with the translator's most remarkable elaboration of the corpse, most notably with the messenger's relation of Hippolytus' death:

His bloud begoes the ground:
 And ding'd agaynst the rugged rocks his head doth off rebound:
 The brambles rent his haled hayre: the edged flinty stones,
 The beauty batter of his Face, and breake his crashing bones:
 At Mouth his blaring tongue hangs out with squeased eyne out dasht,
 His Jawes and Skull doe crack, abrode his spurting Braynes are *pasht*.

(176)

Studley's translation of *Phaedra* contains the first occurrence of the word "pasht," a variation of the word "pashed," meaning "crushed; smashed." It also appears in his translation of Seneca's *Medea*: "Leave not thy hovering hande to strike with firey flake/ Upon my pasht and crushed corpse" (26). In both cases the word is explicitly associated with the annihilation of the corpse.⁹⁶ This annihilation is also figured rhetorically within the messenger's narration, as body parts are transformed from nouns ("his head," "his hayre," "his Face," "mouth," "Jawes and Skull,") into

⁹⁵ Studley does this often. Whereas in Seneca's account of Agamemnon's murder includes that the "feasts' last court will see the master's blood—yes the blood will drop into the wine." Studley's translation reads: "Theyr maysters bloud shall see,/ The gubs of bloude downe dropping on the wynde shall powred bee" (2. 133). Also, in *Medea*, whereas Seneca has Medea wield an "*ensem*" (sword), Studley translates the word as "bloody blade" (2: 96).

⁹⁶ The word "pasht" also occurs in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: "Waving his beam,/ Upon the pashed corpses of the Kings" (5.5. 10).

modified nouns, (such as “blaring tongue,” “squeased eyne” and “spurting Braynes”), connoting violent action. As the account progresses, this narrative of dismemberment continues:

His cursed beauty thus desoiled with many wound is spent:
The jotting wheels do grind his guts, and drenched limbs they rent.
At length a stake with trunchion burnt his ripped paunch hath caught,
From rived groin to the navel stead with his womb it raught,
The cart upon his master paused against the ground and crushed.
The phillies stuck within the wounds, and out at length they rushed:
So both delay and Master’s limbs are broke by stress of wheels:
His dragling guts then trail about the winching horses heels.
They thumping with their horny Hooves against his Belly kick,
From bursten Paunch on heapes his bloody bowels jumble thick.

(176)

The repetition of “his” constantly keeps Hippolytus’ body in the audience’s imagination, yet with associated body parts (“his guts,” “his womb”)—each of which is vividly and systematically destroyed—that body is imagined as fractured. It is that disturbing vision established in the mind’s eye by the messenger’s narration that is brought on stage in the final act when Hippolytus’ body is brought on stage, accompanied by the violence of the catastrophic act.

When Hippolytus’ body appears on stage, Phaedra, according to the Chorus, “languish[es] upon the Corps.” Studley’s translation introduces twenty new lines into her lament over Hippolytus’ death thereby extending Seneca’s original treatment of Phaedra’s mourning. But more than mere extension, Studley’s elaborations emphasize the physicality of the two bodies on stage both visually, as Phaedra throws herself upon the body, and verbally as she directs her speech at the corpse: “Sweete Hippolytus, thus I behold thy battered face” (179). In her final moments on stage, Phaedra continues to narrate the dismemberment of Hippolytus, in spite of the corpse’s gruesome presence on stage: “lims so torne,” “rackt and rent” (179). While Seneca does have Phaedra offer to kill herself, Studley inserts his own physical details regarding her desire to substitute Hippolytus’ body with her own. Studley adds:

Lo here I am content, to yeelde thee mine with bloody knife.
If ghost may here be given for ghost, and breath may serve for
breath,
Hippolytus take thou my soule, and come againe from death.
Behold my bowles yet are safe my lims in lusty plight,
Would God that as they serve for me, thy body serve they might,

Mine eies to render kindly light until thy Carkasse ded,
Lo for thy use *this hand of mine* shall pluck them from my hed,
And set them in these empty cells and vacant holes of thine..

(180)

Like Thyestes', Phaedra's reaction to Hippolytus' mangled remains is to enact her own physical annihilation. It is as if the theatrical corpse, once brought on stage, maintains the destructive potential it collected in its off-stage narrative existence. Phaedra directs attention to her "safe bowles" and her "lims in lusty plight" in contrast to Hippolytus' mangled "Carkasse." She offers to dismember herself in order to bring him back to life: to rip out her heart, to donate her eyes. The linguistic organ transplant juxtaposes the whole body Phaedra with the fractured body of Hippolytus, emphasizing the power of the on-stage theatrical corpse to engender annihilation. This juxtaposition is sustained when Phaedra eventually kills herself over the corpse of Hippolytus, and while the remainder the act is concerned with the state and disposal of Hippolytus' corpse, there are two bodies on stage: Phaedra's intact body and Hippolytus' mangled remains, visually demonstrating the onstage theatrical corpse's power to summon annihilation.

The scattered remains of Hippolytus—and their burial—are the subject of the final act as the Chorus tells Theseus that he must, "Provyde thy Sonne his Obit rytes, and shroude in dompish grave./ His broken lims, which Monsters foule disperst and scattered have" (182). Accordingly, Theseus orders that

The shreadings of this deare beloved carkasse bring to mee,
His mangled members hether bring on heapes that tombled be:
This is Hippolytus.

(182)

Theseus is concerned with how Hippolytus will be remembered and interred, the "This is Hippolytus" indicating his effigy. Yet Theseus' vision of a unified, and recognizable Hippolytus must be a constructed memory since he must first *physically* reconstruct his son's body:

These scattred scraps of body torne. O Syre in order set,
The straying gobbetts bring agayne, here was his right hand set:

His left hand here instructed well to rule the reigns must be.
His left side ribs... as yet alas are lost and wanting still

I doubt if this of thee be piece, a piece it is of thee:
Here, lay it here, in the empty place, here let it be lay'd be.
Although perhaps it lie not right:
(aye me) is this thy face?

(183)

Despite the physical depiction of the dismembered corpse on stage, Theseus attempts to rejoin “the straying gobbets” of Hippolytus. The repetition of “here” indicates that the pieces are scattered on stage as properties. However, the repetition also serves as instructions to others gather the pieces of his son, thereby reconstructing the “scene” of the crime—“his left hand here instructed well to rule the reigns...”—hoping that if he recognizes the parts, he will understand the whole. That said, the end of the play never realizes an intact Hippolytus. Despite both Phaedra’s and Theseus’ insistence on identifying the mangled corpse as Hippolytus, the final image of a stage littered with waxen body parts furthers the idea that the image of the violated corpse will never be successfully reintegrated into imagination of the audience nor into the narrative.

Studley’s translation of *Hippolytus* fixates upon the physicality of the corpse by calling attention to its mutilated state and emphasizing its disfigurement. While the messenger’s account of Hippolytus’ dismemberment repeatedly engages the mind to visualize the whole body slaughtered and scattered into fragments, once the corpse—in its mangled state—is revealed on stage, Studley continues to emphasize its fractured nature by juxtaposing the intact body of Phaedra with the disjointed corpse of Hippolytus. While such attention to the corpse is inherent in the original text, Studley extends such awareness, resulting in an investment in the theatrical corpses’ power to motivate destruction. Studley’s reasons for such attention and elaboration betray an early modern attention to the physical fascination of the power of the corpse on stage. Studley is interested in emphasizing the corpse’s mutilated state and how its presence affects the other characters, resulting in either their own annihilation or in their failed attempts at reconstruction.

V

In Seneca's tragedies the corpse is both the object and the subject of unseen action during the messenger's account: violence is done to them (murder, sacrifice, dismemberment), and they react violently (they tear, bleed, gush, groan, cry). Once these corpses are revealed on the stage they serve as static proof of the narrative event, not only retaining the meaning they acquired during their linguistic off-stage existence, but transferring their violent agency on stage. The language of the messenger's narration invests the theatrical corpse with a performative power that causes it, once revealed on stage, to invoke its off-stage performance of violence, inspiring further on-stage performances of destruction and annihilation. The invisible performance that was previously only available through narration is brought on stage, while retaining the off-stage performance of violence. This relationship between the verbal and the visual spectacle, the elision of the seen and unseen, and the blurring of the object/subject boundary are all shared points of interest to early modern English translators such as Heywood and Studley, whose additions and elaborations extend the corpses' destructive performance so that bodies retain their agency and action after their deaths.

Heywood and Studley's embellishments of Seneca's theatrical corpses reveals an early modern sensitivity to what is nascent in Seneca: the corpses' performative power as achieved through the tensions of visual and verbal spectacle. This sensitivity is equally shared by early modern playwrights who strive to articulate the theatrical corpses' power through its presence and absence on stage: the spectacle of Horatio's dead body revealed alongside four other corpses in *The Spanish Tragedy*; the amputations of Titus' left hand in the third act of *Titus Andronicus*, as well as the filicide and banquet of the dead at the climax of the play; Bajazeth and Zabina dashing their brains out on the bars of Tamburlaine's cage; the mutilations, amputations, and decapitations in *Henry IV*, *Macbeth*, and *Antonio's Revenge*; the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear*; the severed hand, the torture and strangling of the Duchess in Act 4 of *The Duchess of Malfi*, the stabbing of Alonzo, the severing of his finger and its subsequent display in *The Changeling*; Giovanni's entrance in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* with his sister's heart upon his dagger. A.J. Boyle rightly asserts that, "one of the great contemporary appeals of Senecan and

Renaissance drama is precisely its use of violence as a dramatic mode.⁹⁷ The subsequent chapters will explore *how* violence operates as a dramatic mode, especially in early modern drama where the dramatic attention is fixed upon the theatrical corpse, whether it is embedded within set pieces, returned to life, or dismembered into stage-properties. As we will see, the early modern theatre—inspired by the early modern translations of Seneca—uses the theatre to emphasize the corpse’s dual status as object and subject so that it can be appropriated, contemplated, and eventually demystified as an active agent of the theatre.

⁹⁷ Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* 166.

CHAPTER 3

CORPSE IN AN ALCOVE:

THE THEATRICAL CORPSE AS SPECTACULAR STAGING DEVICE

The title page of the 1615 Quarto of *The Spanish Tragedy* depicts 2.4 when Horatio is found dead by his father Hieronimo (Appendix A). In the woodcut, Horatio's body hangs in a trellis-like arbor that is adorned with leaves and flowers. This illustration not only derives from the stage directions "*They hang him in the Arbor,*"⁹⁸ but also from Hieronimo's lines delivered in the darkness before he recognizes his son's body, "But stay, what murd'rous spectacle is this?/ A man hanged up and all the murderers gone,/ And in my bower..." (2.5. 9-11). The image of the arched trellis enclosing the body of Horatio resembles a coffin, and this association is made explicit in a later illustration, from the seventeenth-century Dutch adaptation of Kyd's play *Don Ieronimo, Marschalck van Spanjen* (Appendix B).⁹⁹ Unlike the 1613 woodcut, the Dutch illustration portrays the final scene of the play, depicting the stage direction "*He shewes his dead Sonne*": a heap of tangled bodies at the feet of the King of Spain, Duke of Castile, and the Viceroy of Portugal, with Hieronimo drawing a curtain to reveal an upright coffin containing a figure wrapped in a winding sheet, its twisted face and gaping mouth exposed. Viewing these images in conjunction and conversation with one another, we see a reflection that brings attention to the similarity between the act of murder performed in 2.4 and the performance of vengeful resolution at the end of the play.

⁹⁸ Quotations from Q1592 and Q1602 are taken from Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, Revels Edition, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) and appear parenthetically in the text.

⁹⁹ For a discussion on the various Dutch adaptations of the play, see Lukas Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001).

Alan Dessen warns of the limitations of relying upon illustrations as production evidence, asserting that illustrations in printed editions may have little to do with stage presentation and more to do with an artist's conception as a reader of the play.¹⁰⁰ Yet, the theatrical prominence of the arbor in the drama of *The Spanish Tragedy*—one which may or may not resemble the 1615 title page—cannot be denied.¹⁰¹ As Martin White argues, the bower is “a vital element in the complex mix of image/sound/language/action that the ensuing scene develops.”¹⁰² Although not direct evidence for original staging, the 1615 woodcut's depiction of the arbor and Dutch illustration of the coffin artistically reflect the repeated references found in the play that situate Horatio's body definitively within the set piece of the arbor and the discovery space, grouping the corpse with the staging apparatus of the theatre. I argue that the bower is as central theatrically as it is thematically, and its physical presence visually reinforces the various verbal tropes of the play. In many ways the finale of Horatio's “discovered” body visually echoes the earlier discovery scene in the garden and such conjunction of stage-images presents the audience with the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context:¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 19.

¹⁰¹ Although illustrative or decorative woodcuts in early books are unreliable, the evidence of the front piece of the 1615 quarto in conjunction with the evidence of text and stage directions is incontrovertible. Moreover, there was a property arbor in the Rose theatre's collection, used in Lodge's *Looking Glass for London*. The same property might have been used in *The Spanish Tragedy*, which was presented on March 14, 1592, just six days after Lodge's play was first presented at the Rose.

¹⁰² Martin White, *Renaissance Drama in Action: An Introduction to Aspects of Theatre Practice and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 134.

¹⁰³ Marvin Carlson calls this phenomenon “ghosting” and it is a “recognition not of similarity... but of identity,” see Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003) 7. Although Carlson's term and study of “ghosting” traces the operations of memory conditioned by theatrical composition and reception across global theatrical cultures, I feel it is pertinent in the sixteenth century as well: early modern theatre artists based much of their work on what Derrida calls “citation,” but rarely did they present it directly as citation. Carlson's concept of “ghosting” operates in *The Spanish Tragedy* in a number of ways: locally as audiences witness the “ghosting” of Horatio's enclosed body not only within and throughout the play, but also globally in the various material artifacts of *The Spanish Tragedy* such as the resulting woodcuts, the revised editions of the play both in England and on the European continent, and the later early modern dramas that parody Kyd's original revenge tragedy.

These two illustrations and their implied suggestion that a coffin-like “arbor” or “bower” was used to stage the theatrical corpse of Horatio in *The Spanish Tragedy* inspires some of the central questions of this chapter: why do early modern dramas stage corpses within such spectacular set pieces? What is the relationship between such staging and the depiction of death in drama? How does the physicality of the theatre contribute to the heightened theatricality of the corpse? How does such staging reflect early modern ideas about spectacle and representation? In order to answer these questions, I examine how theatrical corpses are integrated as elements of staging in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine the Great, Part One* as both plays stage the dead body within the spectacular set pieces that are located in the discovery space, offering a double enclosure of the corpse.¹⁰⁴ In so doing these plays heighten the theatricality of the corpse and provide a moment of stasis for the audience to consider and interpret the significance and function of the corpse within the drama. The discovery space and the set pieces within them provide a visual frame that encloses the corpse within a theatrical tomb, pausing the action of the play and focusing the audience’s gaze not only upon the performance of death, but upon performance itself. The use of the discovery space in these two plays provides a dramaturgical means in which to stage “deadness.” Moreover, that “deadness” is appropriated by the theatre to investigate the potential danger of the active, lingering corpse.

I

I select *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine the Great* not only because they provide model examples of the relationship between theatrical corpses and set pieces, but because they

¹⁰⁴ The “traverse” or “discovery space” provided playwrights with a vivid means of discovery and concealments and is an important aspect of Elizabethan dramaturgy. On the platform stage there hung between the main acting platform and the inner stage a pair of curtains, referred to in stage directions as “hangings” or “arras” or “traverse.” When drawn open, this area served to “discover” scenes or persons on the inner stage, and when closed provided a place for hiding actors, props, and large set pieces. The discovery space may have been a free-standing canopy structure put into place for plays that called for its use, rather than a permanent feature. However, it might have also been a central opening area with a split curtain. See C. Walter Hodges, *Enter the Whole Army: A Pictorial Study of Shakespearean Staging, 1576-1616* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) who illustrates such possibilities. See also Scott McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and the Book of Sir Thomas More* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) for a discussion on the hypothesis of a temporary structure.

both likely premiered at the Rose in 1587, and were most certainly on the boards simultaneously at Henslowe's newly renovated Rose theatre between 1593 and 1595. *The Spanish Tragedy* may have been in production at the Rose by 1587; however, it only turns up in the records on March 14, 1592 in the play-lists of Lord Strange's Men in *Henslowe's Diary*, when it was performed sixteen times that year at the Rose.¹⁰⁵ Kyd's drama reappears in the *Diary* in 1597, this time "revised" with additional scenes¹⁰⁶ and as the offering of the Admiral's Men, playing thirteen times at the Rose in its new format. *Tamburlaine* also premiered at the Rose in 1587 and was revived in August of 1594, running fifteen times until November 1595, often with part two performed on successive days. Roslyn Knutson's work on the early modern repertory system reveals how it governed the genre and the number of plays in production each year as well as the percentage of new to old plays, the schedule of productions and the presentation and frequency of showings. But more than mere scheduling, "the repertory system specified in general ways the subject matter of plays and *treatment of that subject matter*."¹⁰⁷ I argue that it is no coincidence that *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine*—both of which perform spectacular theatrical corpses—were playing simultaneously at the Rose, and considering these two plays in repertory at the Rose allows me to discuss specific staging issues—and their relationship to one another—more precisely.¹⁰⁸ I, like Marvin Carlson, view theatre "as an ongoing social institution that almost

¹⁰⁵ It is clear from a number of allusions that the play was commonly known as *Jeronimo*, and "there is no reason to question the natural identification of Kyd's play with the *Jeronimo* acted by Lord Strange's Men" at the Rose in 1592.

¹⁰⁶ The Pavier edition of 1602 advertises, "newly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new additions" on the title page and most probably represents the text of the play following the January 1597 revival and the best representation of the production of *The Spanish Tragedy* at the Rose. Additions commissioned in 1601/02 for a second revival, as recorded in *Henslowe's Diary* by payments to Ben Jonson, have not survived in print. The Q1602 most likely reflects the 1597 revisions; as the acting version of play would not have been allowed to reach the printers so soon have the compositions. For a history on the printing of the play, see the Greg's introduction to Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy with Additions, 1602*, Malone Society Reprints (London: 1925).

¹⁰⁷ Roslyn Knutson, "Influence of the Repertory System in the Revival and Revision of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Doctor Faustus*," *English Literary Renaissance* 18.2 (1988).

¹⁰⁸ Leslie Thomson writes that, "the most complete appreciation of plays requires an awareness that they were written with a particular kind of stage structure and shared staging conventions in mind." Leslie Thomson, "Marlowe's Staging of Meaning," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 18 (2005): 33.

invariably reinforces the involvement of memory and haunting by bringing together on repeated occasions and in the same spaces the same bodies (on stage and in the audience) and the same physical materials."¹⁰⁹ Therefore I will be using the Rose theatre as a physical site where we may witness the conscious dialogue the plays have with one another over the trope of the theatrical corpse. While both plays offer highly theatrical stagings of corpses, and both were performed at the Rose, they also both display an overt concern over the various interpretations of the spectacle of the dead body.

The Rose theatre is a fascinating site to explore specific staging elements and practices of the early modern period because the foundation of the theatre was uncovered in 1989, providing a wealth of information on the sixteenth century playhouse. This archeological evidence can be read with surviving records, such as *Henslowe's Diary* and the plays themselves in order to envision the use of the stage space in constructing the meaning of the plays.¹¹⁰ Most notable of the discoveries from the excavation is the remarkably small stage: roughly thirty-six feet wide at the tiring house wall, and about twenty-six feet at the front. The sides of the staged tapered to the front, with galleries at the rear angles, to form a trapezoidal stage-space with maximum depth of sixteen (later eighteen) feet.¹¹¹ These measurements are significant because it means plays such as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* were performed on a relatively small and shallow stage, on average about twice as wide as it was deep.

¹⁰⁹ Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* 11.

¹¹⁰ The Rose theatre was located on the South bank of the Thames, built by Philip Henslowe in 1587 and extended in 1592 to accommodate a larger playing space of 75 feet in diameter and a larger audience of 2,000. For a fascinating account of the Rose, the excavation, and the politics and history behind both, see Christine Eccles, *The Rose Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1990). For a detailed account of the project see, Julian M.C. Bowsher, *The Rose Theatre: An Archaeological Discovery* (London: Museum of London, 1998).

¹¹¹ While there has been much speculation over the staging at the Rose, most scholars offer their conjectures before the 1989 excavation. For such scholarship, see Eleanor M. Tweedie, "'Action Is Eloquence': The Staging of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature* 16.2 (1976), D.F. Rowan, "The Staging of *The Spanish Tragedy*," *Elizabethan Theatre V* (1975), Ernest L. Rhodes, *Henslowe's Rose: The Stage and Staging* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1976) and McMillin, *The Elizabethan Theatre and the Book of Sir Thomas More* 113-34. Now that a physical understanding of the Rose is available through archeological evidence, these studies can be enhanced with a greater understanding of theatrical space.

Despite their many findings, archeologists did not discover anything new about the openings in the wall at the Rose, neither how many there were nor their dimensions. Therefore, there is still no contemporary evidence of what has come to be called the “discovery space.” Nevertheless, stage directions in plays provide considerable support for the belief that the tiring house wall did have an opening that permitted the effective staging of important action both in and from it.¹¹² While the discovery space can be used to contain a study (as in *Doctor Faustus*), or to reveal a secret rendezvous (such as Miranda and Ferdinand’s chess-playing in *The Tempest*), often the discovery space has a special relationship with the staging of dead bodies. Besides *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine*, the discovery space is used to contain corpses in various other plays, such as *Titus Andronicus*, *The Battle of Alcazar*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Hamlet*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.¹¹³ Taking into account both the stage space and the scenic space—that is the physical reality of the stage itself and the fictive geography of the action, respectively¹¹⁴—my analysis of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* demonstrates how the discovery space functions as a theatrical element associated with the display of the corpse, and what such an association may imply regarding the theatre’s appropriation of death for performative purposes.

¹¹² For a discussion that applies to discoveries generally, see Richard Holey, “The Discovery Space in Shakespeare’s Globe,” *Shakespeare Survey* 12 (1959): 45.

¹¹³ In 1937 William Clark offered a fascinating account of the fate of the discovery space on the Restoration stage. While employment of the traverse became less frequent on the Restoration stage, it remained a regular fixture with the same essential function—“a flexible and vivid means of discovery or concealment” (439). Clark notes the discovery space’s reoccurring function to conceal corpses, and states that, “the incongruous spectacle of this trapezy traverse amid the flats and scenery of the Restoration ‘picture-stage’ constitutes one of the most curious heritages of Elizabeth theatre” (447). Many of occurrences of the traverse that Clark cites include Restoration adaptations of Shakespeare, such as Ravenscroft’s *Titus Andronicus* (1686) where “A Curtaine drawn discovers the heads and hands of Dem & Chir hanging up against the wall. Their Bodys in Chairs in bloody Linnen.” The traverse is also used in Renaissance-inspired plays such as Dryden’s *Duke of Guise* (1682). In each of these examples, not only does the discovery space house the corpse, but it also serves as evidence for various crimes. See William S. Clark, “Corpses, Concealments, and Curtains on the Restoration Stage,” *Review of English Studies* 13.52 (1937).

¹¹⁴ My terms come from Anne Ubersfeld’s theoretical reflections on the function of space in theatre. Her perception of the way the space of performance mediates the play text and the sociopolitical/cultural context of both text and performance is influential to my approach here. Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, trans. Frank Collins (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

The recurrent display of corpses in the discovery space reveals the technique's staging practicality as bodies and actors are easy to place and conceal there, but it also reveals its popularity. As Jeremy Lopez argues, "repetition in the commercial theatre is a good index of theatrical success: for a device to become conventional, it must be functional."¹¹⁵ However, I argue that the use of the discovery space to display the theatrical corpse is also thematically relevant: the discovery space conceals the corpse and is embedded within the stage space, acting as a tomb—that which encloses the corpse. As I discussed in Chapter One, the early modern theatre rarely stages the coffined corpse despite the common practice of coffining during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather, the theatre exposes the corpse within the discovery space, presenting to view that which is imagined enclosed within the coffin: a potentially active and influential corpse.

In my discussion of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine*, I would like to call particular attention to the use of the "discovery space" at the Rose because Horatio's body is found there twice and the cage of Bajazeth likely originates from there. While there may be debate over whether Bajazeth's cage is placed within the discovery space, I argue that locating the cage within the interior space of the theatre is logistically as well as thematically appropriate because staging the cage within the discovery space associates it with the interior space of the theatre. Such an association is inherent in the play as Bajazeth's body is defined within the cage and within the spectacle of *Tamburlaine's* theatre, which is in turn contained within the theatre itself.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 4.

¹¹⁶ In his thorough study on set pieces and staging effects at the Rose, Ernest L. Rhodes concludes that the cage of Bajazeth would have been brought on stage through the discovery space, see Rhodes, *Henslowe's Rose: The Stage and Staging* 116. Writing his study before the excavation of the Rose theatre, Rhodes admits that his theory is speculative and the cage could have been "thrust out" onto the main playing space. However, the excavation of the Rose reveals a very small circumference of the theatre, even after the 1592 enlargement. Therefore, the small size of the Rose and its stage—at approximately thirty-six feet wide—the presumably cramped conditions backstage, and the comparative closeness of the audience are more favorable to using the "discovery" method that Rhodes suggests, rather than pushing out a cage from the sides of the stage onto the main-stage.

In both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* the discovery spaces are reserved for static displays of actors, functioning as a proto-proscenium structure. In this way, the staging of corpses within that spaces creates a kind of *tableau vivant* in that it focuses the audience's visual perspective, as well their interpretation and perception of the corpse. *Tableaux vivants* are best known as a nineteenth-century staging convention used to culminate the acts of melodramas with frozen arrangements of live actors posed for a period of thirty seconds to ten minutes, where the performer's bodies constitute the *mise-en-scène*.¹¹⁷ Writers of nineteenth-century *tableaux vivants* manuals consistently compare this form of entertainment to viewing a painting; in fact, often a large frame was set upon a platform or painted upon a screen to visually establish the tableau as an object: a painting.¹¹⁸ In this sense, the *tableaux vivants* can be considered an appropriation of the performer's body during the performance: by being subsumed by objects, by remaining still, and by being exposed to the audience's gaze, the body becomes an object.

I argue that the contemplation of the motionless body within the discovery space creates a theatrical *lacuna*, providing a moment of stasis for audience members to contemplate the visual spectacle on display and its significance. As Mary Fleischer writes, "stillness abstracts the physical form, asking us to reconsider what it means to be alive and sensate."¹¹⁹ While theatrical performance combines presence and duration, the *tableau vivant* intensifies and crystallizes these two givens into a stasis: that of the actors frozen by the pose and in the grip of theatrical apparatus, heightening the awareness of the duration of the moment. Symbolically the discovery space of the early modern theatre functions to de-animate the body and works as part of a larger theatrical effect that takes away the life of that which is subjected to display within it.

In the following pages I will demonstrate how the theatricality of the corpse in the discovery space disrupts the scenic space, the stage space, and ultimately the plot of *The*

¹¹⁷ Although most popular at the turn of the century, such representational posing was also used earlier in theatre history such as in medieval religious processions and in Renaissance masques. More recently, tableaux have become a popular component of musical theatre.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Annie Frost, *The Book of Tableaux and Shadow Pantomimes* (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald Publishers, 1869). On frames, see James H. Head, *Home Pastimes, or Tableaux Vivants* (Boston: J.E. Tilton & Company, 1860).

¹¹⁹ Mary Fleischer, "Theatrical Stillness," *Movement for Actors*, ed. Nicole Potter (New York: Allworth Press, 2002) 27.

Spanish Tragedy and *Tamburlaine*. In both plays, the violent deaths that are staged in the discovery space threaten to escape their containment within that frame. In other words, the tableaux vivant performed the discovery space—which stages living actors as though they are dead—expresses the performative danger of the potentially active corpse to disrupt the containment of death.

II

The Spanish Tragedy is overtly concerned with death, burials, commemoration, mourning, and the anxieties surrounding the failure to properly respect such rites. While it is clear that much of the action of the drama occurs because of Don Andrea's violent death, it is Horatio's body, hanging and mutilated, that soon takes dramatic precedence over Don Andrea's ghostly body in the plot of the play. According to Molly Smith, Horatio's body supplants Don Andrea's because Don Andrea's death has been narrated and not witnessed, accounting for the precedence of the second revenge plot over the first.¹²⁰ Although Don Andrea's ghost is visible throughout the play as it oversees the action from aloft, Horatio's body is the focus of the drama.¹²¹ While Smith posits that our witnessing of Horatio's death makes it more memorable, I argue that it is not just our witnessing of Horatio's death that makes the body more vivid, rather it is our witnessing of that death within the discovery space along with the repeated visual citation of that moment throughout the play. The reallocation of the arbor as a set piece throughout the play effectively "quotes" Horatio's death back to the audience again and again; and with that "quotation" comes the horror and chaos of the original act.

¹²⁰ Molly Smith, "The Theater and the Scaffold: Death as Spectacle in *the Spanish Tragedy*," *Studies in English Literature* 32 (1992): 225.

¹²¹ In ways very similar to Polonius' corpse's corporeal presence and Hamlet Senior's ethereal apparition in Gertrude's close in Hamlet, Horatio's corpse and Andrea's ghost are in dialogue with one another. Andrea makes it clear in his opening speech that his spectral presence is because of his unjust murder (1.1. 81-85). The parallels between Horatio's fate and Andrea's are striking and the audience is reminded of Horatio's potential afterlife in the persistent presence of Andrea sitting aloft.

The scene in which Horatio is killed begins as a love scene. However his murder and body's display quickly changes not only the tone of the scene but the scenic space of the stage. Horatio and Bel-Imperia agree to meet by Horatio's father's "pleasant bower" (2.2. 42) at night. At their rendezvous, Horatio remarks how

Night begins with sable wings
To overcloud the brightness of the sun,
And that in darkness pleasures may be done.

(2.4. 1-3)

As always on the stage at the open-air public playhouse, any state such as night and day has to be established through language. And the irony of invoking darkness—often associated with danger—at the beginning of what promises to be a love scene is a foreshadowing of gruesome events to come. Horatio constructs that darkness as a blessing to the lovers:

...Fair fortune is our friend,
And heavens have shut up day to pleasure us.
The stars, thou seest, hold back their twinkling shine,
And Luna hides herself to pleasure us.

(16-19)

The language continues to evoke the image of night and anticipated pleasure. For Horatio, the darkness equals "pleasure," repeated three times; a pleasure that is performed by nature for the lovers. Bel-Imperia and Horatio's wooing takes the form of couplets, with pronounced rhyme that climaxes into shared couplets (2.4. 24-41), increasing the intimacy of the lovers.

In the midst of this lovemaking, Lorenzo and Balthazar interrupt disguised and, with the help of the servant Pendrango, surprise the lovers. They hang Horatio in the arbor and Lorenzo stabs him as he hangs, saying "...thus, and thus: these are the fruits of love" (55). The repetition of "thus" may indicate the number of stabs that Lorenzo uses to kill Horatio and his violent gestures and words ends the love scene between Bel-Imperia and Horatio with a far more literal sense of "die" than Horatio has been suggestively implying.

The murderers drag the crying Bel-Imperia away and empty the stage space of sound and action so all that remains on the stage is the hanging body of Horatio, creating a *tableau* within the discovery space that focuses the audience's attention on the corpse. The brute

physicality of theatrical corpse hanging in the arbor significantly alters the stage-space that was previously created by amorous words. After the clamor of movement, the absence of movement on stage is striking as the immobile body exerts its own fascination. As Guy McAuley states, “The object, being physically present in the space, necessarily serves to shape and define that space, and equally necessary, has an impact upon the human users of the space.”¹²² With a *lacuna* provided by the theatrical corpse in the traverse, the stage-space changes from a clandestine bower to a place for covert horror. The frozen presence of a stage corpse within the arbor, enclosed within the stage-space of the traverse, has created this a transformation and altered the scenic-space. Moreover, this silent pause allows for a shift in attention away from the *action* of violence to the *result* of the violence. Arguably the play itself seems to shift at this point as well: until this moment the narrative has established Horatio as the hero set to pursue the revenge of his murdered friend, Andrea. Now, with the *lacuna* of the corpse within the discovery space—and the interpretative pause that it allows—all narrative, scenic, and interpretative stability is questioned.

Hieronimo’s entrance breaks the silence, yet his delay in identifying his son as the murder victim (the audience watches him wandering around the stage in a nightshirt asking, “Who calls Hieronimo?”, 2.5. 4) heightens the tension of the moment as the audience waits in expectant anticipation of his “discovery.” Hieronimo eventually recognizes his son’s body by the clothing and laments the darkness that has not only hindered his realization, but has allowed the murder to occur:

What savage monster, not of human kind,
Hath here been gluttred 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 heavens, why made you the night to cover sin?
By day, this deed of darkness had not been.

(19-25)

¹²² Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999) 173.

The theatrical corpse causes Horatio's "pleasurable" darkness of the night to be dismantled by Hieronimo and transformed into "dark and deathful shades." Isabella enters and shares her husband's disbelief, and their mutual grief expressed in alternating couplets provides an ironic echo to Horatio and Bel-Imperia's amorous couplets and furthers the transformation of the stage space from a "bower of blisse" into a bower of death.

Hieronimo orders Isabella to help him "take up" the corpse of their son and "bear him in from out this cursèd place" (2.5. 65). Despite the physical absence of Horatio's body on the stage, the play reverberates with his presence through verbal and visual echoes. For example in 3.7 Hieronimo laments the lack of resolution of his son's murder: "the blust'ring winds, conspiring with my words,/ At my lament have moved the leafless trees" (5-6)... and he asks why he should "waste unfruitful words,/ when naught but blood will satisfy [his] woes" (67-68). By speaking of "trees" and "fruits" and "blood," the audience is given the verbal cues that recall Horatio's murder in the garden and Lorenzo's reference to the "fruits of love" blending with the stage image of Horatio's body surrounded and suspended with leaves and flowers.¹²³

Beyond these verbal prompts that remind the audience of the staging of Horatio's death, the image of the hanging man is visually repeated throughout the plot: Villuppo exits the play in 3.1 presumably to be tortured and hanged in the Portuguese sub-plot; Pedringano is executed by hanging in 3.6 for his role in the murder of Horatio; and Hieronimo tries unsuccessfully to hang himself in 5.4. Most compelling is the example of Pedringano's execution since it actually stages another hanging and most likely used the arbor as a set piece for the scaffold. Indeed, the trace of the arbor as well as the image of the hanging man is what "makes" Hieronimo—and the audience—remember his son: "Dispatch and see this execution done./ This makes me to remember thee, my son" (3.6. 102). More importantly, the image of the dangling body of the murderer stimulates the memory of the murdered Horatio in the arbor, as the corpse haunts the stage, returning the audience to the primal scene of the play.

¹²³ This symbolism of the tree as a body is later used in the anonymous domestic tragedy acted by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, *A Warning for Fair Women* when, in a dumb show "suddenly riseth up a great tree" between two illicit lovers (1266). The Chorus interprets the show for the audience, identifying the tree as the "husband whom it represents" (1277). In both plays the tree later becomes a gallows.

The arbor appears onstage a third time, carrying with it memories of Horatio's murder when Isabella cuts it down in her grief-induced rage over her son's death and Hieronimo's delay in revenging the murder. Isabella curses the arbor's "loathsome boughs" (4.2. 6) and tears the garden apart:

Ay, here he died, and here I him embrace.
See where his ghost solicits with his wounds
Revenge on her that should revenge his death!

(4.2. 23-25)

The stage direction embedded within the line indicates the possibility that Isabella tries to embrace the arbor itself in lieu of Horatio's body. It is the failure of that gesture—the emptiness and inefficacy of the act—that causes her to madly destroy the arbor, and herself. Symbolically, Isabella repeats the violation of the garden that occurred with Horatio's death. Up until this point, by metonymy the arbor has stood for Horatio's murdered body, and the discovery space as the place of his death. Isabella's death redoubles that association and intensifies the metonymy.

When he first discovered the body of his son, Hieronimo vowed over the body of Horatio, "seest thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?/ I'll not entomb them till I have revenged" (2.5 53-54), leading the audience to believe that he keeps his son's corpse in state until the end of the play when he revenges the murder. However, Hieronimo's guilt-ridden hyperbolic vow is later revealed concrete in the final scene when he re-discovers Horatio's body to both the on-stage royal audience and the off-stage audience.

Hieronimo's entertainment celebrating the marriage of Bel-Imperia and Balthazar becomes an opportunity to enact revenge for his son's murder, as he devises a play in which the killers are killed in the action of the drama. His play, "Solimon and Perseda," confuses the distinction between the feigning actors and the real victims, concealing his stratagem by having it performed in various "unknown languages." Despite the polygot performance, Hieronimo will make all clear:

For the conclusion
Shall prove the invention and all was good;
And I myself, in an oration,

And with a strange and wondrous show besides,
That I will have *there behind the curtain*.

(4.1. 182-186, my
emphasis)

Hieronimo will “prove” his case with both the language of “oration” and the spectacle of a “strange and wondrous show” will be housed in the discovery space. Hieronimo envisions his son’s body as providing ocular proof of injustice; however, Horatio’s re-discovered corpse will also prove Hieronimo’s murderous dramatics as righteous revenge.

What readers and scholars of the play often overlook is a truth that is obvious in performance: it is not only Lorenzo and Balthazar who take part in the play without fully understanding what their parts will be, but also every first time audience that watches Hieronimo’s tragedy of revenge without knowing it will turn out deadly. When the tragedy is over and Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia are all dead by its means, *neither* on-stage royal audience nor off-stage audience at the Rose has been told what has truly happened. Hieronimo’s design to kill Lorenzo and Balthazar during the performance is never fully revealed until the carnage is over and Hieronimo admits that everyone is dead. The reactions of the on-stage royal audience makes explicit that they do not understand what has happened; nor is it likely that the off-stage audience can see any difference between the body of the actor playing a character playing dead and an actor playing a dead character. Both audiences are forced by Hieronimo’s actions to reassess the relation between mimetic signs and the things they represent. As Hieronimo pulls back the curtain of the discovery space to “show his dead son,” the theatrical corpse again alters the perception of the stage-space. Whereas previously the stage housed entertainment, it now is a charnel house, containing four dead bodies.

Yet just as Hieronimo reveals that the murders enacted were really committed he calls attention to their reliance on the accepted spectacular nature of tragedy:

Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
That this is fabulously counterfeit,
And that we do as all tragedians do:
To die today, for fashioning our scene,
The death of Ajax, or some Roman peer,

*And in a minute starting up again
Revive to please tomorrow's audience.*

(4.4.76-82, my emphasis)

Hieronimo speaks of the stage-practice of the fake death, calling attention to the meta-theatricality of the moment of seeing “dead” bodies on stage, of actors “playing dead.” At this clearly self-reflexive moment, Kyd’s tragedy simultaneously indulges and exposes its reliance on the performance of death. It is after this disclaimer by Hieronimo that he reveals the motive for his bloody play: “Behold the reason urging me to this. *Shows his dead son*” (88, s.d.). Hieronimo attempts to appropriate the corpse’s destabilizing power for his own spectacle, but it fails. The mixed reactions of its on-stage audience who first applaud the play for its realistic enactment, and then condemn it for its horrific authenticity invites an reappraisal of the truth of spectacle itself.¹²⁴

The corpse staged within the discovery space forces a re-evaluation of the stage space and performance conventions and expectations. Both audiences must re-interpret the signs of the actors’ bodies in front of them: the feigned corpses on stage, without changing their appearance, suddenly change their meaning and become, in the fiction of the play, genuine. Yet, for the off-stage audience, despite Hieronimo’s words, they know that none of this is “real.” In fact, the “discovery” of Horatio’s corpse as an *actual* corpse might be problematic for audience members to accept, as other feigned corpses surround it.¹²⁵ Therefore its position within the discovery space serves to paralyze its potential liveness, coupled with Hieronimo’s overtly commemorative language to emphasize the its deadness. Displaying Horatio’s corpse, Hieronimo repeats “Here lay” eight times:

¹²⁴ William West suggests that this final moment of *The Spanish Tragedy* is “precisely what gives performance its peculiar force” as it demonstrates an Elizabethan concern with the themes and practices of confusion. West seeks to understand how dramatic mimesis was understood to function in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres’ repeated rehearsals of recognition, disguise, understanding, and confusion. William W. West, “But This Will Be a Mere Confusion: Real and Represented Confusions on the Elizabethan Stage,” *Theatre Journal* 60 (2008) 224.

¹²⁵ Although Horatio’s corpse at the end of the play may be portrayed by a “dummy.” The corpse might also be doubled by the actor playing Isabella, who just re-enacted her son’s murder by killing herself in the garden in the previous scene. Kyd—usually so attentive as to the disposal of bodies—provides no exit for Isabella at the end of her scene. Most editors assume that she “crawls off,” however she could also stay within the arbor, as Hieronimo comes in immediately after to “knock up a curtain” around the discovery space, hiding her body so that she may double as Horatio’s corpse.

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.

(90-95)

The anaphora instructs the audience to examine the corpse in its “decayed” state, as he calls attention to the “through girt wounds and slaughtered” body of his son (112). The semiotic, linguistic, symbolic elements that stand in for absent realities are contrasted with the physical presence of the corpse, echoing the “Here lies” of familiar epitaph inscriptions. Hieronimo restages his son’s corpse within the discovery space, creating another spectacle of death, in order to justify his violent actions against the court. The spectacle is enough he thinks: “Urge no more words, I have no more to say. *He runs to hang himself*” (152, s.d.). However, he is stopped by guards who “*break in, and hold Hieronimo*” (156, s.d.) This stage direction, and the action of breaking open “the doors” (156), suggests the use of a specially defined stage area for the attempted hanging. Perhaps, with thematic finesse, the trellis or arbor used to hang Horatio and Pedringano is pressed into service once more as Hieronimo attempts to submit himself to the de-animating power of the discovery space.

In response to his failed efforts of convincing the on-stage audience of the righteousness of his actions, Hieronimo tries to hang himself but is prevented. Upon further interrogation he declares

[N]ever shalt thou force me to reveal
The thing which I have vowed inviolate.
And therefore, in despite of all thy threats.
Pleased with their death, and eased with their revenge,
First take my tongue, and afterward my heart.

(4.4. 189-91)

Hieronimo insists that his secret is “inviolate” and he dies with it unspoken, as he eventually stabs himself. But what is the secret? Hieronimo has already revealed Horatio’s murder, his revenge on the killers Lorenzo and Balthazar, Bel-Imperia’s role in the scheme, and everything else. At this

point the audience has heard nothing of a “vow,” and so it shares in the confusion with which Hieronimo leaves his royal audience.

The action is significantly different in the additions of 1602 where Hieronimo concludes “Now to express the rupture of my part, First take my tongue, and afterward my heart” followed by the stage direction “*He bites out his tongue*” (addition 5, line 48) and proceeds to bite out his tongue (5.4. 191, s.d.). Hieronimo’s self-inflicted silencing changes from an attempt to conceal the truth in the 1592 version, to an indication of truth’s inexpressibility in 1602. In the 1592 version Hieronimo’s concealment of a “vow” implies that the existence of a lost secret might make sense of everything we have witnessed on stage. The writer of the additions is not content with the audience’s sense of uncertainty and seeks instead a definite or logical indeterminacy, the “rupture” of rational discourse into silence and blood. This revised ending is, I argue, another effect of the theatrical corpse on stage: it is an attempt to render the ending fixed and stable by asserting the inevitability of confusion and chaos.

Like the victim’s corpses in Seneca’s tragedies that are “revealed” to prove the crimes, Horatio’s body is “shown” to justify Hieronimo’s violent actions against the court. Yet the violent actions against himself seem superfluous to the plot and do not conform to the usual triumphantly satisfied avenger found in Seneca (e.g. Atreus, Medea). The on-stage revelation of the corpse in Seneca, as I demonstrated in Chapter Two with *Thyestes* and *Hippolytus*, unleashes in to the drama the destructive energies that created the corpse off-stage. Similarly, the revelation of Horatio’s corpse not only justifies Hieronimo’s bloody play, but also inspires the continued destructive tendencies of the finale including the three other staged corpses that surround Horatio’s corpse. Most importantly, that “destruction” does not merely influence Hieronimo’s self-annihilation, but extends to the destruction of the various distancing frames that have been operating in the play.

The Spanish Tragedy consists of an array of inset performances and elements that mimic performance: the framing device of Don Andrea and Revenge, which is connected with the main action of the play although not part of it, providing a framing audience for the play’s action; actual

plays within the play; a dumb show directed by Revenge for Andrea; and several scenes of spectatorship. Although not written explicitly for the Rose, *The Spanish Tragedy* makes specific use of the public theatre stage-space: the two levels of the gallery and the stage, the discovery space, and scenic props such as the arbor all of which enable Kyd to create strong visual patterns that echo and parallel one another.¹²⁶ For example, earlier in the play, Horatio's death scene is enclosed in a number of ways: first, by the surveillance of Don Andrea and Revenge, who mirror the audience's spectatorial involvement; secondly, by the set property of the arbor, which is in turn enclosed in the mechanism of the discovery space. Later, Horatio's second "death" in the finale mimics these earlier enclosures: ringed by the other characters on the stage Horatio's corpse is once again enclosed by the theatrical space containing no less than seven actors. Between these two cadaver discoveries Horatio's corpse has permeated the scenic space of the play through various stage images of hanged men and violated gardens. With the final discovery of Horatio's corpse those diffused representations are compressed and focused onto the returned theatrical corpse within the discovery space.

The play, through Hieronimo's taunting condemnation of his audience's expectations, raises questions about theatre's very status as framed spectacle. The corpse in the discovery space, with its heightened theatricality and citation of annihilation, disrupts any stable reading of theatrical spectacle that Hieronimo—or Kyd—hopes to convey. With the theatre-within-theatre of the theatrical corpse staged in the arbor within the discovery space, we witness a conscious manipulation of distance and framing, and an eventual collapse of those frames. For Kyd—and for Marlowe, as I will demonstrate—the precariously dangerous nature of the active corpse illustrates the instability of theatrical power. However, for Marlowe that instability extends to the nature of political spectacle.

III

¹²⁶ For discussions on Kyd's visual stage pictures and patterns, see Tweedie, "Action Is Eloquence": The Staging of Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*," and Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1982) 101-40.

Marlowe's dramas are suffused with corpses—from the carnival of carnage that parades through *The Massacre at Paris* to the death by cauldron that Barabas endures in *The Jew of Malta*. Marlowe's early drama, *Tamburlaine the Great*, has no shortage of stage corpses. In Part One, we witness Tamburlaine's rise to power from a Scythian shepherd to a conquering warrior and his eventual downfall in Part Two, all along witnessing the mounting body count. Like *The Spanish Tragedy*, these corpses are often staged along with the spectacular stage machinery that originates from the discovery space. The conclusion of *The Spanish Tragedy* stages a corpse within the discovery space to conclude the revenge tragedy's sustained citations of Horatio's death, thereby releasing the destructive performative power of the theatrical corpse to destabilize the theatrical spectacle itself. The final *tableau* of corpses in *Tamburlaine* extenuates this unease regarding the corpses' power to endanger the stability of the structure and containment of political power. Although these plays function differently because of their genres, the similar staging of corpses—albeit for different ends—reveals the early modern theatre's engagement with the performance of the theatrical corpse as a means to explore interpretative stability.

Tamburlaine is a theatrically spectacular play, requiring a large cast and breathtaking stage effects and pageantry. Overall, Marlowe's plays were hugely entertaining for contemporary audiences and much of *Tamburlaine*'s spectacles are directed at both the stage audience as well as the off-stage audience. Contemporary responses to such spectacles—audiences are described as ravished and struck dumb with admiration of the play—suggest its success.¹²⁷

Jocelyn Powell, a commentator on the theatrical dimension of Marlowe's works, remarks:

In constructing his plays, [Marlowe] pays very careful attention to the visual effect made by each scene in action, and contrives that the movements of the actors, their properties, their costumes, and the background against which they appear, should combine to form a picture, as representative as the words, of the psychological and moral tensions about which he is writing.¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Richard Levin, "The Contemporary Perception of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984).

¹²⁸ Jocelyn Powell, "Marlowe's Spectacle," *Tulane Drama Review* 8 (1966): 197.

Overall, Marlowe's plays exhibit a strong interest in the visual and the importance of that dimension to the structure of his plays. His stage directions are for the most part conventional, demonstrating his familiarity with the Rose playhouse as inhabited by the Admiral's Men.¹²⁹ Almost always, Marlowe makes considerable use of properties and costume, and features distinctive items or memorable business at thematically central moments, like the cage used for Bajazeth's imprisonment and suicide in *Tamburlaine*.

Marlowe's play portrays a hero emerging from the margins of society who conquers not only countries and peoples, but also social and political boundary structures through his own bodily transformations and performances.¹³⁰ *Tamburlaine* is aware of the power and importance of bodily presence—not only his own in his aspiration to power as the “scourge of God,” but others, as his actions frequently involve the subjugation and mutilation of others' bodies. *Tamburlaine* sweeps through Asia, meting out destruction like a plague. His chariot wheels roll over “heaps of carcasses” (2 *Tam.* 5.1. 72), while “Emperors and kings lie breathless at [his] feet” (2 *Tam.* 5.1. 471), and city streets are “strow'd with dissever'd joints of men/ And wounded bodies gasping yet for life” (1 *Tam.* 5.1. 324-5).¹³¹ As Stephen Greenblatt says, *Tamburlaine* is a “desiring machine that produces violence and death.”¹³² Most notable of *Tamburlaine*'s physical degradations is that of Bajazeth, the Turkish Emperor, in Part One.

After four acts of spectacular dominance, throughout which *Tamburlaine* has staged various displays of his power, he anticipates the benefits of staging his supremacy before battling the city of Damascus and creates a scene to highlight his power and control through hosting a

¹²⁹ Not surprisingly, the extant text of *The Massacre* is an exception, although it too includes staging practices similar to Marlowe's other plays.

¹³⁰ For more on *Tamburlaine*'s corporeal transgressions, see Simon Shepherd, *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006) 115-21.

¹³¹ All quotations are from Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Parts One and Two*, New Mermaids, ed. Anthony B. Dawson, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998) and appear parenthetically in the text.

¹³² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980) 195.

state dinner. Banquets are characteristically theatrical because of their intricate levels of decorum and display, the public nature of the meal, and the guests themselves (functioning as an audience).¹³³ However, with the display of Bajazeth in a cage within the discovery space, the banquet becomes a scene of torture and starvation rather than of benefice and plenty. By this point in the play, Bajazeth has already been soundly beaten by Tamburlaine in an offstage battle, narrated by their consorts. Refusing to kill Bajazeth outright, Tamburlaine humiliates his royal captive and his queen, who is made a servant to a waiting woman. Bajazeth's punishments—as a footstool, as prisoner, as starving potentate—are always staged. Bajazeth's resistance fuels Tamburlaine's desire for dominance and the unconvertible Turk becomes Tamburlaine's Fool, as well as the audience's, an object for macabre amusement.¹³⁴

But the most spectacular disgrace is Bajazeth's detention in the cage. Although the body is always on display in performance, Bajazeth's containment in a cage on stage provides a heightened and intensified exhibition of the theatrical body as it is contained within the set piece of the cage. Moreover, the cage itself works to dehumanize Bajazeth, and that cage's placement within the discovery space focuses audience attention to the body, which is slowly dying from starvation. This presentation is emphasized by Tamburlaine's reduction of Bajazeth to his bodiliness. For example, Tamburlaine asks, "hast thou any stomach?" (4.4. 10), a two-fold taunt

¹³³ Fran Teague argues that banquets are "occasions of grotesque, even tragic spectacle." Frances N. Teague, *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991) 102-3. Critics such as David Bevington argue that banquet scenes represent community. See David Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) 159. However, for how that community is often perverted through violence, see Henry E. Jacobs, "The Banquet of Blood and the Masque of Death: Social Ritual and Ideology in English Revenge Tragedy," *Renaissance Papers* (1985) as well as Lisa Stark, who argues that with the banquet Tamburlaine "transgresses the limits of 'decency' to an extreme Sadeian degree." Lisa Stark, "'Won with Thy Words and Conquered with Thy Looks': Sadism, Masochism, and the Masochistic Gaze in *1 Tamburlaine*," *Marlowe, History, Sexuality*, ed. Paul Whitfield White (New York: AMS, 1998) 181.

¹³⁴ As they were first acted in London in the late 1580s the *Tamburlaine* plays apparently contained more comic material than the earliest printed edition indicates. In a prefatory note to the 1590 octavo, the text from which all others ultimately derive, the printer Richard Jones makes an intriguing statement "To the Gentlemen Readers and others that take pleasure in reading Histories" that he has "purposefully omitted and left out some fond and frivolous gestures..." Jones' attempt to remove the comic aspects of the play is an effort to assert the stately nature of the tragedy. Yet, despite his excisions Jones' text of *Tamburlaine* still contains a good deal of humorous material—albeit darkly humorous.

that reminds Bajazeth of his hunger and implies that he is no longer a man, as he lacks the “stomach” for pride. Tamburlaine also threatens that he will force Bajazeth to “slice/ the brawns of thy arms into carbonadoes and eat them” (4.4. 43-44), as well as consume the flesh of his own wife, Zabina. Bajazeth describes his physical state as indicative of his internal and emotional torture:

My empty stomach, full of idle heat
Draws bloody humours from my feeble parts,
Preserving life by hasting cruel death.
My veins are pale, my sinews hard and dry,
My joints benumbed—unless I eat, I die.

(4.4. 93-7)

Not just a means to communicate his mental state, these lines point to Bajazeth’s bodily deterioration: pale veins, dry sinews, empty stomach, feeble parts, numbed joints. These are symptoms that the audience cannot visually observe but that the actor can attempt to perform within the cage. In detailing these ailments, Bajazeth calls attention to his bodily state within the cage as he performs it; and, according to Tamburlaine, it is “a goodly show,” (4.4. 58).

The verbal emphasis on the materiality of the body coupled with the visual spectacle of the body in a cage objectifies the actor’s body and recalls Seneca’s *Thyestes*, reinventing the lurid feast by evoking it through the metaphor of cannibalism. The exquisite cruelty of *Thyestes* finds its match in the banquet scene of *Tamburlaine*, and the entire ending of the play is more Senecan than critics have noted.¹³⁵ For example, like *Thyestes*, Bajazeth and Zabina express the enormity of their suffering through the conceit that hell has erupted into the everyday world, as if the earth’s crust has suddenly broken open to reveal a passageway to the underworld (4.2. 26-9; 5.1. 217, 238). But perhaps the deepest imprint of Seneca’s play on Marlowe can be seen in the

¹³⁵ Braden’s lengthy discussion of Senecanism and *Tamburlaine* does not refer to the banquet scene or Bajazeth. See Gordon Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). See Roy W. Battenhouse, *Marlowe’s Tamburlaine: A Study in Renaissance Moral Philosophy* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941) who does offer some suggestive parallels between *Tamburlaine* and *Atreus*. Arnd Bohm makes an explicit connection between Marlowe and Seneca in his study Book III of Seneca’s *De ira* as a source for the spectacular staging and treatment of Bajazeth. See Arnd Bohm, “Seneca’s Influence on the Construction of Bajazeth in Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine*,” *Notes and Queries* 55.253 (2008).

manner in which Tamburlaine plays Atreus to Bajazeth's Thyestes, exulting in his triumph over his powerless victim. Not only do motifs in *Tamburlaine*, such as the consumption of internal organs by fire, first appear in *Thyestes* (102-3. 98-9), but both works also emphasize the deliberate and shocking transgression of moral boundaries. Although the spectacle of a banquet typically aims to evoke a new society, this meal's punning wordplay and inedible courses of crowns and gold all force the onstage diners as well as the off-stage audience to reevaluate their expectations of the feast as they witness a feast replete with cannibalism and starvation and a new society that relies upon conquest and destruction. Moreover, at this spectacular banquet food is not consumed, but rather visual symbols of power—including the starving Bajazeth. Locked within his cage and set within the discovery space, the starving Bajazeth summons the audience's gaze in the midst of this ocular feast.¹³⁶

Throughout the play, Tamburlaine has manifested his power by directing the gaze of onlookers to sights which he has constructed, and his intention in staging the spectacle of Bajazeth's incarceration is clearly to reveal how superior he is to his captive. Accordingly, Tamburlaine wheels Bajazeth out in his cage on stage so that he may watch Tamburlaine sack Damascus off stage; as Bajazeth watches Tamburlaine's constructed display of martial power, we watch him watch. And as he watches, Bajazeth and his wife mourn their captivity, lamenting that they have been made abject spectacles. Bajazeth sends his queen away for water and then, after praying that his "pined soul, resolved in liquid air,/ May still excruciate [Tamburlaine's] tormented thoughts" (5.2. 237-8) he "*brains himself against the cage.*" While Bajazeth's soul may turn to "liquid air," his body after death is grossly corporeal. Bajazeth's staged death offers up an unsettling range of theatrical possibilities: the attending gore would have required not only several bladders full of blood fastened to the cage, but also several impacts of Bajazeth's head on those bladders. His braining must startle and amaze; it is more than a mimed show, but a rebellious act against his captivity and humiliation. This stunning response to his imprisonment, a grotesque but

¹³⁶ Fred Tromly suggests the importance of an audience for Bajazeth's torment, which he views as a reenactment of the punishment of Tantalus: "In addition to lending itself to dramatic representation, the punishment of Tantalus is inherently theatrical because the full effect of its humiliation depends on the presence of spectators." Frederic B. Tromly, *Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 24

strangely courageous death staged within the discovery space, stops the play in its tracks. Until now, Bajazeth has been a Fool for Tamburlaine, an object lesson on Fortune's fickleness.¹³⁷

However his choice to die, and the means and moment of his choosing, restores the primacy of the individual's will and repudiates the tyrant's claim to dominion.

In the midst of this *tableau*, consisting only of the cage and Bajazeth's de-brained corpse, Zabina returns with the water and sees what has happened. Her grief-crazed response is in sharp contrast to the stillness of Bajazeth's corpse. Much like Isabella's self-destruction in the garden of her son's death in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Zabina's is drive to suicide at the scene of her husband's death. Her "eyes behold" her husband's "skull all riven in twain, hs brains dashed out" (242-43). It is important to recall that Bajazeth has killed himself within his cage and Zabina stands without, unable to embrace him. Her eyes may "behold" the horror of the scene, but like Isabella's empty embrace of Horatio in the garden, Zabina's arms cannot. In her madness, Zabina mimics her husband's suicide, calling "I come, I come, I come, I come!" (224-5), as she "*runs against the cage and brains herself*"; the repetitions perhaps signaling the number of times she throws herself against the cage until she finally kills herself. The gory death of Bajazeth is enclosed within the set prop of the cage that inspires Zabina's suicide and the scene ends with the two corpses on stage performing a *tableau* that reflects not only their own suffering but also represents the off-stage, unseen carnage of Damascus performed by Tamburlaine. Here the discovery space functions not only to pause the play's action so that the audience may attend to the theatrical corpses on stage, but it also serves as a miniature of the slaughter of Damascus.¹³⁸

For a brief moment the audience is presented with a spectacle that lacks Tamburlaine's interpretation, a bloody theatricality that he did not directly stage and therefore does not directly control. In this way, the bodies of Bajazeth and Zabina imply an alternative means to view death

¹³⁷ In the words of one of Marlowe's primary English sources, George Whetstone's *The English Myrror*, "Bajazeth, that in the morning was the mightiest Emperor on earth, was driven to feed among dogs." Quoted in Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine the Great*, Revels Plays, ed. J.S. Cunningham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981) 322.

¹³⁸ In fact, Zabina's crazed soliloquy can be seen as an oracular narration of the off-stage slaughter of Damascus: "Ah, save that infant, save him, save him! I, even I, speak to her—the sun was down. Streamers white, red, black, here, here, here!...Tamburlaine, Tamburlaine, let the soldiers be buried. Hell, death, Tamburlaine..." (5.2. 250-254).

other than the one that Tamburlaine has been articulating throughout the play—as justifying his rule (“they know my custom” he tells the virgins of Damascus 5.2.4.). As the two corpses lie amidst their shattered brains and blood, Zenocrate enters lamenting the destruction of Damascus. Her description of Damascus could equally be applied to the scene of Bajazeth and Zabina she walks in on: “streets strowed with dissevered joints of men/ And wounded bodies gasping yet for life” (260-1). Zenocrate asks, “Ah Tamburlaine, wert thou the cause of this?” (273) before she sees “another bloody spectacle”—Bajazeth’s and Zabina’s corpses. With her eyes “glutted with these grievous *objects*” (279, my emphasis), Zenocrate describes the scene, as well as Tamburlaine’s murderous victories as a warning to “Those that are proud of fickle empery,/ And place their chiefest good in earthly pomp” (290-1), especially Tamburlaine who “sleep’st every night with conquest on thy brows” (297). Like Hieronimo’s epithet in the finale of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Zenocrate’s speech over the bodies of Bajazeth and Zabina takes on a funerary tone, as she repeatedly exclaims, “Behold the Turk and his great empress!” (292, 296, 300), punctuating her monologue with verbal instructions to gaze upon the bloody corpses on the stage. Stressing the visibility of the corpses in the discovery space, Zenocrate attempts to interpret their portent. For her they signify “bleeding ruth” (280) and the “ruthless cruelty” of Tamburlaine (284).

Yet when Tamburlaine enters from battle he reads the gory scene as “a sight of strange import,/ Emperors and Kings lie breathless at my feet.” Echoing Zenocrate, he recognizes “The Turk and his great empress... All sights of power to grace my victory./ And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine” (5.2. 406-13). Whereas for Zenocrate the corpses were omens of Tamburlaine’s “contempt/ Of earthly fortune and respect of pity” (302-3), Tamburlaine interprets the corpses as “objects” that herald and “grace” his martial success. By associating Bajazeth with the objects of his spectacular political play, Tamburlaine also attempts to assimilate the deaths of his captives within that spectacle. Throughout, Tamburlaine has treated Bajazeth and Zabina as objects of his conquest; now they are no more than set pieces to be commented upon.

The Turk and his Empress’s corpses in the discovery space usurp Tamburlaine’s control over the audience’s gaze. The Turks die without permission and they die in a manner that mocks

their captor, using their cage as a weapon to free themselves. As the blood of Bajazeth and Zabina spreads over the stage, the implications of their suicides overshadow Tamburlaine's successes and the finale of the play and their bodies on stage defy Tamburlaine's triumphs. These corpses provide a silent commentary of their own to the "heroic" and "happy" ending of the play, as they remain on stage even as Tamburlaine announces the coronation and marriage of Zenocrate, having a kind of ironic agency even after their death.

Shall with honor, as beseems, entomb
With this great Turk and his fair empress.
Then after all these solemn exequies
We will our celebrated rites of marriage solemnize.

(5.2. 469-72)

The extra-metrical word "celebrated" (often cut by most editors despite its presence in all early texts), gives these final lines of the play a sonorous tone. It also connotes that such "celebrations" are forced—and dictated. The announced coronation of Zenocrate as Queen of Persia by Tamburlaine occurs with the bodies of Bajazeth and Zabina still present in the discovery space. While this scene has been characterized as the play's climax,¹³⁹ Fred Tromly argues that, "this coronation amounts to significantly less than a crowning moment." Tromly observes that although this scene brings closure to the drama because it fulfills promises made earlier by Tamburlaine (4.4. 142-3), by the end of the play crowns have been devalued by Tamburlaine's persistent taunting of his commanders.¹⁴⁰ However, it is not just the physical crown that has been devalued. The physical presence of the de-brained and bloody corpses of Bajazeth and Zambina on the stage throughout these final moments reduces all of Tamburlaine's previous rhetoric to mere visual displays of political power. In fact, it is the sight of Bajazeth and Zabina's corpses that moves Zenocrate to express a long lament on the vanity of fighting "for scepters and slippery

¹³⁹ See Stroup's comment that the coronation "effects proper reconciliation [of Tamburlaine and Zenocrate] and the play achieves an Aristotelian conclusion. Thomas B. Stroup, "Ritual in Marlowe's Plays", *Drama in the Renaissance*, ed. Clifford Davidson (New York: AMS Press, 1986) 40.

¹⁴⁰ Tromly, *Playing with Desire: Christopher Marlowe and the Art of Tantalization* 74, on the game of crowns see 68-74.

crowns” (5.1. 357) and when Tamburlaine declares to make Zenocrate “my queen of Persia,” she may well steal a glance at Zabina’s corpse.

Although Tamburlaine tries to interpretatively contain Bajazeth’s body within the cage, the corpse escapes its imprisonment, yet still remains an element of the staging as it is still literally enclosed within the discovery space. The presence of the theatrical corpses of Bajazeth and Zabina adds to the interpretative instability of the ending of the play that carries into the second part of *Tamburlaine*, where the tyrant’s aspirations continue to be reframed.

Tamburlaine celebrates the spectacle of its hero over five acts, but as the play closes it is the spectacle of his enemies that take center-stage in the discovery space and works to challenge the nature of Tamburlaine’s power and control. Like Hieronimo, Tamburlaine attempts to interpret the theatrical corpses of Bajazeth and Zabina as physical proof of his actions: such “sights” reinforce his “power” and “victory.” However, as they lie on stage—a silent *tableau*—the theatrical corpses of Bajazeth and Zabina steal the final, victorious moment away from the speaking Tamburlaine, and conversely “speak” for themselves through their display.

IV

Throughout the sixteenth century many tales circulated detailing the body’s reaction to death, a reaction evident in the popular account of Bishop Fisher of Rochester’s death in 1535:

The next day after his burying, the head, being parboiled, was pricked upon a pole, and set high upon London Bridge...And here I cannot omit to declare unto you the miraculous sight of this head, which, after it had stood up in the space of fourteen days upon the bridge, could not be perceived to waste nor consume; neither for the weather which was then very hot, neither for the parboiling in hot water, but grew daily fresher and fresher, so that in his lifetime he never looked so well; for his cheeks being beautified with a comely red, the face looked as though it had beholden the people passing by, and would have spoken to them; which many took for a miracle that Almighty God was pleased to show above the course of nature in thus preserving the flesh and lively colour in his face, surpassing the colour he had being alive...Wherefore the people coming daily to see this strange sight, the passage over the bridge was so stopped with their going and coming, that almost neither cart nor horse could pass; and therefore at the end of fourteen days the

executioner was commanded to throw down the head, in the night time, into the River of Thames...¹⁴¹

In this account the mystification of the corpse reveals that the monarch's display of political power is false. Behind Fisher's postmortem demeanor hovers a haunting image of unpredictable, underlying power of the corpse that can defy the laws of nature. Refusing to settle into a predictable pattern of decay, Fisher's body—or, precisely, his boiled head impaled on a spike—exposes the latent power of the corpse to exert power and agency beyond its death.

As I began to demonstrate in Chapters One and Two, the theatrical corpse has a latent power because of its occupation of the liminal state between death and life, between stillness and action. That power can—and is—appropriated for theatrical spectacle. Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* show how when bodies stop speaking for themselves, they start to communicate as visual spectacles. Contemplation of the dead body within the discovery space—even for a moment—allows the interpretative excess of the corpse to register because the momentum of the plot has been frozen so that symbolic resonances can accrue. That these moments of visual display are interpretatively unstable because they are theatrical—at any moment those bodies may live again—makes them all the more tempting for Kyd and Marlowe who use them to investigate the political use of spectacle. Both *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* stage political struggles for power that hinge upon characters making a stable political cases for their actions—yet the presence of the corpse within the discovery space destabilizes all attempts to use them in political narratives.

Additionally, in this example of Bishop Fisher there is an apparent conflict between a politically motivated show of dominance and a seemingly divinely inspired counterplot. In intervening to transform Fisher's head, God is figured as a cosmic disrupter of perception. Similarly, Kyd and Marlowe also show themselves—as playwrights—to be disrupters of perception as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* work to destroy the boundaries between theatre and spectator. However in the next chapter, with the staging of the corpse in

¹⁴¹ Quoted in John Laurence, *A History of Capital Punishment* (New York: Citadel Press, 1960) 32-33.

Shakespeare's plays, the demarcation of such boundaries becomes even more blurred as the theatrical corpses of Juliet, Cordelia, and Imogen occupy the various liminal states of sleep, death, and dream.

CHAPTER 4

PLAYING DEAD: PERFORMING THE CORPSE IN SHAKESPEARE

The motif of death as being a kind of sleep figures prominently—and famously—in Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy. The conflation of sleep and death also occurs—and is staged—in the play within the play of Act 3. The dumb show, presented in anticipation of the dialogue, dramatizes the resemblance of sleep and death. The Player King “*lies him down upon a bank of flowers,*” whereupon the Player Queen, “*seeing him asleep, leaves him.*” After the murderer removes the King’s crown and “*pours poison in the sleeper’s ears,*” the Queen returns and “*finds the King dead*” (3.2. 133 s.d.). These gestures convey a central concern of this chapter: when an actor lies down and remains motionless in order to portray sleep or in death, there exists a visual affinity in the physical performance of the two identical postures of proneness. So, do theatrical corpses “play dead” by mimicking sleep? And if so, then what do those performances say about the two similar states?

In my previous chapter I discussed how *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Tamburlaine* script the dead body: staging it within the discovery space in order to heighten the theatricality of the corpse and provide a moment of stasis for the audience to consider and interpret the corpse’s significance and function within the drama. The use of the discovery space in these two plays—and others—provides a dramaturgical means in which to stage “deadness.” As I demonstrated, the dramatic representation of the corpse on the early modern stage entailed a meta-theatrical recognition of an illusion: a material, sentient body that is supposed to signify an insentient one. However, unlike other theatrical illusions, such as the performance of gender or age—which could be achieved through outward gesture and costume—the performance of death is outside the experience of actor and audience member alike. Therefore, the illusion of death could not be

evoked through memory. However, death could be—and often is, as in “The Mousetrap”—performed by mimicking its cultural counterpart: sleep.

Characters asleep on stage are not especially common in ancient and modern dramas, however in medieval, Renaissance, and Jacobean plays, sleeping onstage is a recurrent and widespread motif, with the trend seeming to taper off in the Restoration.¹⁴² The characters who sleep on stage in front of the audience in the sixteenth and seventeenth century are frequent and many: Wit in John Redford’s *Wit and Science* (1530-1548), Sappho in John Lyly’s *Sappho and Phao* (1584), the title character in *Endymion* (1588), Revenge in Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587), Mercury in the opening of Marlowe’s *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1587-1593), the title character in *Doctor Faustus* (1588-89) and *Edward II* (1591-93), Friar Barnardine in *The Jew of Malta* (1589-90), Christopher Sly in *The Taming of the Shrew* (1590-93), Titania and Bottom and the four lovers in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595), Falstaff in *1 Henry IV* (1596-97), King Henry in *2 Henry IV* (1597-8), Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-6), the Player King in *Hamlet* (1599-1601), Desdemona in *Othello* (1603-4), Kent and Lear in *King Lear* (1605-6), the title character in *Pericles* (1606-8), Imogen and Posthumus in *Cymbeline* (1608-10), and Miranda in *The Tempest* (1611), the title character in Jonson’s *Volpone* (1605-1606), the Duke and the Duchess in *The Revenger’s Tragedy* (1606-07), the Prince Astor and his brother Philippo in Barnes’ *The Devil’s Charter* (1607), and the King in Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Maid’s Tragedy* (1608-11).¹⁴³ It is appropriate that the performance of sleep on stage is in vogue during a period when there is a sustained attempt to come to terms with the body’s signification, as in many of these examples the true status of the body on stage is questioned: as when Helena’s exclaims

¹⁴² No classical examples come to mind. The instances of characters asleep on stage in modern dramas do not suggest a thematic or dramaturgic pattern. Chekhov offers a few examples: Professor Serbriakov dozes briefly in *Uncle Vanya*, but mainly as a means to suggest the lateness of the hour. At the end of the *Cherry Orchard*, the old servant Firs decides to “lie down a bit,” as the others leave; the audience is perhaps undecided as to whether he is going to sleep, or is going to die. The cook Christine falls asleep on a chair by the stove in the second scene in Stringberg’s *Miss Julie*. Hamm seems to be asleep at the start of Beckett’s *Endgame*, and later Clove finds Hamm’s father asleep inside his trash can.

¹⁴³ David Bevington offers a thorough tabulation of Jacobean and Caroline occurrences of sleep on stage as an appendix to David Bevington, “Asleep Onstage,” *From Page to Performance: Essays in Early English Drama*, ed. John A Alford (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

upon seeing Lysander stretched out on the ground, "Dead, or asleep?", which is later echoed by in Thisbe's "Asleep, my love?/ What dead, my dove?" (*MND*, 2.2. 107, 5.1. 321-22); or in *2 Henry IV*, when as a last poignant moment of misunderstanding between father and son, Prince Hal concludes that his sleeping father has died before the end actually occurs (4.4-5). Sleep is either compared to or confused with death, and often characters have difficulties distinguishing between the two supine states. This confluence of death with sleep comes from not only a long medieval dramatic tradition of portraying sleep on stage, but from a general mode of comprehending death as sleep—with the possibility of waking—that became prevalent in the early modern period.¹⁴⁴

This chapter explores how and why death is portrayed and performed as a state of sleep in Shakespeare's works. I focus on Shakespeare because his canon exhibits a clear and recurrent concern with the portrayal and performance of sleep/death. David Roberts goes so far as to state that "watching sleeping either in performance or, metaphorically, in print, was a matter of an almost obsessive concern to Shakespeare." No other dramatist, Roberts argues, "represents the act of sleep more frequently or graphically than he does."¹⁴⁵ Despite this, few scholars investigate sleep as a pattern in performance.¹⁴⁶ David Bevington is the only exception

¹⁴⁴ In Corpus Christi plays and other church dramas of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance the occurrence of sleep on stage is frequent and allegorical, often symbolizing the eminent presence of the divine: Adam and Eve, the shepherds who witness Christ's birth, the Magi, Pilate's wife, Mary Magdalene, the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, the soldiers guarding Christ's tomb, and the title character in *Everyman*.

¹⁴⁵ David Roberts, "Sleeping Beauties: Shakespeare, Sleep and the Stage," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 35.3 (2006): 235. Roberts suggests that Shakespeare repeatedly represents sleeping bodies on stage so that readers/spectators might "replicate the voyeuristic tendencies of the onstage observer" (236). Roberts traces the development of sleeping scenes in *Lucrece*, *Othello*, and *Cymbeline* in order to articulate the concepts of visual desire in Renaissance and Restoration drama.

¹⁴⁶ Roberts is one of many scholars who read the imagery of sleep as means to discuss the eroticism of the supine female. Notable other studies include Peter Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor," *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992) and Celia R. Daileader, *Eroticism on the Renaissance Stage: Transcendence, Desire and the Limits of the Visible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 35-50. Recent scholars who do address sleep in Shakespeare mainly do so to follow the imagery's source in biblical texts. For example, Richard Levin, "Caught Napping in Shakespeare and the Bible," *Shakespeare Newsletter* 57.2 (2007) and Margaret Jones-Davies, "*Cymbeline* and the Sleep of Faith," *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Dutton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Earlier treatments of Shakespeare's use of sleep/death tend to explore the imagery in order to articulate

in expressing interest in Shakespeare's repeated representation of sleep on stage. For Bevington, Shakespeare's sleeping scenes represent a continuance of the medieval dramatic tradition, and he argues that Shakespeare synthesizes "the spiritual view of sleep as expressed in medieval theatre and a Renaissance interpretation of sleep as an ambiguous state uncertain in its meaning."¹⁴⁷ This "ambiguous state of uncertainty," I argue, derives from early modern contentions concerning the physical body after death. While Bevington, Roberts, and others survey Shakespeare's use of sleep none attend to the sustained conflation of sleep with death throughout Shakespeare's career or what such a conflation might have signified to Shakespeare's audience. This chapter discusses that conflation in Shakespeare and its connection to early modern concerns over the status of the body in the grave, arguing that plays which present death theatrically through sleep directly engage—and problematize—the circulating Protestant discourse over the resurrection of the body.

Contemporary liturgical discourse often conflates sleep with death in order to elucidate the complex doctrine of the resurrected body on the Last Day of Judgment, providing a comforting analogy for the status of the body in the grave. However, while such discourse posits that, "death *is like* sleep," in the theatre the reverse is staged: "sleep *is like* death." This reversal of the analogy is an important distinction that Shakespeare explores throughout his career, investigating the correspondence between sleep and death and its dramatic possibilities. Shakespeare's staging of the performing theatrical corpse as a sleeping body—with the ever present possibility to awake—engages and challenges the ecclesiastical notion of death as a comfortable sleep and a quiet rest. By staging sleeping scenes as a time of danger—with sleeping figures often staged in tombs, or juxtaposed with decapitated corpses, or slumbering without the knowledge that they are about to meet their violent undoing—Shakespeare uses sleeping scenes to associate the body with vulnerability and, by extension, mortality.

larger themes of good and evil in the plays. For example, S. Viswanathan, "Sleep and Death: The Twins in Shakespeare," *Comparative Drama* 13 (1979) which focuses on sleep/death in *Macbeth*.

¹⁴⁷ Bevington, "Asleep Onstage," 68.

In this chapter I look at a number of instances where sleep and death collide in Shakespeare, but I focus my analysis on *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lear*, and *Cymbeline*. While these scenes represent different genres—and effectively a different treatment of death as expressed through the ideologies of the romantic or tragic form—they also represent different points in Shakespeare’s career. There are striking parallels in these scenes representing sleep/death, suggesting that the later plays in many ways represent a revised version of the earlier. By examining those parallels and echoes, I demonstrate how in the earlier plays sleep, in its capacity to “mimic” death, foreshadows future or immediate death. However, in the later plays, the “performance” of death as sleep results in a “symbolic” death, as sleepers are ultimately revived to a new life. However, in all of these instances the sleeping body on stage is aligned with theatrical corpse, and therefore—as I have demonstrated in previous chapters—they are associated with the potential to disrupt and destabilize. Shakespeare’s return to the sleep/death dichotomy in his work demonstrates the imaginative power of the sleeping-corpse in Protestant liturgy in early modern culture. But more than that, the evolution of the sleeping-corpse in these plays indicates Shakespeare’s use of the theatrical corpse as an instrument to assert and subvert genre expectations.

I

In his recent book *Shakespearean Resurrections*, Sean Benson argues that Shakespeare repeatedly evokes Christ’s resurrection from the dead when long-lost characters reunite in the “recognition” scenes of comedies and romances. For Benson, these “quasi-resurrections” remind us of the Resurrection itself, with “the accompanying joy that attends to the biblical account.”¹⁴⁸ Benson’s aim is to recover the spirituality of Shakespeare’s plays and he

¹⁴⁸ Sean Benson, *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Dying* (Pittsburgh, PA: Dusquesne University Press, 2009), 1. For Benson, Shakespeare’s deep and abiding fascination with the event of the resurrection is demonstrated in the ways in which the Bard augments suggestions of spiritual restoration (and adds it when absent) in his source material. Through his analysis of several plays including *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Alls Well that Ends Well*,

repeatedly positions himself against materialist critics whom he charges with ignoring Shakespeare's moral and religious sense.¹⁴⁹ This being said, Benson project lacks the historical context that is found in such materialist criticism. While Benson's focus is the evocation of Christ's resurrection story in Shakespeare's recognition scenes, I am interested in the many death scenes in which Shakespeare implies and invokes the resurrection of the sleeping corpse on the Day of Judgment, as expressed in early modern liturgical texts. Unlike Benson, I do not simply want to know *why* Shakespeare returned to the theme of resurrection in his works but what such a return *might mean* to his audience. In other words, what did resurrection mean in Shakespeare's culture and to Shakespeare's audience? I intend to explore the cultural texts and art forms on the resurrection that likely inspired and influenced Shakespeare's staging of resurrections. In so doing I argue that Shakespeare's depictions of resurrected bodies participate in the ongoing cultural discourses concerning the active nature of the physical body after death.

While the imagery of sleep pervades Protestant literature on death and commemoration to an extraordinary extent, the connection between sleep and death was not, of course, discovered for the first time in the sixteenth century. In the judgment of Philippe Ariès, "the idea of sleep is the most ancient, the most popular, and the constant image of the beyond."¹⁵⁰ Although medieval liturgies included prayer for those sleeping in the sleep of peace, the image did not dominate or shape pre-Reformation mortuary culture to the extent that it was to do later.¹⁵¹ The

¹⁴⁹ Benson's position against materialist critics is most articulate in his essay Sean Benson, "Materialist Criticism and Cordelia's Quasi-Resurrection in *King Lear*," *Religion and the Arts* 11.3-4 (2007).

¹⁵⁰ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981) 24.

¹⁵¹ Art historians have traced the process whereby the general resurrection gradually emerged as a popular religious theme of English sculpture up to the Restoration and beyond. Inscriptions and epitaphs that allude to the resurrection (often invoking Job 19: 25-6, "in my flesh shall I see God") begin to appear with some regularity on brasses and stone monuments in Elizabeth's reign, particularly from the 1570s onwards. After 1600 the subject began to impinge on monumental sculpture. A handful of monuments in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century depicted the body of the deceased rising from the grave. For more see Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Nigel Llewellyn, *Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, C. 1500-1800* (London: Reaktion, 1991). For details on the medieval understanding of the Resurrection see Carolyn Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

conflation of sleep with death as liturgical strategy in early modern culture was used to help explicate the theology of the resurrected body at the Day of Judgment as well as provide a surrogate for the image of purgatory.

Reformers were drawn to the analogy between sleep and death for a number of reasons. First, it was profoundly scriptural as both the Old and the New Testaments abound with references to the dead sleeping in the Lord. Second, to conceive of death and the state of being dead as sleep was also regarded as a comforting doctrine for the dying and the bereaved, and it was very much inimical to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory with its inferno fires. And finally, because the restriction of mourning rituals associated with purgatory resulted in mourners feeling “painfully ineffectual” in that they could no longer pray for the dead; the image of the deceased sleeping peacefully encouraged a passive acceptance of death and grief.¹⁵² According to Nigel Llewellyn, Protestants developed “*memoria*,” which can be seen in the monuments and funeral sermons, to counteract such inefficacy, which are devoted to preserving “the social body as an element in the collective memory.”¹⁵³ That this social body is often imagined as the natural body asleep, resting, and awaiting the life to come, I argue, is part of that neutralization of purgatory. Throughout this chapter I will attend to each of these concerns. But first, I will detail the origin and engineering of the death as sleep analogy prevalent in early modern liturgy.

To encourage the faithful to envision their death as falling asleep was a risky exercise, as it threatened to giving credence to the contentious doctrine of “soul-sleeping” which in the early Tudor period caused much controversy. Psychopannychism—the doctrine that souls of the

¹⁵² Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 39. For more on this sense of inefficacy, Neill 3-41; Robert N. Watson, *The Rest as Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 5-6; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1998) 40-48. G.W Pigman insists that written works of mourning, such as elegies, published funeral sermons, and treatises on dying, had replaced the pre-Reformation communal rituals of mourning. However the impassioned utterances of grief found in such writings are themselves dependent on the form and genre that mediates and contains them. See G.W. Pigman, *Grief and the Renaissance English Elegy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For more on the cultural and literary function of the elegy in the seventeenth century, see Dennis Kay, *Melodious Tears: The English Funeral Elegy from Spenser to Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

¹⁵³ Llewellyn, *Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual, C. 1500-1800* 28, 46-9.

righteous sleep in expectation of an awakening at the Resurrection—was associated with Luther and later discredited by Calvin and later reformers. While this concept dealt a blow to the doctrine of purgatory, at the same time it asserted that the dead did not immediately receive the blessings of heaven. In an effort to control such debates, the Edwardian articles of religion (1552) declared that, “the souls of them that departs this life do neither die with their bodies, nor sleep idly,” the “idly” allowing room for religious debate.¹⁵⁴ It seems that theological parley began to abate by the late sixteenth century; however the frequency and enthusiasm with which the typology of “death as sleep” appears in early modern liturgical literature suggests that the significance of the trope was both culturally and socially persistent.¹⁵⁵

As I discussed in Chapter One, the resurrected body occupied the imagination of Protestant theologians and a remarkably consistent picture was presented: at the sound of the last trumpet souls would be restored to bodies, and the bodies of the living transformed “in the twinkling of an eye.” These bodies would be perfect, agile, and luminous (like the transfigured body of Christ), having no need of food, sleep, or clothing. At the same time it stressed that these were *not* new bodies, but glorified and perfected versions of those that were laid in the grave. Bodies would retain their distinction of sex, but would lose all impediments, scars, and deformities. It was thought likely that all (irrespective of the age at which they died) would rise at the prime of life, around the age of thirty-three.¹⁵⁶

For Protestants the nature of the resurrected body is very different from that of the spiritual body. As the burial service recites:

We shall not all sleep: but we shall all be changed, and that in a moment, in the twinkling of any eye, by the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall blow, and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (312).

¹⁵⁴ Article 40.

¹⁵⁵ For more on the Protestant debate over resurrection of the body, see Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* 223-25.

¹⁵⁶ This synthetic presentation is compiled from a number of sources, namely Samuel Gardiner, *Devotions of the Dying Man* (STC 11574, 1627) 385, Samuel Crooke, *Death Subdued, or, the Death of Death* (STC 6065: 1619), GII r-v, see also Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* 42-3.

At the Last Judgment, the body/corpse is glorified—that is, rendered eternally changeless or incorruptible—in a brilliant fusion with the soul. The Christian believer was enjoined to conceive of the putrefying corpse not only as food for worms but as raw material of the beatified self. As John Donne articulates this in “Death’s Duel”: “In an instant we shall have a dissolution, and in that same instant, a reintegration, a recompacting of the body and soul” (380). There is a distinct emphasis on the immediacy of the miracle of resurrection and with that immediacy, a material continuity between two states of bodily being that seemed dramatically incongruent.

Despite the enthusiasm with which they approached the subject, early modern Protestant writers regularly admitted that of all the doctrines of the faith, the resurrection of the body was the most difficult for people to understand and accept. Preachers conceded that it was difficult for human intellects to comprehend how corporeal elements, thoroughly dispersed and seemingly transformed, might be reassembled in a living body. Protestant writers on the Last Judgment imagined doubters rehearsing hypothetical objections familiar to their medieval scholastic predecessors: what if a man were eaten by a wolf, the wolf by a lion, the lion by birds, and the birds by other men; or what of those eaten by cannibals?¹⁵⁷ The multiplication of detailed, practical questions about the mechanics of the operation of the resurrection was, supposedly, Satan’s preferred strategy to make it “bee thought a mere dreame and fable.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, as Hamlet himself wonders how “Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,/ Might stop a hole to keep the wind away” (5.1. 202-3). Therefore in order to convey the miracle of the resurrected body and counter such existential musing, liturgical texts repeatedly employ the imagery of sleep in order to communicate the nature and state of the body awaiting resurrection.

References to sleep as pre-figuring death originate in the Bible passages that several Protestant texts allude to and amplify.¹⁵⁹ In these texts, such as the burial service, the homily “An

¹⁵⁷ For more on the medieval interrogations, see Carolyn Walker Bynum, “Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion of Its Medieval and Modern Contexts,” *History of Religions* 3.1 (1990): 54, 56.

¹⁵⁸ M. Day, *Doomes-Day: Or, a Treatise of the Resurrection of the Body* (STC 6427, 1636) 192.

¹⁵⁹ Psalm 13:3 “lest I sleep the sleep of death...” Daniel 12:2 “and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” Multiple stories of Jesus raising the dead, such as Lazarus in John

Exhortation Against the Fear of Death,” and various funeral sermons, the resurrection is figured as a time of joy, and the accompanying imagery of sleep is used to convey such ease and bliss. As I discussed in Chapter One, the “Order for the Burial of the Dead” presented a performative occasion for mourners to contemplate the lives—and afterlives—of the deceased. Throughout the service, there is a distinct emphasis on the dead “rising”: “I know... I shall rise out of the earth on the last day” (309), “the dead will rise” (311) “the dead shall rise incorruptible” (312). In a ritual performed for the *burial* of a body—one that includes the conclusive gesture of casting earth upon the body—the language is decidedly fixed upon that body being *animated* and rising, as if from slumber. For example:

[The body] is sown in corruption, it riseth again in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it riseth again in honor. It is sown in weakness, it riseth again in power. It is sown a natural body, it riseth again a spiritual body (311).

There is a sustained tension here between what is buried (the “sown natural body”) and what rises (the “spiritual body”). While death commits the body to one state, the final resurrection alters and transforms it into another.

The notion of death as sleep had enormous utility as an instrument of pious consolation, particularly in the printed funeral sermon; it was constantly reiterated that the godly should not fear to die, nor should their loved ones mourn excessively for them, since, to the godly, death was but a sleep. According to the preacher Samuel Gardiner, the thought of the dead merely having gone to bed allowed us to “suck comfort from the iuyce of this grape against the bitter death of

11: 11-14 and the miracles of restoring life to children, “the girl has not died, but is asleep” (Matt 9:24). In the Bible sleep often is used as a narrative device to indicate either heightened spiritual awareness (such as the story of the prophet Elijah sleeping in the juniper tree in 1 Kings 19:5, or Jacob’s vision of the ladder in Genesis 28:12) or its opposite; man’s tragic-comic failure to notice the immanence of the divine (as in the Garden of Gethsemane, depicted in Matthew 26 and Luke 22). While Shakespeare may have known these references, he also may have absorbed the idea from Cicero or from the school text *Sententia Pueriles* (“*somnus mortis imago*”). In other words, the classical idea of sleep as an image of death chimes with the biblical metaphor of death as sleep. For more on the classical allusions to sleep/death see the extensive survey by Marbury B. Ogle, “The Sleep of Death,” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 11 (1933).

such, as while they lived, were most deere and neere to us.”¹⁶⁰ While death is “bitter” for those that mourn the loss, it is an assumed sweet “comfort” to imagine them asleep.

The associations religious writers applied to the condition of the dead revolved around concepts of rest from wearisome labor, physical comfort, exemption from trouble and care, refreshment, and new beginnings. Therefore, it was comforting to think of churchyards of “dormitories of Christians.” As the state-sanctioned homily “An Exhortation Against the Fear of Death” (1547) encourages:

And to comfort all Christian persons herein, holy scripture calleth bodily death a sleep; wherein men’s senses be, as it were, taken from him for a season, and yet, when he awaketh, he is more fresh than he was when he went to bed... For death shall be a deliverance from all pains, cares, and sorrows, miseries, and wretchedness of this world, and the very entry into rest, a beginning of an everlasting life.¹⁶¹

The idea stressed is that in sleep the body is “senseless” but then is returned to life, refreshed. Moreover, that senselessness is a welcome relief for the “world-wearied flesh.” Throughout the homily, death is figured as welcome rest from life’s toils: “...death, delivering us from our bodies... maketh us to dwell with God for ever in everlasting rest and quietness” (99, 104, 104). Further examples that attempt to convey the comfort of death through the imagery of sleep are to be found in printed funeral sermons which repeat that death is a means to “depart from troubles unto rest” (99) and provides a “rest from pains and labours” (101). The congruence of sleep and death makes the analogy a perfect one: “nothing more like death than sleep”; “nothing more like to the grave, then to our beds,” “nothing better resembleth death then our sleep,” and viewing churchyards as “dormitories and sleeping places of the bodies of he saints.”¹⁶² The “nothingness” of death is now the “nothing more” than sleep. Or as the Jacobean preacher Robert Pricke announced during funeral sermon:

¹⁶⁰ Gardiner, *Devotions of the Dying Man* 160.

¹⁶¹ Included *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches, Book 1* (STC 136639, 1547), 93. All future citations will appear parenthetically.

¹⁶² F. Rodes, *Life after Death* (STC 2114, 1622) 21; J. Moore, *A Mappe of Mans Mortalitie* (STC 18057a: 1617) 233; T. Oldmayne, *Lifes Brevitie and Deaths Debility* (STC 18806: 1636) 73.

It ministreth comfort to them that bestow and lay up the dead bodies of their friends in the graves; for why? They know they do not yield or deliver them up to destruction, but lay them up, as it were in soft beds, to the end that they may sleep quietly till they be awakened by the sound of the last Trumpet.¹⁶³

Again, the idea of graves as “soft beds” providing a quiet repose where the body will not decay or suffer “destruction.” This resistance to decay can also be seen in the Jacobean allegorical dialogue between the flesh and the spirit when Flesh asks, “Doth not the soule then long for the body, seeing it knoweth it is rotten in the cold ground?” Spirit replies that souls rest in a place where there is no disquiet or desire; they look forward to the resurrection, but without sorrow, persuaded that “that they pleasantly and softly sleep and rest” until rising again.¹⁶⁴ With the “death as sleep” analogy there is a repeated insistence that death is *quiet*. While this may be a rhetorical distinction from the pains and fires of purgatory, it also betrays a need to calm anxieties over an unquiet grave.¹⁶⁵

Yet this repeated insistence on the comforts of death as a sleep resulted in, for some Protestant reformers, an obsession upon the materiality of the body with too much attention paid to the intermediate state of the body in death, rather than the life of the world to come. Indeed, it may be a measure of how deeply embedded the symbolism of the sleep had become that by the 1630s the funeral sermon is obligated to labor the rather obvious point that people should *not* imagine death as “properly to be asleep,” that death was called sleep “in regard only of a kinde of similitude and proportion that is betwixt them.”¹⁶⁶ As Donne’s “Death’s Duel” affirms, sleep is a simile only, because when one dies “it shall truly be a death... but no sleeping, no corruption”

¹⁶³ Robert Pricke, *A Verie Godlie and Learned Sermon, Treating of Mans Mortalitie* (STC 20338: 1608) D3.

¹⁶⁴ B. Robertson, *The Crowne of Life: Containing the Combate between the Flesh and the Spirit* (STC 21097: 1618) 358-60.

¹⁶⁵ Donne’s evocation of the churchyard as swelling with “waves and billows of graves,” reminds us that the vast majority of early modern English were buried outside of the church, in largely unmarked graves. Fresh bodies were superimposed on those who had gone before, and in some parishes, as David Cressy informs, “they were stacked as many as five deep.” David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 466.

¹⁶⁶ Oldmayne, . 53.

(380). Robert Pricke also makes it clear in his funeral sermon that although the image of “soft beds” “ministreth comfort” to the bereaved, the body does indeed “lieth in the grave senseless, without motion even as a block or stone.”¹⁶⁷ The corpse figured as a “block or stone” recalls the phrase “dead as stocks and stones” so prevalent in the Homily Against Idolatry and anti-theatrical tracts I discussed in Chapter One, where theatre is envisioned as a place not only of immorality, but of death. For Shakespeare the theatrical body that threatens to “ravish men” (according to anti-theatricalist writer John Rainolds) is the sleeping-corpse. Shakespeare explores the inconsistencies of the analogy of the death as sleep for his own shifting dramatic aims. And while, for Protestant reformers, death commits the body to one state and the miracle of resurrection transforms it in the grave, for Shakespeare that miraculous transformation is performed in the theatre.

II

For David Roberts, *Lucrece* is Shakespeare’s “dry run” bedroom scene, in that it becomes an important context later for both *Othello* and *Cymbeline*.¹⁶⁸ However, the image of Lucrece asleep in her bed also resonates with her contemporary, Juliet.¹⁶⁹ In the poem, Tarquin, “as the grim lion fawneth o’er his prey,” (421) watches Lucrece as she sleeps and notes “Where like a virtuous monument she lies,/ To be admir’d of lewd unhallowed eyes.”¹⁷⁰ (391-2). Lucrece

¹⁶⁷ Pricke, *A Verie Godlie and Learned Sermon, Treating of Mans Mortalitie* D1-v.

¹⁶⁸ Roberts, “Sleeping Beauties,” 246.

¹⁶⁹ *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were likely composed sometime between 1593-96. The earliest edition of *Romeo and Juliet* is a quarto printed in 1597, a second appears in 1599 declaring to be “newly corrected, augmented, and amended.” Two other quartos appeared before the 1623 Folio. As *Lucrece* was entered in the Stationer’s Register in 1594 there is a very good possibility that Shakespeare was either writing—and certainly thinking—about the two women, during this period.

¹⁷⁰ All quotes come from William Shakespeare, *The Poems*, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, ed. F.T. Prince, 2nd ed. (New York: Methuen & Co., 1960) and appear parenthetically.

envisioned as a sacred statue, foreshadowing her eventual commemoration into an effigy by her kinsmen after she kills herself.¹⁷¹ This fatal end is anticipated as Lucrece is further described as:

Showing life's triumph in the map of death,
And death's dim look in life's mortality:
Each in her sleep themselves so beautify,
As if between them twain there were no strife,
But that life liv'd in death, and death in life.

(2. 400-406)

Here sleep, through "a map of death," portends Lucrece's suicide. At the same time, sleep serves as a mediating factor in the antithesis of life and death that operates while she slumbers. As the "Service for the Burial of the Dead" professes, "in the midst of life we be in death" (309). A claim made by Capulet when he laments over his daughter's supposed corpse: "life, living, all is Death's" (4.5. 40).¹⁷² In both of Shakespeare's early works, death lurks in slumber. The pattern of ominous anticipation and foreboding present in *The Rape of Lucrece* operates in *Romeo and Juliet* as well, as each text figures sleep as a perilous state of vulnerability, not as a comforting metaphor for the life to come.

In *Romeo and Juliet* references to death occur throughout the play until it becomes the driving image in Romeo's final soliloquy over the supposedly dead body of Juliet in the last scene.¹⁷³ My discussion focuses on that final scene where the play's conceit of death is incarnated in a final *coup de theatre* within the tomb: Juliet's death-like sleep anticipates the lovers' suicides and the bodies remain on stage throughout the concluding moments of the play.

¹⁷¹ For Coppelia Kahn a "vocabulary of purity and holiness surrounds [Lucrece] like a halo." Coppelia Kahn, "The Rape in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976) 49. For more on the commemorative nature on the poem and Lucrece, see Ian Donaldson, *The Rapes of Lucretia: A Myth and Its Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford, 1982).

¹⁷² All quotes come from William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Brian Gibbons, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1980) and appear parenthetically.

¹⁷³ The evocation of death as Juliet's surrogate husband begins in 1.5. 133-4, "If he be married,/ My grave is like to be my wedding bed;" is repeated in 3.2. 136-7 "I'll to my wedding bed,? And death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead;" echoes by Lady Capulet, "I would the fool were married to her grave" (3.5. 140). Capulet's lament for the discovery of his daughter's death body: "Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir,? My daughter he hath wedded" (4.5. 38-9). For more on the death imagery in play, see William C. Carroll, "'We Were Born to Die': *Romeo and Juliet*," *Comparative Drama* 15.1 (1981) who examines the imagery of death and its growing momentum towards the conclusion of the play much like, Carroll argues, the play's Morality play predecessors.

Lying in a final embrace, they resemble the carved figures of a funerary monument, prefiguring the statues of pure gold that the penitent fathers promise to construct. Juliet's sleep has an uneasy dramatic status: as an imitation of death it looks ahead to the tragedy of the play's ending. For Tanya Pollard, Juliet's performance of sleep as an "apotropaic substitute for actual death, suggests the prototypical possibility of young lover's triumph over adversity." Pollard sees the effects of the sleeping potion as thematic for the play, in that both the drug and the plot "hover... uneasily between remedial and harmful."¹⁷⁴ While *Romeo and Juliet* certainly does engage with the dichotomy of life/death found in early modern elixirs, it also participates in the equally "uneasy" early modern idioms over the resurrected body after death. While Juliet's potion-induced sleep might "suggest" the possibility of reunion with her love, Shakespeare negates such hope by presenting a performance of sleep that is ultimately fatal. In so doing, Shakespeare's rejects the consoling attributes of the analogy of "death is like sleep" found in Protestant discourse and asserts a far more fatal—and final—reading of the metaphor in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Rather than depicting Juliet's sleep as a restful quiet, the ambiguous sleep-death state is shown to have violent potential, as expressed by Juliet herself in her soliloquy when she conjures up the various terrors that may afflict her in the vault:

How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
I wake before the time that Romeo
Come to redeem me? There's a fearful point!
To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,
And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?...

O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,
And in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desp'rate brains?

(4.3. 30-54)

¹⁷⁴ Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 61, 55. Pollard's fascinating study explores the effects of potions and poisons in several early modern dramas. In her chapter on Shakespeare she investigates *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* and argues that the sleep induced onstage "parallels the suspension of time and identity produced in spectators by the plays themselves" (65). That being said, I find it curious that she does not explore *Cymbeline*, as the potion has a very similar effect on Imogen, and the audience.

It is in this frenzied delirium that she finally consumes the potion and commits herself not only to her desperate action of passion but also to an almost “occult risk of catastrophe.”¹⁷⁵ Juliet imagines Romeo “redeeming” her from her death-like sleep, yet her revival is not envisioned as an absolution but a horror, as she makes it clear that she is venturing into the unknown underworld. Once there she fears being buried alive or having nightmare visions of ghosts, all of which lead to macabre madness and death. Shakespeare emphasizes the dangers of sleep-death by Juliet’s own anticipations of its potentially necromantic consequences.

While Juliet (and the audience) does not know what to expect when she awakes, both are prepared by the Friar—who is not only in herbalist, but an ecclesiastic—on what to imagine once Juliet drinks the potion. According to the Friar, the potion has a singular intended effect: to mimic the symptoms of death when in actuality, she will simply be asleep. However, it is not just the *appearance* of death that the Friar envisions for Juliet, but an almost temporary sort of death itself. Juliet confesses to him that she “longs to die” and he tells her that he does “spy a kind of hope” in her desperation:

Thou has the strength of will to slay thyself,
Then it is likely thou wilt undertake
A thing like death to chide away this shame,
That cop’st with Death himself to ‘scape from it

(4.1. 72-75)

If Juliet is will to “cop’st with Death” by undertaking a “thing like death,” she may be able to “scape from it.” Death becomes not only an escape *from* pain, but an escape *to* a new life. According to Clayton MacKenzie, the “life in death” possibility that Friar Lawrence presents to his young charge would have “rhymed sonorously with a number of period representations.” For MacKenzie, emblems of phoenixes, of shrubs growing out of a pile of skeletal remains, or of a flower blooming from the cavities of a human skull are iconic links between life and death that were popular during the early modern period. However, the idea of “life in death” is also prevalent

¹⁷⁵ Robert A. Fothergill, “The Perfect Image of Life: Counterfeit Death in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 52.2 (1982/3) 170. Fothergill surveys the multiple counterfeit deaths in Shakespeare and finds particular comparisons between Juliet, Cleopatra, and Hero.

in the Protestant liturgy, specifically in the homily “Exhortation Against the Fear of Death” which contends that, “this bodily death is a door to entering a new life” (94). Shakespeare most certainly engages with the visual emblems of regeneration and the liturgy of resurrection which proclaims a “life in death,” both suggesting the regenerative potential of the lovers within in the romance plot. However, as a tragedy the play negates such potential and in so doing revokes the regenerative possibilities not only of the lovers’ romance, but also contemporary discourses of a regenerative death.

This negation can be seen in the friar’s description of Juliet’s sleeping-death, which is not portrayed as a comfortable slumber but a petrifying state:

Presently through all your veins shall run
A cold and drowsy humour; for no pulse
Shall keep his native progress, but surcease
No warmth, no breath, shall testify thou livest;
The roses in thy lips and cheeks shall fade
To wanny ashes; thy eyes’ windows fall,
Like Death, when he shuts up the day of life
Each part, deprived of supple government,
Shall stiff and stark and cold appear like death
And in this borrowed likeness of shrunk death
Thou shalt continue two-and-forty hours,
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.

(4.1. 95-106).

The physical effects of the potion will transform Juliet’s warm, living body to “stiff and stark and cold,” a terrifying likeness to death that is only slightly diminished by his seeming afterthought that she will “awake as from a pleasant sleep.” Kaara L. Peterson reads this description as “mimicking the symptoms of the moribund hysteric in syncope...” and that it “might as well be out of the medical tracts describing hysterical refrigeration.”¹⁷⁶ However, I think it unlikely that Shakespeare, the actor playing Juliet, or the audience would have been aware of such medical theories or recognized them in performance. However, they all would have been conscious of the similarities between sleep and death either from classical literature, the Bible, or from various sermons and homilies about the resurrection, such as the homily “Against Fear of Death” which encourages the

¹⁷⁶ Kaara L. Peterson, “Shakespearean Revivifications: Early Modern Undead,” *Shakespeare Studies* 32 (2004) 248. Peterson discusses the “revived hysteric myth” in *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter’s Tale*, focusing on the medical history of the “wandering womb” and its possible impact on Shakespeare’s works.

faithful to “perceive that bodily sickness, pangs of death, or whatsoever dolorous pains we suffer with death to be nothing” (97). Yet these symptoms are not “nothing”, but in fact are a rehearsal of what Juliet is to perform, and what the audience is to believe when they later see her “dead” body.

By registering the similarities between sleep and death, Shakespeare is able to place Juliet dangerously close to death. Indeed these predictions are the signs that Capulet reads upon his daughter’s corpse: “She’s cold./ Her blood is settled, and her joints are stiff” (4.5. 25-6).¹⁷⁷ Shakespeare’s emphasis is on the mimetic symptoms of sleep and death, providing the audience—and the actor—with a script for the performance of death. Yet when Romeo later sees Juliet’s body in the tomb, these same signs of death that are observed by Capulet are now transformed into signifiers of sleep by Romeo. Romeo remarks:

Death, that has sucked the honey of thy breath,
Hath no power yet upon thy beauty:
Thou art not conquered, beauty’s ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks
And Death’s pale flag is not advanced there.

(5.3. 92-96).

Whereas to Capulet the signs of sleep equaled death, to Romeo the reverse is true: signs of death are but indications of a peaceful slumber. Indeed, death—thought to be a final state—when imagined as sleep, is an ambiguous state that holds the potential for either re-animation or annihilation.

After Romeo dies, Juliet’s sleeping-corpse is juxtaposed with the “dead” body of Romeo. Only for a brief moment does Shakespeare allow the two recumbent bodies to exist on stage together in silence so that the audience may contemplate the similarities between the two actor’s “performing” deadness realizing, perhaps, that nothing visually changes in appearance between

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Moisan offers a compelling rhetorical analysis of the language in the “lamentation” scene of 4.5. The words of the Capulets, the Nurse, and Paris are often judged as exclamatory and repetitive and have been even read as a parody of grief. However, Moisan analyzes the rhetoric used by various characters to offer insights into their nature. Bearing upon my analysis, Moisan also sees the lamentation scene as a rehearsal of the real death to come, arguing that, “in rehearsing Juliet’s death [the scene] foretells the deal of the ‘real’ Juliet” (391). See Thomas Moisan, “Rhetoric and the Rehearsal of Death: The ‘Lamentations’ Scene in *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 34.4 (1983).

the quick and dead. With the Friar's entrance and Juliet's awakening the *tableau* of the two entombed bodies within the discovery space is interrupted. Now in the presence of Romeo's corpse, and in the location of the discovery space, the once "pleasant sleep" described by the Friar (4.1. 106), is now interpreted as "unnatural sleep" (5.3. 152). Upon seeing Romeo's corpse, Juliet's self-destruction is quick and immediate and the audience is given another brief moment to contemplate their corpses within the *tableau*, as they embrace in death as they did in life.

Here—and through much of the final act—Shakespeare radically departs from his source, Arthur Brooke's non-dramatic poem *Romeus and Juliet* (1562):¹⁷⁸ While Shakespeare makes several additions to Brooke, he notably abandons the poem's religiously orthodox language despite its many possible resonances with life after death. For example, Brooke's Romeus, when he feels the poison working, declares:

Lord, Christ, that so to raundome me descendest long ago,
Out of thy father's bosome, and in the virgins wombe,
Didst put on flesh, Oh let my plaint out of this hollow tombe,
Perce through the ayre, and graunt my sute may favour finde...
For well enough I know, this body is but clay,
Naught but a masse of sinne, to frayle, and subject to decay.

(2674-80)

In contrast to Shakespeare's Juliet who envisions Romeo as her "redeemer," Brooke's Romeus looks to a divine redemption that does not exist in this world but in the next, suggesting the survival of Romeus in another time. William Carroll finds this speech in keeping with "the interactive imagery of womb-tomb and descent-ascent" that we have seen throughout the play. Yet Shakespeare suggests a far more final death in the play's corresponding scene over Juliet's corpse:

...Here I will remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids; O here
Will I set up my everlasting rest,

¹⁷⁸ Most significantly Shakespeare amplifies the role of the apothecary and he adds the murder of Paris in the tomb. The most detailed explanation of Shakespeare's adaptation of his source, is Olin H. Moore, "Shakespeare's Deviations from *Romeus and Juliet*," *PMLA* 52.1 (1937). Also see Benson, *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Dying*, esp. pp. 78-87 and Carroll, "'We Were Born to Die': *Romeo and Juliet*," which offers an excellent analysis of the role of the apothecary in foreshadowing death, as well as Shakespeare's avoidance of "spiritual analogy" that is found in Brooke.

And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh.

(5.3. 108-112)

Brooke dwells on the inevitable decay of the body while Shakespeare merely suggests that decay through the attendant chamber-worms. Rather, Shakespeare stresses Romeo's "everlasting rest" for his "world-wearied flesh." Brooke emphasizes the transformative power of the corpse in decay, while Shakespeare attends to the finality of death and the corpse. Carroll argues that Shakespeare avoids Brooke's explicit religious declarations because he "prefers to work for pathos in the final scene... and emphasizes loss rather than redemption."¹⁷⁹ While Shakespeare does avoid such explicit religious tones, he does by rejecting the regenerative possibilities of the corpse and favoring the finality of the dead body.

That finality of the corpse is what subverts the tragic form of the play and asserts a narrative structure. Once the families are assembled to bear witness to the deaths of their children, the Prince demands that the friar "clear these ambiguities" (5.3. 217). Friar Lawrence then delivers a lengthy account of what literally happened which does not tell the audience anything new.¹⁸⁰ All the while, the bodies of the lovers visibly remain on stage, in the tomb. In Brooke, however, "[t]he prince did ordaine, the corses that we founde/ Should be set upon a stage, hye raised from the grounde" (ll. 2817-8). In Brooke, the Friar delivers his speech "upon the open stage" (2826). Yet, unlike so many of his other tragedies where the *theatrum mundi* metaphor seems inevitable, Shakespeare resists elevating the bodies upon another stage.¹⁸¹ Rather, he keeps them within the tomb of the discovery space, using the interior of the theatre as a means to de-animate the bodies, which is furthered by their linguistic petrification into memorial statues. The Friar's narration and the corpses' "sleeping" within in discovery space, assures that

¹⁷⁹ Carroll, "'We Were Born to Die': *Romeo and Juliet*," 64, 65.

¹⁸⁰ Johnson noted, "It is much to be lamented, that the poet did not conclude the dialogue with the action, and avoid a narrative of events which the audience already knew." W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., ed., *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960).

¹⁸¹ For example, Hamlet speaks to "the audience of this act" (5.2. 335) and his corpse is carried "like a soldier to the stage" (5.2. 396); and rather than allowing Roman thespians to stage her story, Cleopatra acts her own death—"performed the dreaded act" (5.2. 331).

they will never wake—that this death is permanent.¹⁸² The Friar's narrative moves the story of Romeo and Juliet from drama—the genre of performance where death is really just sleeping with the potential to awake—to legend—the genre of *Lucrece*, of history, of permanence.

While Shakespeare's play does effect a transformation of the body, that transformation is not one of regeneration but of stasis, as is manifested by the fathers who conceive of the lovers' bodies as statues:

Montague: For I will raise a *statue* in pure gold,
 That whiles Verona by that name is known
 There shall be no *figure* at such rate be set
 As that of true and faithful Juliet.

Capulet: As rich shall Romeo's by his lady lie
 Poor sacrifices for our enmity.

(5.3. 299-304)

Of the *actual* bodies that still lie before us (along with Tybalt and Paris), there is no mention. Rather, they become icons—objects, statues, figures, and commemorative monuments. The final scene displays two bodies in the discovery space that are narrated and then solidified into gilded monuments. The corpses of Romeo and Juliet create an emblematic *tableau* that does not connote regeneration or reconciliation of the tragedy or romance genre, but the finality and death of the legend.

It is clear in his early works that Shakespeare is aware of the possibilities and limits of representing the dead body on stage and uses both sleep and the iconic imagery it conveys to help in the task. In his attempt to convincingly stage the corpse via the sleeping body, Shakespeare complicates the early modern truism of the comforting sleep of death, positing sleep as a potentially dangerous, permanent state. He does so by avoiding the possibilities of overly dramatizing the death of the bodies that Brooke's poem presents and instead leaves the corpses inside the discovery space. Like *Lucrece*, Romeo and Juliet are figures that are to remain dead, and statues cannot breathe—at least, not until *The Winter's Tale*. Here, unlike later plays,

¹⁸² Although Shakespeare is following his source, it seems particularly fitting that it is the Friar who gives an account of the actions and events of the play, a speech that performs a eulogy to the lovers. Shakespeare continues to consider how liturgical discourse works to moderate and define the experience of death and mourning.

Shakespeare insists on a gap between bodies and effigies rather than a continuity that he stresses later. Yet even in these early examples Shakespeare sees the *potential* for revival—these staged corpses are theatrical corpses—and he explores that potential in *Lear*.

III

The ending of Shakespeare's *King Lear* makes a radical departure not only from his source *The True Chronicle of King Leir*, but from all other known sources of the story that he—and his audience—would have encountered, including *Mirour for Magistrates*, Holinshed's *Chronicles*, and Spencer's *Faerie Queene*. In each, the aged Lear is overthrown by his wicked daughters, but saved and restored to the throne by Cordelia, and dies peacefully years later. Cordelia succeeds her father's rule until her nephews depose her, and she, "wearie of that wretched life,"¹⁸³ hangs herself in prison. Therefore, in Act 5 when Lear enters with "*Cordelia in his arms*" (5.3. 231, s.d.) the original audience, secure in their expectation of a very different resolution, must have been shocked. And it is shock that is emphasized and cruelly sustained throughout the scene, as signs of Cordelia's revival are simultaneously assured and then proven false. Although Cordelia is not described as a sleeping-corpse, the language that Lear uses to envision her revival connotes the sleeping-dead state imagined in early modern liturgical literature. Additionally, the language of the scene itself alludes to the larger themes of the resurrection that Shakespeare capitalizes on theatrically.

For Stephen Booth, the greatest achievement of *King Lear* is its constant disappointment of the persistent promise of order and resolution. This greatness, argues Booth, is achieved with the play's "extended confrontation with inconclusiveness." Booth observes that Shakespeare "presents the culminating events of his *story* after his *play* is over."¹⁸⁴ Indeed, the final scene seems to complete the formal structure of the play with the deaths of Goneril and Regan and Edmund. Additionally, it seems that Lear is restored to his sanity in his reconciliation with Cordelia

¹⁸³ *Faerie Queene*, 2.10.32.

¹⁸⁴ Stephen Booth, *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 6, 11.

("Pray you know, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish," 4.7. 83-4), and it seems that he is content with his acceptance of prison, as long as Cordelia is with him ("Come, let's away to prison;/ We two alone will sing like birds i'the cage," 5.3. 8-9). Lear is then offstage for nearly two hundred lines (in the Folio, more in the Quarto)—a period in which most of the play's actions are resolved and explained. Yet all these "seeming" resolutions are put into question when Albany orders the bodies of Goneril and Regan to be "produce[d]... be they dead or alive" (5.3. 229) and they are brought on stage.¹⁸⁵ It is an unusual demand: while funeral processions are common on stage, their movement is usually to usher bodies *off* (as Edmund is at line 254). It is clear then that Shakespeare wants to have all of Lear's daughters on stage in the final scene, perhaps to recall and contrast the image with the opening scene, or perhaps because Albany's line "this judgment of the heavens " (230) is stronger if he can point to the bodies. Booth argues that bringing the daughters back on stage visually registers for the audience the narrative completion of the pattern of events thus far.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the entry of the howling Lear bearing a lifeless Cordelia in his arms is startling in that it extends the play beyond the pattern of completion and disrupts the expectations, not only of the source material, but of the conventional movement towards reconciliation and resolution that occurs at the ends of tragedies. For Booth, the first visual display of Goneril and Regan's corpses signified the destruction of evil, while this second display signifies the destruction of Lear's family. I argue that it also portends a greater destruction of theatrical form and convention.

A frail old Lear, on the point of death himself, carries the lifeless body of Cordelia in his arms and registers her death—and his anguish—with "Howl, howl, howl" (255). Lear's entrance with the dead body in his arms—likely from the discovery space—marks an abrupt cessation of the busy activity of the preceding lines and an ironic refusal of Albany's wish that "the god's defend" Cordelia (254). The moment of Lear's entry immediately establishes a haunting *tableau*,

¹⁸⁵ All quotes are from William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. R.A. Foakes, 3rd ed. (Surrey: Thomas Nelsons & Sons, Ltd., 1997) and appear parenthetically.

¹⁸⁶ Booth, *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefintion, and Tragedy* 28.

with all eyes on him and Cordelia.¹⁸⁷ He despairs at what he believes to her extinction: "She is gone forever./ I know when one is dead and when one lives./ She is dead as earth" (234-6). The monosyllabic simplicity of these lines—like the repeated "howl"—are like a death knell ringing out irrefutability. Yet, Lear takes the extraordinary—and slightly demented—step of calling for a mirror to see if she has any "breath [that] will mist or stain it" (237). He then claims:

This feather stirs, she lives: if it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I felt.

(263-5)¹⁸⁸

Whether or not these "tests" for life actually take place on stage, they invoke for its Jacobean audience the contrast between the Christian hope of resurrection and the material reality of Cordelia's corpse. Samuel Johnson's reaction to Cordelia's death is indicative of the audience's likely frustration: "Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and yet what is more strange, to the faith of the chronicles."¹⁸⁹ Such tests of life exploit the audience's intense desire—and narrative expectation—to see Cordelia revive; we hope that she is just sleeping.

Kent's question, "Is this the promised end?" (261) seems to imply that *this* moment may be the end of the dramatic patterns described; that perhaps *this* is the conclusion that brings hope, resolution, and restoration. However, Edgar immediately replies with a question "Or image of that horror?" (262). Edgar does not see denouement, but apocalyptic destruction in the image of Lear grieving over Cordelia. Yet it is but an "image" of that horror, meaning that this is not the dreaded end, but rather a representation of it. In this way Lear's grief over his daughter's death

¹⁸⁷ Visually, the moment evokes the *pieta*. See Katharine Goodland, "Inverting the Pieta in Shakespeare's *King Lear*," *Marian Moments in Early Modern British Drama*, ed. Regina Buccola and Lisa Hopkins (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007) who reads this scene, and much of *Lear* as analogous to the laments of mourning women—especially the Virgin Mary—in medieval drama.

¹⁸⁸ Note the echo of this passage in Webster's *The White Devil* (1612) where Cornelia hopes to revive the dead Marcellus: "fetch a looking-glass, see if his breath will not stain it; or pull some feathers from my pillow, and lay them to his lips" (5.2. 38-40).

¹⁸⁹ Wimsatt, ed., *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare* 97.

represents the desire for those who mourn their beloved and wish them to awake from their death-sleep.

The final moments of the play painfully entertain Cordelia's revival. In his grief, Lear continues to vacillate between believing in the possibility of Cordelia's resurrection and resigning himself to her inescapable death:

I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever.
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha?
What is't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft.

(268-70)

Lear's very language shifts between past and present tense, toying with the audience's hope for the scene to end happily. Such wavering intensifies in the final speech:

...No, no, no, life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never.

(304-7)

The repetitions of "no's" and "never's"—like the earlier "howl's"—signal a finality, yet it is at this point that a striking difference between the Quarto of the play published in 1608 and the first Folio of 1623 is made. The 1608 Quarto of *Lear* may give us a glimpse of the play before it was first performed, while the 1623 Folio represents revisions made years after the play had first been written and performed. The consensus is that Shakespeare actively revised the 1608 Quarto version into what became, over time, the First Folio.¹⁹⁰ According to David Richman, if Shakespeare did revise the play "it is a reasonable assumption that the play printed in Quarto was produced by Shakespeare's company and that revision may well have been undertaken because the play as it stood was found wanting in production."¹⁹¹ After asking Edgar to "undo this button." Lear, in the Folio only, suddenly asks, "Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips./

¹⁹⁰ For an overview of the current state of textual criticism, see John Jowett, "Editing Shakespeare's Plays in the Twentieth Century," *Shakespeare Survey* 59 (2006), esp. pp. 10-12.

¹⁹¹ David Richman, "The *King Lear* Quarto in Rehearsal and Performance," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.3 (1986), 374-5.

Look there, look there" (286-7), and then dies. Some scholars see these words as a last expression of hope, others as a statement of loss.¹⁹² I argue that in their articulation of the painful separation between the living and the dead, they might also embody a critique of the Protestant construction of death as quiet, comforting, and peaceful. As I have discussed, the trope of death as sleep was not only a comfort to those about to die, but also to those who mourned the dead, encouraging believers to accept that their loved ones were beyond their intercession. *King Lear* collapses all the debates over the fate of the body in the grave into a more urgent challenge as Lear exhorts the audience to "look there!", recalling the intense looking upon the dead that characterizes the relationship between mourner and deceased. While struggling with Lear to perceive—and perhaps believe in—the signs of life from the "corpse" of Cordelia, the audience comes to terms with the dramatic tensions created by the body performing death.

Michael Neill believes "no ritual consolidations are allowed to modify the starkness of *Lear's* ending."¹⁹³ I agree with Neill that there are no ritual consolidations depicted within the world of the play—but what about the play itself? That Cordelia and Lear's deaths occur on stage along with the "produced" corpses of Goneril and Regan is significant staging, not only because of the dramaturgical resonances that Booth suggests, but because Goneril and Regan remain on stage "be they dead or alive" (229). With Lear's consistent and repeated attempts to envision Cordelia alive, the other two corpses on stage may appear closer to the latter of Albany's choices. The corpses' bodily state thus becomes the focal point not only of Lear's words, but also for on-lookers' eyes. Lear's description of Cordelia's lifelessness runs counter to what the audience

¹⁹² Benson views these words as pointing "toward the possibility that all is not lost forever for the two; to hold the hope and despair of the moment in a delicate, and finally unresolved, balance of his art," Benson, *Shakespearean Resurrection: The Art of Almost Dying* 107. While Stephen Greenblatt reads the lines as "forlorn hope of an impossible redemption... drained of its institutional and doctrinal significance, empty and vain, cut off even from a theatrical realization," Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988) 125. Clearly, Lear's last words have been the focus of much critical attention, ranging from speculation about sources to debates over the religious implications of his words. See especially William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1988) for an exploration of Lear's pagan possibilities. For a more psychological reading of the final lines, see Arthur Kirsch, "The Emotional Landscape of *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.2 (1988) and Susan Snyder, "*King Lear* and the Psychology of Dying," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33.4 (1982).

¹⁹³ Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* 297.

hopes will be a dramatic resolution, what they remember as history from the chronicles, and what they *know* is a living actor playing Cordelia and is, indeed, breathing. Yet by evoking the possibility of resurrection only to deny it only inspires a stronger desire for revival, as evidenced by the Folio's revision of this scene to emphasize Cordelia's potential resurrection and Samuel Johnson and Nahum Tate's eighteenth century reconstructions of the play. However in *Lear* Shakespeare keeps Cordelia's resurrection a "sure and certain hope" as the burial service phrases it (310), but it is not a theatrical reality despite the repeated insinuations of the possibility.

The corpse of Cordelia interrupts the resolution of the play. Unlike Romeo and Juliet's corpses that move the drama into the realm of narrative legend, Cordelia's highly theatrical corpse nearly dissolves the tragedy into romance. It seems that Cordelia's quasi-resurrection is especially tantalizing for Shakespeare, and I believe that the staging of Cordelia's hopeful sleep-death brings us closer to the playwright's exploration of the theatrical corpse in the romance genre.

IV

Shakespeare's later romance *Cymbeline* stages multiple scenes of sleeping.¹⁹⁴ However I, like Simon Forman who recorded his account of seeing the play at the Globe in 1611, am most interested in the two scenes involving the heroine of the play because they point to the variety of ways that *Cymbeline* conflates the sleeping body with the dead body. Forman's description of the

¹⁹⁴ Beyond the two scenes discussed here, in Act 5 Posthumus sleeps in jail in where he dreams of being visited by his ancestors and by Jupiter, who "*descends in thunder and lightening, sitting upon an eagle*" (5.4. 92, s.d.). While Bevington reads this scene as a "mastery of medieval conventions of sleep" in its evocation of a divine vision, it is also a notable contrast to the other sleeping scenes in the play that imply danger, voyeurism, and potential death—all with very little special effects or pyrotechnics. I argue that Posthumus' sleep *must* have such a spectacular display of theatrical magic in order to distance it from the other sleeping scenes. Posthumus' sleep functions within the plot as a solution towards happiness, rather than an obstacle to resolution, hence the elegant artifice which defines it differently than the other two sleeping scenes.

first scene, when Iachimo invades Imogen's bedchamber, focuses not on the motivations but on the movements of Iachimo:

...howe the Jtalian that cam from her loue conveied him selfe into A Cheste... And in the depest of the night she being aslepe, he opened the cheste & cam forth of yt. And vewed her in her bed and the markes of her body, & toke a wai her baslet & after Accused her of adultery to her loue &c.

The second scene is the final detail in Forman's account of the play and describes Imogen waking beside the headless corpse of Cloten, whom she believes to be her estranged husband, Posthumus:

...& howe by eating a sleeping Dram they [her two brothers] thoughts she had bin deed & laid her in the wods & the body of cloten by her in her louses apparel...& howe she was found by lucius & c.¹⁹⁵

Forman's account is particularly focused on the moments of the play that highlight the body on stage as it strives to embody both sleep and death. Forman's recording of these two scenes, as if they were consecutive, hints that he may have experienced similar sensations while viewing them: as an audience, we wait in suspense that Imogen *might* wake up in Act 2, yet she does not; subsequently in Act 4, we experience the same tension because we know she *will* wake up to a grotesque horror.¹⁹⁶ In this way, the previous scene of sleeping rehearses the second scene of the sleeping-death.

Like Juliet's performance of sleeping-death, Imogen's sleep foreshadows danger and dissolution. When Iachimo makes his "small request" (1.7. 181) to keep his trunk in Imogen's chamber, neither Imogen nor the audience is prepared for his emergence while she sleeps in Act 2. Yet there is a nervous tension operating at the opening of the scene as Imogen asks, "Who's there? My woman Helen?" which establishes the anxiety prevalent throughout the scene. This

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, ed. J.M. Nosworthy, 2nd ed. (New York: Methuen, 1955) Introduction, xiv-xv. All subsequent quotes of *Cymbeline* are from this edition.

¹⁹⁶ Forman is not the only one to intuitively sense the similarities of the scenes. In Douglas Hickox' 1973 b-horror classic film *Theatre of Blood*, starring Vincent Price, the two scenes are collapsed into one and adapted for the horror genre. Although often dismissed as mere camp, the film's conflation of the two disparate scenes helps us to see the parallels between them.

scene echoes Shakespeare's other depictions of women asleep, such as Juliet and Desdemona, and he even references his own *The Rape of Lucrece* explicitly: upon exiting the trunk Iachimo invokes "Our Tarquin thus/ Did softly press the ruses, ere he waken'd/ The chastity he wounded" (2.2. 12-15), thereby emphasizing Imogen's defenselessness and the nature of his incursion. Like Tarquin in *The Rape of Lucrece*, Iachimo describes the sleeping Imogen "as a monument,/ Thus in a chapel lying" (32-33), alluding to effigies placed on tombs of distinguished persons. In this way Imogen—like Juliet and Lucrece before her—becomes a commemorative statue to a death she has not died, further emphasizing the overlapping boundaries between sleep and death. Iachimo recognizes the correspondence: "O sleep, thou *ape of death*, lie dull upon her" (31). While "ape" means to "imitate," according to the *OED* it also denotes a mimicry that is "in an inferior or spurious manner." Sleep is a poor imitator of death in *Cymbeline* where sleep poses on a symbolic danger, yet it still threatens to turn romance into tragedy.

Imogen's chamber scene is visually recalled later when she lies asleep again after drinking a potion that she believes is a medicine, but in fact causes death-like symptoms, similar to those experienced by Juliet but to much different effect. Earlier in the play the Queen had asked her doctor for "poisonous compounds,/ Which are the movers of a languishing death:/ But though slow, deadly" (1.6 8-10). However, because the doctor is suspicious of the Queen's dishonorable intentions, rather than giving her "strange ling'ring poisons" (34) she asks of him, he only provides her with drugs that will merely "stupefy and dull the sense awhile." In an aside, the doctor assures the audience that "there is/ No danger in *what show of death makes*,/ More than locking up the spirits a time,/ To be more fresh, *reviving*" (39-42). The doctor's assurance is much like the Richard Carpenter's funeral sermon which argues for an equally tranquil vision of death: "It is but a sleep, which is mis-called death, his grave is his bed, and she shall awake as sure as he lay downe, yea more fresh and glorious."¹⁹⁷ The doctor promises that the "show" or performance of death holds no potential for danger and in fact results in a "reviving." Unlike the Friar's description

¹⁹⁷ Richard Carpenter, *The Soules Sentinel* (STC 4683: 1612) 110.

of Juliet's sleep that focused on the nearness to death, the doctor emphasizes the similitude to restorative sleep.¹⁹⁸

While it is clear to the audience that these drugs will induce a death-like sleeping state, Imogen believes them to "drive away distemper" (3.4. 193) and takes them while she is in the forest of Milford-Haven disguised as the boy, Fidele. In fact, when Arviragus enters with "*Imogen, dead, bearing her in his arms*" (4.2. 194, s.d.), no one—besides the audience—is quite sure if she is dead.¹⁹⁹ Arviragus relates how he found the body "Thus smiling, as some fly had tickled slumber,/ Not as death's dart, being laughed at" (210-11). Imogen smiles at death as though she were tickled "by some fly." Unlike Romeo, the brothers are unsure of her death, yet they do not read the physical signs as a fatality—but as possibility. Guiderius claims:

Why he but sleeps
If he be gone, he'll make his grave a bed:
With female fairies will his tomb be haunted,
And worms will not come to thee.

(215-216)

Even "if" Fidele is dead, Guiderius assents, his grave will be like a "bed." And, unlike Romeo who is certain that worms will be Juliet's chambermaids, Guiderius believes that Imogen will not decay. Yet, despite Imogen's true syncopal state, and the brother's uncertainty over her death, formal burial rites are performed for her with extreme visual interest in the arrangement of her body, the strewing of flowers, and the placement of Cloten's corpse beside her.²⁰⁰ These visual details, along with elegiac language used throughout the scene, recalls the burial service's

¹⁹⁸ Samuel Johnson found the doctor's soliloquy "very inartificial" in that the speaker is "neither resolving, repenting, suspecting, nor deliberating, and yet makes a long speech to tell himself what he himself knows." Wimsatt, ed., *Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare*. However, the audience does require this information, and moreover, Shakespeare has to ensure that this romance does not imply *too* much disaster.

¹⁹⁹ Arden editor J.M. Nosworthy notes this Folio stage direction has often been changed to "as dead" because "everybody, including the audience, should believe she is dead at this point" (136, n.). Yet, as an audience we are aware that the drug from Pisanio is harmless, as evidenced by Foreman's account and the doctor's clear admission in an aside, preparing the audience to expect the condition of Imogen as a "show of death" (1.6. 40).

²⁰⁰ While actors may have played corpses on the early modern stage, the possibility of an actor playing a decapitated corpse is less likely. Therefore, Cloten is not a "theatrical corpse" but a prop; not played by a living actor but portrayed by a dummy.

assertion of death as sleep, which is accentuated for the audience witnessing a communal expression of grief coupled with their individual knowledge of Imogen's state of mere sleep.

Like the service, the brother's dirge offers several comforting and familiar sentiments on the power of death to offer reprieve from the hardships of earthly life, such as poverty, labor, disenfranchisement, even the extremities of nature: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun,/ Nor the furious winter's rages" (4.2. 258-59). Also here is the familiar trope of the "universal" death, meant to offer reassurance: "Golden lads and girls all must,/ As chimney-sweeps, come to dust" (261-62). This the metaphor extends not only the universal death experienced by both "golden" children and lowly chimney sweeps, but the pun on the dust of the chimney-sweeps harkens to the "quintessence of dust" that we all must return to, and echoing the burial service's words "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" (310). The dirge repeats "...and come to dust" three times, indicating not only the occurrence of death, but also a movement towards death, an invitation to submit to physical obliteration. While throughout the song the imperatives state what *not* to fear, in the final stanza the attention of the song shifts to what *to* fear: the many threats that might be posed to the body in the grave:

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have,
And renewed by thy grave!

(276-81).

These final lines, which are between blessings and demands, betray a concern regarding the unrest of the dead. The commonplace sentiment that the grave is the end of all earthly troubles is suddenly disrupted by the anxiety that it may be no such thing. As I have suggested, the repeated assertions of the grave as being a peaceful bed of rest and repose betrays an anxiety that death is nothing but. Again, Shakespeare contradicts the comforting notions expressed in funerary literature and ritual and asserts that death *can* be disrupted; the dead do not rest in peace but

rather exist in a vulnerable state where the body can be “harmed” or “charmed.”²⁰¹ In combating this, the concluding stanza of the dirge is, in some sense, a prayer for the dead, yet an anti-intercessory one, pleading only that the dead should be left alone to achieve “quiet consummation.” While “consummation” is a euphemism for death, understood as the completed or even perfected state of a human being, in this context it also carries the sense of “consumption,” a reminder of the biological processes where the body achieves its final status of dust. These concerns over the restful slumber of the dead are fully embodied when the audience is confronted immediately succeeding this idyllic funeral with Imogen’s awakening beside the corpse of Cloten.

The positioning of the two bodies on stage, one whole and one fractured; one living and one dead, achieves an almost Senecan power. Like Phaedra in Studley’s translation of Seneca’s *Hippolytus* and Juliet’s brief contemplation of Romeo’s corpse, Imogen’s meditation upon of the corpse of Cloten/Posthumus inspires her own annihilation. However, unlike Phaedra and Juliet, in a romance that annihilation is symbolic:

This is Pisanio’s deed, and Cloten: O!
Give color to my pale cheek with thy blood,
That we the horrider may seem to those
Which chance to find us. O, my lord! My lord!

(4.2. 329-32)

There is a real potential of running the lines, “Cloten O Give color to my pale cheek,” which brings attention to Imogen’s blurring of the two bodies. Arden editor J.M. Nosworthy notes that, “there

²⁰¹ Inscribed on a slab in the chancel of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Stratford-upon-Avon, are what may be the last lines of poetry Shakespeare ever composed:

Good friend, for Jesus’ sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,
And cursed he that moves my bones.

Shakespeare’s epitaph bears a disquieting resemblance to that of the misanthrope *Timon of Athens* in his readiness to curse beyond the grave. In each case, it seems that Shakespeare seems far less preoccupied with what he *knew* would happen to this body than with what he feared *might* happen to it.

seems no escape from the gruesome conclusion that she smears her face with his blood."²⁰²

However, unlike Nosworthy, I believe there is more than mere Grand Guignol gruesomeness operating in this gesture: the smearing of blood effects an externalization of the internal "horror" that she experiences. And with this gesture, coinciding with the use of "we," Imogen aligns herself with the corpse on stage, effecting a symbolic self-destruction. Like Juliet's potion-induced sleeping in the tomb, Imogen's performance of narcotic sleep is also symbolic of her death. However, Imogen is not in a tomb but in the open space of the forest, surrounded by its regenerative possibilities. Therefore her symbolic death remains figurative and ushers in her metaphorical rebirth.

After she emulates her annihilation, she presumably falls on the body of Cloten. It is this scene that Lucius enters upon and confuses the two figures on stage, unable to tell the living actor from the dead corpse. The audience may in fact think that Imogen has died of her grief, strewn upon the "bloody pillow" (363) of the headless Cloten. Lucius puzzles:

How? A page?
Or dead; or sleeping on him? But dead rather:
For nature doth abhor to make his bed
With the defunct, or sleep upon the dead.

(355-58).

Lucius not only confuses the two bodies on stage, but their representative states of sleeping and death. While he is unable to distinguish if it is one dead figure, or a living body sleeping upon a dead one, he hopes is the former because, according to Lucius, it is unnatural for the living to sleep with the dead. We are long way from Verona, and what was acceptable in *Romeo and Juliet* is inconceivable in Milford-Haven.

Romances often contain the potential to veer off into the tragic, and *Cymbeline* intensifies that potential by giving us dark moments that emerge from the preceding tragedies of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Lear*. In *Cymbeline* the threat of the tragic is manifested most acutely during the sleeping scenes of Imogen that echo and portend the potential interruption of the romantic resolution of the play. Like *Romeo and Juliet*, Imogen and Posthumus are reunited at the end;

²⁰² 136, n.

however, theirs is a reunion without memorials or effigies. The court wonders at and celebrates their reconciliation, with Belarius asking, "Is not this boy revived from death?" and Guiderus concurring that it must be "The same dead thing alive" (5.5. 121-5). While the audience knows that Imogen was never really dead and therefore has not been supernaturally resurrected, the language of that possibility still evokes a sense of miraculous, and romance-driven, preservation and regeneration.

V

When John Rainold's attacks the theatres in 1599 for encouraging "men to be ravished with love of stones, of dead stuff," he condemns performers that are "framed by cunning gravers to beautiful women's likeness; as in poets' fables appeareth by Pygmalian."²⁰³ Rainold's concern is that the theatre will enchant us with the idols of living-dead. It is true, in *The Winter's Tale* that we are "ravished" with the stone, the "dead stuff" of Hermione. And while she is never called a corpse, nor is she ever depicted as asleep, it is the "dead likeness" (5.3. 15) of Hermione's statue that Paulina claims is "life lively mock'd as ever/ Still sleep mock'd death" (19-20).²⁰⁴ Like Iachimo describing Imogen's sleep as an "ape of death" (2.2. 31), we have another apish imitation. However, it is now a sculpture that mimics *both* sleep and death. Here there is a new conjunction in Shakespeare's representation of the theatrical corpse as he connects it to art, specifically statuary, but more so to the theatre. As Robert Fothergill bluntly states, *The Winter's Tale* "hardly needs commendation as the play which gets it all right."²⁰⁵ Indeed, Hermione's statue and its transformation into life is the graceful culmination of *Lucrece*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lear*, and

²⁰³ Tanya Pollard, ed., *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004) 176.

²⁰⁴ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, ed. J.H.P. Pafford, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1963). All citations appear parenthetically.

²⁰⁵ Fothergill, "The Perfect Image of Life: Counterfeit Death in the Plays of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries," 175.

Cymbeline, and the final scene echoes each of these sleeping-corpses' power to disturb, yet actualizes their potential to dazzle.

Absent from the plot since her faint in the trial scene in Act 3, Hermione returns to the action of the play at the end of Act 5. Unlike other plays such as *Cymbeline* and *Pericles*, there is no interval of time where Hermione is supposed dead; she *is* dead. Audience members familiar with the source, *Pandosto*, are sure of it. Moreover, Paulina swore to it, claiming there was no "Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,/ Heat outwardly or breath within" (3.2. 224-5). Therefore when we see Hermione again as a statue in the discovery space of Paulina's chapel, we have been given no indication of her existence. Herimone's resurrection is the only instance in these plays where the first-time audience is not privileged to the fact that she has been apparently alive this whole time. Shakespeare's decision to exclude the audience from all knowledge of what has happened to Hermione during the past sixteen years gives him a dramatic advantage over the theatrical corpse as he is able to remove the body from both the stage, and the minds of the audience, so that is no longer an element in dramatic resolution until he is ready to "fill [her] grave up" (5.3. 101). Moreover, in doing this, the audience is placed in the same situation of most characters on stage as they share the tension that Leontes experiences just as they had shared in Lear's. In many ways Leontes recapitulates the dying Lear's hopes for Cordelia's revival when he sees the living statue of his wife. And he is reminiscent of Lear's tottering reason when he attempts to convince others of his delusion: "would you not deem it breath'd? And that those veins/ Did verily bear blood?" (64-65). As just as in Lear, the audiences' gaze is fixed on Hermione's figure.

Juliet and Imogen's performances as sleeping-corpses are compared to monuments and they eventually return to their conscious states by awakening from their death-like sleep. However, Hermione performs as a corpse through her existence as a statue, via her stillness and her object-ness. She comes alive not through awakening from a sleep, but from a theatrical transformation from stage property into *dramatis personae*. For Donovan Sherman, Hermione's statue bridges the gap between narration and drama in that the "statue breaks its own mimesis by

merging with its Platonic ideal."²⁰⁶ Of course this, in itself, is an illusion: there is no statue, even in the play's own fiction, but rather an actor's body that strives for stillness. Still, the audience believes, and disbelieves simultaneously, yielding to the theatrical experience and yet knowing that what they witness is "romance"—none of this is real.

For Shakespeare the theatrical corpse in his plays provide a dramatic element with which to question cultural dialogues that envision the dead as sleeping peacefully and undisturbed. In so doing, Shakespeare is able to use the theatrical corpse as dramatic device that imperils dramatic genre, and in so doing asserts the performative nature the corpse on stage. In the same way that the sleep of death can—and often was in early modern English churchyards—disturbed, so can the sleeping theatrical corpse disturb, and thereby define, dramatic genres and conventions.

²⁰⁶ Donovan Sherman, "The Absent Elegy: Performing Trauma in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 27.2 (2009) 215. Sherman largely focuses his analysis of the play on Mamillius as a model of loss and recovery in light of recent developments of trauma theory.

CHAPTER 5

THE BODY IN PROPS:

THE DISMEMBERED THEATRICAL CORPSE IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DRAMA

In my two previous chapters I have explored the efficacy of the theatrical corpse as a staging element and I have examined how Shakespeare appropriated the corpse's deadness through the rehearsal of sleep in performance. This final chapter continues my performance-inspired explorations of the function and significance of the theatrical corpse by considering how dismembered body parts of the corpse are used as theatrical props in the seventeenth century dramas *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14), *The Changeling* (1622), and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1631). In so doing, I discover how the severed body parts of the theatrical corpse function in the theatre, not only as metaphors of psychological or social fragmentation, but as active agents used to implement schemes that produce tangible effects in the material world. In seventeenth century dramas the severed parts of theatrical corpses are transformed into stage properties, and even more so, into narrative agents that cite their corporeal owners. In this chapter I will demonstrate how when a theatrical corpse is dismembered—resulting in a fake hand, heart, or finger—the fragment, through its active nature as a stage property, challenges cultural notions over the integrity of the body after death and asserts the corpse's potential dislocated efficacy. In other words, the severed body part, although disassociated from its producing corpse, functions as a “free agent” in order to produce delayed, yet intended results.

The vigor of the dead object as a prop in seventeenth century dramas underscores the vitality of corpses in early modern theatrical plots, which both depend upon and accommodate their audiences' ability to recognize traces of liveliness in those supposedly dead. Like the theatrical corpses of Horatio, Bazajeth and Zabina, Juliet and Romeo, Imogen, and Cordelia that I

have discussed, the fragmented corpse provides a focal point for the audience's attention. However, unlike those theatrical corpses—which are staged and imagined as whole and intact—the severed members of seventeenth century corpses enact and engage with the narrative energy of these plays as fragments, all the while referencing their absent hosts.

As an artistic motif and theme, corporal fragmentation varies in prominence in sixteenth and seventeenth century drama. Severed heads, hands, legs, fingers, and tongues abound in the texts of early modern plays, as well as on the prop table backstage. For example, Hieronimo's famous self-excision of his tongue at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy* (1582-92), the less famous but equally furious "plucking out" of Piero's tongue by Antonio and his fellow revengers in *Antonio's Revenge* (1599-1601), infamous heads and hands in *Titus Andronicus* (1589-94), the ear, head, and hands that are severed in *Massacre at Paris* (1593), and false legs and heads in *Doctor Faustus* (of the 1616 B text) which are followed by his bodily dismemberment in the final scene, and the similarly spectacular set dressing that decorates the final scene of *The Bloody Banquet* (1600?)²⁰⁷. While later tragedies are often cited for their sensational gore, they are surprisingly minimalist in comparison, yet no less gruesome: *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606-7) uses a single skull to enact revenge on a corrupt court; *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-14) displays a severed hand that we later learn to be a waxen prop; *The Changeling* (1622) parades a severed finger; and in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1631) an eviscerated heart is impaled at the end of a dagger is carried onstage in the final scene.

Whereas Elizabethan plays often feature limbs severed from "living" bodies, such as Titus and Lavinia's hands in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Jacobean bodily fragments are obtained from theatrical corpses—those characters killed in the course of the drama and played by living actors. In these later dramas, specifically, *The Duchess of Malfi*, *The Changeling*, and *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, the severed body parts of the theatrical corpses operate as stage

²⁰⁷ *The Bloody Banquet* was first printed in quarto in 1639 but because of a lack of topical allusions or contemporary external references, the date of composition is questionable. Gary Talor posits that Thomas Middleton originally wrote the play with help from Thomas Dekker, sometime between 1600 and 1602. See Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, ed., *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

properties in that they exert a displaced efficacy—enacting violence or expressing desire— independent from, yet still related to, their producing corpses. By approaching the dismembered fragment as a stage property I examine the narrative function of bodily props on the Jacobean stage as well as the theoretical issues that the fragment raises regarding bodily wholeness. The Jacobean fragment of the theatrical corpse resists being read as a simple metaphor of political or erotic discourse, rather it participates in a post-Reformation aesthetic that allows for a new ideology that conceives of the body differently.

I

It would be a mistake to underestimate the role of corporeal fragmentation in medieval literature and thought. Religious relics, zodiac figures (with each sign corresponding to a part of the body), the circulating organs of the *fabliaux*, witness accounts of phantom limbs, and the dramatic depictions of martyrdom via dismemberment all mark the body as a charged site of fragmentation. Medieval philosophy and theology understood corporeal fragmentation as demonstrative of Christian unity and therefore religious and social systems were modeled on bodily organization. However with the Reformation's recalibration of Catholic ideology of the material body, that confidence was no longer available in the Elizabeth and Jacobean periods.²⁰⁸ Therefore the proliferation of social and symbolic dismemberment of the body in the early modern period, be it by punitive dismemberment on the scaffold, pictorial isolation in anatomy texts, or poetic blazoning in sonnets, has generated a significant body of criticism about the logic and meaning of fragmentation.²⁰⁹ The severed body parts and skeletal remains that are such notable features in early modern plays have in the past, been derided as sheer sensationalism or more

²⁰⁸ Carolyn Bynum has theorized about the gradually increasing interest in body parts as objects of veneration in medieval Europe. See Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992).

²⁰⁹ See Nancy J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981); Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995); Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

recently, explored as a site for emerging scientific and sexual objectification of the body. In these studies bodies are marked out as ritual objects embodying either contagion or horror, or subsumed into networks of economic exchange. However, I argue that once we consider these fragments as stage properties originating from theatrical corpses, we can see how they refuse to be subsumed into such symbolic discourse.

Literary scholars who investigate the dismembered body typically focus on how such violence to the body signifies the fracturing of the self and the larger abstract social/political body that is ruptured in the course of these plays.²¹⁰ An example of such scholarship is David Hillman and Carla Mazzio's collection of essays, *The Body in Parts*, that surveys the various literary and cultural examples of bodily dismemberment, including eyes, hands, organs, and tongues demonstrating that "the body in parts is not always the body in pieces."²¹¹ As Mazzio and Hillman explain the goal of the collection is to chart "the function of the body parts in articulating conditions of subjectivity." The collection provides valuable reading regarding the significance attached to individual organs and systems in early modern thought, offering secondary consideration of the processes that isolate the body's elements from one another. For example, Carla Mazzio's essay, "Sins of the Tongue," examines how "pervasive images of autonomous speech organs in early modern period" found in such texts as Erasmus' *Lingua* and early modern emblem books, "speak not only to conditions of linguistic and cultural fragmentation... but, more specifically, to conditions of psychic fragmentation."²¹² While individual essays focus on several specific body parts/ organs, as a collection the book attempts to reconfigure the early modern body as an ontological whole constituted by individual organs, arguing that the body is the sum of the parts and if we can read the individual pieces then we can interpret the whole and extend that interpretation to other early modern systems such as politics, religion, psychology, and biology.

²¹⁰ It is important to note that Hillman and Mazzio's collection largely deals with poetry, except for Hillman's discussion on human entrails in Shakespeare's plays. Dismembered bodies function very differently on stage than in poetry because in the theatre audiences are presented with physical, bodily representation that grounds the figurative imagination.

²¹¹ David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, ed., *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) xi, xix.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 57.

In her attempt to expand the discussion to move beyond mere appendages, Margaret Owens examines the *act* of dismemberments in her study on the representation of violence in early modern drama. Owens' *Stages of Dismemberment* draws upon psychoanalytic models, especially the concepts of traumatic repetition, and the uncanny return of the repressed. Owens articulates what many of these scholars discover in early modern plays: "dismemberment tends to expose the social and political inscription on the human body, and hence the subject."²¹³ Each of these studies views the dismembered body part as a single symbolic metonym of a fractured religious and psychological psyche working to remember itself whole, seeking to discover the meaning behind the mutilations. While such scholarly efforts attempt to re-attach the severed limbs in order to recreate a fantasy of an intact political, social, or medical body, none address the theatrical conditions of drama, such as the conventional use of waxen props or animal organs to stage bodily fragments and bloody entrails. These staging concerns are made even more culturally compelling, as this chapter will demonstrate, when we consider them as being visually juxtaposed with the wholeness of the actor's body on the stage.

The isolated body part in early modern England is not always a source of anxiety—especially in Jacobean drama. In my examination of Jacobean plays I have found that the bodily fragment is repeatedly repurposed, refusing to settle for the role of passive symbol that substitutes for the whole body. Rather, it is used as an active agent in the play that exerts influence over narratives and characters. By staging an *active* fragment of the body Jacobean plays assert a macabre refusal of the fantasy of wholeness that extends to various other ideological fantasies of union operating in the plays.

It will be helpful to look at Elizabethan dramas in order to position the Jacobean fragmented corpse properly. For example, *Titus Andronicus* makes approximately sixty references to "hands" throughout the play, calling attention to the parts of the body that are violated in the course of the drama. In the first act Lavinia asks her father to bless her "with thy

²¹³ Margaret E. Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005) 20.

victorious hand" (1.1. 163)²¹⁴, which foreshadows the eventual mutilations in the play—the severing of Lavinia’s hands, and Titus’ willing sacrifice of his own hand. *Titus* is full of such moments in which the language of the play directs our perceptions toward the isolated parts of the human body that later become, literally, isolated *from* their bodies. In fact, it has been argued that language itself generates most of the horror in *Titus Andronicus* as words disengage from casual usage and become literalized.²¹⁵ In this way, the language of hands serves as a linguistic prosthesis for the physical lack of hands. While linguistic substitution for body parts works in play, material substitution does not.²¹⁶ For example, when Titus cuts off his own hand to spare the lives of his imprisoned sons, only to have the severed heads of his sons returned to him “in scorn” (3.1. 238) with his own ineffectually sacrificed hand. Titus’ hand, as a prop, has no power—to free his sons or to enact revenge. Although Titus’ hand is returned to him at the end of the scene, it does not function as an active stage prop that engages in the subsequent events of the play. In fact, after this scene Titus’ prop hand is never seen again, yet his handlessness is repeatedly referred to: “O, here I lift this one hand up to heaven,/ And bow this feeble ruin to the earth” (3.1. 207-08)... “This poor right hand of mine/ is left to tyrannize upon my breast..” (3.2. 7-8)... “O, handle not the theme, to talk of hands/ Lest we remember still that we have none” (3.2. 29-30). The

²¹⁴ This and all subsequent quotations are taken from William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. Jonathan Bate, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 1995).

²¹⁵ See Albert H. Tricoli, "Aesthetics of Mutilation in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Survey* 27 (1974). See also Gillian Murray Kendall, "'Lend Me Thy Hand': Metaphor and Mayhem in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.3 (1989) where Murray Kendall argues that the violence done to metaphor is only one aspect of violence associated with language in the play. Tracing the ways in which words distort how characters of the play view their world, along with patterns of previous fictions and myths, Murray Kendall reveals how words “influence, transform, and mutilate the action of the play” (299).

²¹⁶ I argue elsewhere that the void dismemberment engenders is emphasized by the repeated reconstruction of Titus and Lavinia’s hands by stage properties not only within the text but in modern productions of the play. Both Julie Taymor and Peter Brook’s replacements of Lavinia’s hands with theatrical prosthetics illustrate an impulse that is inherent in the text. They occupy the void created by bodily violence with stage props, emphasizing the absence of the hand with the presence of theatrical prostheses. I argue that such attempts at theatrical substitution, while encouraging audiences to imagine the characters’ bodies as whole, in fact call attention to their deficiency. See “Stage Hands: The Body as Property in *Titus Andronicus*” in *Titus Out of Joint: Reading the Fragmented Titus Andronicus*, ed. Paxton Hehmeyer and Liberty Savage. Cambridge Scholars Press, forthcoming.

severed hand—and its lack—is always associated with Titus, albeit referring his helplessness and lack of power.

As *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates, in early plays amputations are associated with the violated body from which they originate, and what such violation may signify. Another example of this, *The Bloody Banquet*, tells the story of a usurping tyrant who steals the throne from the Old King of Lydia and banishes the royal family from the kingdom, except for the Old King's gentle-natured son, Tymethes. The Tyrant's wife, the Young Queen, is kept imprisoned, yet upon seeing Tymethes, falls in love with him and the two begin a clandestine affair. In 4.3 the Young Queen, concerned that her lover Tymethes' indiscretions will lead to her ruin, shoots him with two pistols. Her husband, the Tyrant, enters her chamber suspecting her betrayal and finds the body of Tymethes. He is unconvinced of the Young Queen's explanation of her attempted rape and self-defense. Comparing her to a hunter who has just killed a deer, he orders his servants to butcher Tymethes' body and prepare it for a feast:

Drag hence that body, see it quarter'd straight;
No living wrath can I extend upon't,
Else torments, horrors, gibbets, racks and wheels
Had with a thousand deaths presented him
Ere he had tasted one.

(1653-7)

The Tyrant admits that the corpse, as a dead object, cannot be subjected to pain and torture. In fact, he explicitly contrasts the corpse's dead state with his own "living wrath." Yet, he can express his anger through enacting post-mortem violence not only upon the corpse, but upon the body of the Queen: the Tyrant informs the Young Queen that she will be forced to eat her former lover as punishment for her sexual transgression. He exits with the body only to re-enter "*bringing in Tymethes' limbs*" which are then strung up around in the Young Queen's chamber:

So, bring 'em forward yet, *there, there*, bestow them
Before her eyes *lay the divided limbs* of her desired Paramour...
By heaven, no other food thy taste shall have,
Till in thy bowels those corpses find a grave...
Hang those quarters up.

(1717-26, my emphasis)

The Tyrant's repeated instructions are directed to the limbs of Tymethes, and his verbal cues call attention to the fleshy stage props not only to his wife, but to the audience as well—both cannot help but gaze upon the “horrid and inhuman spectacle” (5.2. 1881).

As the next and final Act opens Tymethes' butchered limbs are still hanging in display, and they remain so throughout the rest of the play. The aged King of Lydia, who has been wrongly usurped by the Tyrant, returns to his realm disguised as a pilgrim and discovers “three quarters of a man hung up” in the entrance of his castle. Adding to the horror is the King of Lydia's discovery that the flesh belongs to his son. The old king and his party cannot help but fixate on the limbs, for “Where'er I look, these limbs are in mine eyes.” To which the Tyrant explains, “You waste the virtue of your serious eye/ Too much on *such worthless objects* as that./ A Traitor when he liv'd call'd that his flesh; Let hang” (1903-06, my emphasis). For the Tyrant the limbs are mere props, symbolizing the betrayal of his wife, treason of his subject, and his power over both.

What is striking about this play is that the spectacle of human limbs hanging at the entrance to the castle is interpreted by the returning Old King and his party as a sign of evil: he asks, “What Tiranny hath been exercis'd of late?” (5.2. 1884). While in contemporary extra-theatrical world, the sight of human remains exhibited on the gates of a city supposedly signified the extermination of evil and the restoration of order, set within the fictive drama of *The Bloody Banquet* that spectacle evokes the opposite meaning: brutal and oppressive rule by a tyrant. Like in *Titus Andronicus*, the severed limbs in *The Bloody Banquet* literalize the metaphor of political disunity and corruption by the repeated attention given to the corporeal fragments. However, while those metaphors are physicalized into set dressings and stage props they do not function as agents in the narrative. Unlike these early examples of *Titus Andronicus* and *The Bloody Banquet*, Jacobean dramas have a special awareness of the body part as an *active* prop—one that directly engages and effects the plot of the drama. Such awareness reveals that as a prop, bodily fragments can signify many other things beyond the bodies that produce them. And while body fragments in Jacobean dramas have a related association with their producing corpses, they speak for themselves.

II

While literary scholars have investigated the culture and history of the bodily fragment, they have not considered its theatrical significance as a prop and tend to ignore the stage property as a vital component of the theatrical event.²¹⁷ While props may seem tangential to written drama, any regular theatergoer knows that in performance objects are often central. This is especially evident in early modern theatre, with its absence of illusionary scenery that thrusts objects into unusual prominence. On the mostly bare stage of Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses, props are both searing visual emblems and vital participants in stage action.

Frances Teague offers the most extensive analysis of Shakespeare's use of props in her study *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties*, where she explains how props are defined by their "dislocated function":

A property is an object, mimed or tangible, that occurs onstage, where it functions differently from the way it functions offstage.... Properties do not operate in performance as they do in a nontheatrical context—they mean differently.²¹⁸

For Teague, this "different meaning" does not supersede the object's everyday meaning: "[t]he ordinary function of the object does not disappear; an object has the same connotation that it has

²¹⁷ Performance-orientated Renaissance scholars do treat the prop as an important element of dramaturgy exploited by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. See David Bevington, *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), and Felix Bosonnet, *The Function of Stage Properties in Christopher Marlowe's Plays* (Bern: A. Francke, 1978). Meanwhile, those scholars interested in material culture investigate how stage props and costumes embody what Lena Cowen Orlin calls "the cultural project of things." See Lena Cowen Orlin, "The Performance of Things in *the Taming of the Shrew*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993). Scholars such as Peter Sallibrass, "Reading the Body and the Jacobean Theater of Consumption," *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Sallibrass (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, ed., *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002) focus on the material conditions in which early modern props were produced and exchanged. While these studies focus on what props *are* as objects, they do not explain *how* props are used or *how* they might mean on the early modern stage.

²¹⁸ Frances N. Teague, *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991) 16-17.

offstage.”²¹⁹ Teague’s “dislocated function,” suggests how props often estrange the quotidian behavior we come to expect from objects and is very close to the Russian formalist concept of *ostranenie* (“making strange”), or defamiliarization. Disclosing and making obvious the “fictive” qualities of the theatre—such as the obtuseness of the body fragment—alienates the spectators from any passive acceptance of wholeness. Rather, viewers are forced into a critical, analytical frame of mind that serves to disabuse them of the notion that what they are watching is inviolable, self-contained.²²⁰ This estrangement is an important point of focus for Andrew Sofer in his recent study of stage properties. In *The Stage Life of Props* Sofer refocuses the critical conversation on stage properties from a theatrical perspective. Sofer looks at specific props through theatrical history and investigates how props as material objects function as transit points of theatrical energy on stage and become volatile carriers of subjective and inter-subjective meaning, i.e. the bearers of human gesture and feeling.²²¹ According to Sofer, one of the ways that props exert this vitality is through their ability to “thrust their own material strangeness at the audience.”²²²

Although Sofer does not cite Teague’s “dislocation function” as part of the defamiliarization phenomenon, the concept is indebted to Teague’s work. For Teague, props cite off-stage objects, imitating and referring to their non-theatrical functions. Sofer is interested in

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²²⁰ This was one of the aims of Brechtian epic theatre; Brecht’s concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the alienation effect, is an adaptation of Russian formalist principles. Keir Elam locates the effect in theatrical semiosis, claiming that the “spectator is encouraged to take note of the semiotic means, to become aware of the sign-vehicle and its operations.” See Keir Elam, *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002) 15. However, I am drawn to Brecht’s own definition and its emphasis on the *object* as the site for alienation: “it is a way of drawing one’s own or someone else’s attention to a *thing*” which “consists in turning the *object* of which one is to be made aware, to which one’s attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar or immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected.” See Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willet (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964) 143.

²²¹ Among the historical props that Sofer discusses are the Communion wafer in medieval drama, the handkerchief on the early modern stage, the skull in Jacobean theatre, the ladies’ fan prevalent in Restoration comedy, and the stage gun on the modern stage. Much of Sofer’s analysis of the retrospective relationship of properties is inspired by Marvin Carlson’s concept of “ghosting.” See Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

²²² Andrew Sofer, *Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003) 20, 25.

such citations when a prop's materiality as an object "clashes with its conventional function as a sign or as tool." For Sofer, when this clash occurs, it results in the rupture of the "tacit representational conflict between performer and spectator."²²³ While for Teague props always imitate the off-stage function of objects, Sofer takes the "dislocated function" further to consider the power of props to defamiliarize our notion of those off-stage objects. In these particular moments props point to themselves rather than to external referents. While for Sofer this defamiliarization occurs commonly in modern drama I would like to propose that the defamiliarizing power of the props arises earlier in theatre history—with the Jacobean body fragment. I argue that in viewing body parts as props we can see them participating in this process of "dislocation function" and defamiliarization in that they challenge the audience's perception of the body as lifelessly intact after death. Through their "dislocated function" properties enact "dislocated efficacy;" the production of an intended result is disrupted or repurposed, both literarily and metaphorically. While the bodily fragment in Jacobean plays achieves its producing corpse's intentions, it is as a stage property in another character's hands.

III

If on-stage props mimic their off-stage counterparts, then what, exactly, are the properties of body parts citing? In other words, what visions of corpse-dismemberment influenced playwrights and playgoers? We know very little about the early modern stage techniques used to create false limbs or the effects used to stage spectacular scenes such as on-stage dismemberments.²²⁴ Jeremy Lopez infers from the large number of violent scenes throughout the

²²³ Ibid., 25.

²²⁴ In an article published in 1927, Louis B. Wright suggested that sixteenth and seventeenth century treatises describing the art of jugglery might furnish insights into early modern staging practices. According to Wright, "It is probably that realist scenes of bloodletting, bodily integrity, and stage executions often derive from tricks common to the repertoire of the ordinary juggler." See Louis B. Wright, "Juggling Tricks and Conjuring on the English Stage before 1642," *Modern Philology* 24 (1926-1927): 269. Among the best sources for information on the craft of sleight-of-hand is Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), which supplies detailed instructions on how "To thrust a bodkin into your head without hurt," or how "To thrust a dagger or bodkin into your guts verie strangelie, and to recouer immediatlie." Most involve trick knives and hollow hafts. See Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1971) 347-

period that “the technology was simple enough to be used widely and as needed, but sophisticated enough in its effects to be worth whatever trouble it was.”²²⁵ Often, what is focused on in studies of these Jacobean plays is the “spectacle” of the dramaturgy²²⁶ and not enough attention is given to the ways in which the playwrights might take these body parts for what they fundamentally are—props of the theatre, that is maneuverable, disposable, transferable, and falsifiable. While we do not know for certain how such props were created for the stage, we do have a sense of how the severed body parts were culturally perceived outside of the theatre, which helps us understand what associations severed body parts carried for playwrights and audiences.

Even in Protestant regions of early modern Europe, popular belief attributed an almost magical aura to the human corpse and its parts, and that aura can be seen in the theatrical treatment of body parts as stage properties in their power to have effect beyond the grave. Jacobean plays appropriate popular notions of the corpse, particularly the long tradition of its mysterious, semi-animate status. According to Hillary Nunn, “when actors brought stage props in the shape of supposedly lifeless body parts into the theatre, the audience could see these detached limbs as mysteriously endowed with a sensibility of their own.”²²⁷ For Nunn and other

50. A later treatise on witchcraft, Thomas Ady's *A Candle in the Dark* (1655), describes a beheading trick that seems well-suited to theatrical representations of decapitation and could be easily adaptable to stage executions.

²²⁵ Jeremy Lopez, *Theatrical Convention and Audience Response in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 109.

²²⁶ Andrew Gurr gives some known examples of special effects techniques (mostly bladders full of vinegar or animal blood), and includes a drawing from Reginald Scott's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) that demonstrates how to behead a man. See Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Books in the *Theatre Production Studies Series* (Routledge, edited by John Russell Brown) such as Michael Hattaway's *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (1982) and Sturges' *Jacobean Private Theatre* (1987) include excellent surveys of Elizabethan and Jacobean production values, but nevertheless have a shortage of information regarding on-stage dismemberment or similar violence. By far the best and most thorough discussion of staging and stage effects is George Fullmer Reynolds, *The Staging of Elizabethan Plays at the Red Bull Theater 1605-1625* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1940).

²²⁷ Hillary M. Nunn, *Staging Anatomies: Dissection and Spectacle in Early Stuart Tragedy* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005) 65.

scholars²²⁸ it is the establishment of anatomic sciences that accounts for the objectification of the fragment, as they see such nascent medical practices as an attempt to harness the gruesomeness associated with the corpse and its dismemberment through objective science. Anatomy sessions may have mimicked theatrical performance²²⁹ however unlike the corpses on the dissection table, the body parts on the Jacobean stage are endowed with a *material potency* that reflects the concerns of the corpse after death.

Katherine Park's study of the practices of embalming and dissecting corpses in early modern Europe suggests some of the reasons for the English frame of mind over the efficacy of the corpse. According to Park, death in England was envisaged as "an extended and gradual process" more or less concomitant with putrefaction. It could take up to a year or more for the corpse to decompose, during which time it was perceived as "active, sensitive, or semi-animate, [and] possessed of a gradually fading life."²³⁰ The deeply entrenched superstitions regarding the indeterminacy of the corpse was, of course, precisely one of the many beliefs that Protestant reformers were set against. However, the idea of a residual sentience in dead bodies did not die easily, as witnessed by the difficulties encountered by Tudor authorities in attempting to scale down or eradicate funerary practices that related to protecting or exploiting the corpse's latent powers.²³¹ Park points to a predominately northern European interest in drugs made from the fat

²²⁸ Such as Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* and Susan Zimmerman, *The Early Modern Corpse and Shakespeare's Theatre* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

²²⁹ In 1636 the Barber-Surgeons commissioned architect Indigo Jones to design the company's Anatomical Theatre as a permanent home for their dissections. Jones' plans bore a significant resemblance to the dramatic theatres he designed, most notably the Cockpit. Nunn argues that as the practice of medical dissection gained acceptance within the English medical community, theatrical violations of the body grew more common the English state. Nunn, *Staging Anatomies* 4-21. However, this conjecture does not take into account the fact that medical dissections never really achieved broad popular cultural acceptance in early modern England—which Park accounts for in her article as she treats the different perspectives on autopsy in Italy and England. See Katharine Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," *Journal of History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 50 (1995).

²³⁰ Park, "The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe," 115.

²³¹ David Cressy acknowledges that rituals of birth, marriage, and death customarily undergo gradual rather than radical transformation, however thoroughly the official prescriptions for such rituals may be reformulated. See David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 396-41. The

and flesh of the recently dead, “the special power of which seems to have lain in their lingering vitality.”²³² Known as *mummia*, this drug was procured specifically from the body of a person who died an unnatural death. For Park, such beliefs in a “sensitive and potentially active corpse” led to practices that protected and contained the body—such as winding sheets and coffining. Park argues that, “in the North... people saw the flesh-and-blood body as in some ways integral to the self,”²³³ as Hamlet claims upon observing the Gravedigger “throw up a skull”: “That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if ‘twere Cain’s jawbone, that did the first murder. This might be the pate of a politician which this ass now o’erreaches...” (5.1. 71-74). Despite Hamlet and the Gravedigger’s frank conversation over a corpse’s process of purification (“will last you some eight year—or nine year...,” 157), Hamlet is able to see how a skull that “hath lien you i’th’ earth three and twenty years” (163-4) still has the power to remind him of the Yorick’s “jibes... gambols.. songs... flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar” (179-181). This iconic moment in Shakespeare’s play, where Hamlet mockingly reanimates the skull he picks up, points to the power of “dead objects” to be given life in the hands of another actor. There is a residual sense that the body fragment retains vitality even after being separated from its host.²³⁴

most extensive demonstration of the gradations of change is Peter Marshall’s study of the Reformation dead. Marshall concludes that the “Protestant Reformation... represented in practice a complex and protracted process of cultural exchange in which the teachings of the reformers were adapted and internalized in sometimes unforeseen ways, and in which the concerns of the people helped to shape and direct the priorities of the reformers...” See Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 311.

²³² Park, “The Life of the Corpse: Division and Dissection in Late Medieval Europe,” 116.

²³³ Ibid. 118, 119.

²³⁴ I have never seen a production of *Hamlet* in which the actor playing Hamlet did not find some peculiar intimacy with his prop skull, making it to look outward or at himself, whispering into its non-existent ear, making it nod, laugh, and speech even in his own distorted voice. In other words, Hamlet both speaks for and *doubles* Yorick’s jesting skull. Yorick’s intent being manifested through Hamlet’s actions has recently been made especially explicit with the recent RSC controversy over the use of an actual human skull. The skull, once belonging to Andre Tchaikowsky, a Polish pianist, was bequeathed to the RSC for the express purpose of being used in *Hamlet*. Once it revealed inadvertently by actor David Tennant that an actual human skull was being used in production, the RSC announced that the skull would be replaced with a fake for all future productions, so not to “distract” audiences. However, nine months later director Greg Doran admitted that the company continued the real skull in order to fulfill Tchaikowsky’s wishes.

As I have discussed in Chapter One, Protestant reformers attacked the idolatrous worship of painted images and relics through state-sanctioned homilies, issued new regulations for the decoration of tombs, and attempted to eradicate “superstitious” attitudes towards the corpse as manifested in the Catholic burial and funeral practices. Because of such latent beliefs in the potential animation of the corpse, funerary practices in early modern England attempted to de-animate the corpse during its period of putrefaction, or as Susan Zimmerman says, “to disempower its fetishistic presence within the cultural consciousness.”²³⁵ In *The Rest is Silence*, Robert N. Watson identifies various ways in which the Reformation attempted this disempowerment, contributing to a “heightening” of the “psychological burdens of mortality.”²³⁶ He notes that one of the many channels of communication between the living and dead that was severed occurred with the suppression of the cult of relics. As Watson states, “by forbidding belief in the miraculously preserved reliquary remains of saints, Protestantism forbade the hope that piety might somehow exempt the body from physical decay.”²³⁷ In this way, Reformers posited that the virtuous actions performed in this life would have no influence in the afterlife. However, the Jacobean theatre exploits the hope of bodily integrity and influence by staging powerful secular relics—body parts that retain vitality and agency despite being removed from their producing corpses. If relics of saints represent the result of a piously performed life, harnessed and located in the physical entity of the fragmented body part, then on-stage body fragments also reflect the efficacy of performance to instill objects with agency and influence. By using the bodily fragment, that is an object without sentience, as an agent of dramatic action to further the plot of

²³⁵ Zimmerman, *Early Modern Corpse* 132.

²³⁶ Robert N. Watson, *The Rest as Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) 5. Watson’s argument that the Reformation provoked a “crisis of mortality” in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture has been echoed by Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); and Stephen Greenblatt, *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). These scholars offer compelling analysis of the theatrical effects of this crisis, identifying the Reformation as the leading stimulus to the “extraordinary burgeoning of tragic drama in late Elizabethan and Jacobean England.” As Neill succinctly puts it, “tragedy... was among the principle instruments by which the culture of early modern England reinvented death.”

²³⁷ Watson, *The Rest as Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* 5.

the play, enact revenge, express desire, and torture its beholders—these plays “cite” the off-stage fragment of the corpse which was thought to have powers of animation. Despite the Reformation’s attempts to suppress such folk beliefs, the power of the corporeal fragment persisted in the minds of the English and on the London stages.

IV

My argument that we need to treat dismembered corpses as stage properties in order to fully understand their cultural impact on and significance to early modern theatre audiences begins with the example of the “dead man’s hand” episode in Act 4 of Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*.²³⁸ In this scene, Duke Ferdinand, the young Duchess’ erratic and irrational twin brother, punishes his sister for secretly remarrying after her first husband’s death. Having enveloped the Duchess in darkness²³⁹, Ferdinand determines to mentally torture her with a series of grotesqueries that begins with his presenting (what the Duchess discovers to be) a dead man’s hand:

Ferdinand: I come to seal my peace with you: here’s a
 hand,
 To which you have vow’d much love: the
 Ring upon’t you gave.

²³⁸ All quotations are from John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, Revels Editions, ed. John Russell Brown (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997) and will appear parenthetically.

²³⁹ The play, according to its title page was performed both at the Blackfriars and the Globe theatre, quite likely during the same year, since the Globe was used in good weather and the Blackfriars during the Fall/Winter months. The new Globe was not available until 1614, when it was rebuilt after a fire. Therefore production of the play may have started at the indoor Blackfriars and then moved to the Globe in the Spring of 1614. Theatre historians and editors have imagined that *Malfi* at the Blackfriars would have been markedly different than at the Globe in terms of the private, indoor theatre’s potential for stage effects. But research by R.B. Graves suggests that although the Globe was lit by daylight, and Blackfriars by a combination of daylight and candlelight—though the windows may have been blocked by black velvet hanging for tragedies—neither venue allows for more than the most minimal control of ambient lightening on stage. When the Duchess waits in darkness for Ferdinand’s visit, then calls for lights and discovers the horror of the severed hand, the entire scene takes place in the lights; the audience’s recognition that the scene moves from darkness to light is a matter of stage convention signaled by the bringing of a torch or lantern, not by significant changes in the level of lightening onstage. However, as Graves notes, the back of the stage would usually have been darker than the front, so that the vision of the wax bodies might have been fairly hard for the audience to discern clearly. See R.B. Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage, 1567-1642* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Press, 1999).

Gives her a dead man's hand.

Duchess: I affectionately kiss it.
Ferdinand: Pray do: and bury the print of it in our heart:
I will leave this ring with you for a love token
And the hand, as sure as the ring; and do not doubt
But you shall have the heart too: when you need a friend
Send it to him, that ow'de it: you shall see
Whether he can aid you.
Duchess: You are very cold.
I fear you are not well after your travel.
Hah? Lights! Oh horrible!
Ferdinand: Let her have lights enough.
Exit.
Duchess: What witchcraft doth he practice, that he hath
left
A dead-man's hand here?

*Here is discovered, behind a traverse, the artificial figures of
ANTONIO and his children, appearing as if they were dead.*

(4.1.42-54).

Moments after Ferdinand exits, the Duchess catches her first glimpse of the dead man's hand and the discovery space curtains²⁴⁰ open to reveal what the stage directions describe as "artificial figures." Neither the Duchess, nor the audience, can be as confident as the printed text's readers in the figures' artificiality. Bosola gestures to the waxwork body of Antonio, presumably missing a hand, and claims it as "the piece from which 'twas ta'en" (55), associating the dead man's hand with the lifeless owner. The combined displays, Bosola declares, constitute a "sad spectacle" designed to provide the Duchess with incontrovertible evidence of her family's fate. He encourages her to conclude, "now you know directly they are dead" (58). Here, the counter-intentional quality of the "hand" is contrasts with the Duchess' expectations is manifested through Bosola's actions as the "hand" of Ferdinand.

More than fifty lines of dialogue are exchanged between the Duchess and Bosola before she exits, all the while the bodies of the Antonio and the children lie on the stage, amplifying the

²⁴⁰ Most editors have Bosola draw the curtains, but there are not specific stage directions indicating so. Also, it is arguably more effective to leave unseen the method by which Ferdinand reveals the figures, as was done in the 1850 adaptation by R.H. Horne produced by Samuel Phelps, when the traverse was replaced by a wall that magically opened by itself.

Duchess' grief and, despite the forgery, animating them with a sense of life. This scene is not particularly strange, as evidenced by my previous chapters that demonstrate how early modern audiences were quite accustomed to seeing corpses staged, especially within the discovery space.²⁴¹ However, after the Duchess leaves the scene Ferdinand returns and draws attention to the spectacle of illusion. He delights:

Excellent, as I would wish; she's plagued in art.
These presentations are but framed in wax
By the curious master in that quality,
Vincentio Lauriola, and she takes them
For true substantial bodies

(4.1.111-115).

If the Duchess remains unaware of their artificial nature, then scholars also seem, if not equally unaware, inattentive to the theatrical nature of the scene and its significance to the play.²⁴² By focusing their analysis on symbolic themes and source studies of the scene, scholars miss the relationship between the “dead man’s hand” and the process of defamiliarization of the waxen bodies taking place in the scene that affects the rest of the play. When, in the following scene, Bosola shows to Ferdinand the “actual” strangled children of Antonio and the Duchess posed behind the same traverse in the same discovery space, the previous “presentations” are recalled. By doing so, the theatricality of the “feigned” children questions the reality of the “actual” murders, and throughout the play audience members are never fully confident of what they are presented is “real,” in turn relating to the Duchess’ hope—and the audiences’—that the children and Antonio are still alive.

²⁴¹ I believe that Webster is aware of and ironically engages with the theatrical history of the discovery space as a stage space that de-animates bodies as he stages either already dead objects (waxen dummies) or the living bodies of actors within the discovery space to convince his audience they are truly “dead.”

²⁴² For example, Hillary Nunn falls prey to Ferdinand’s spectacles. She seems convinced that because the figures of Antonio and the children are waxen, that the severed hand is actually a severed man’s hand—and not part of the same illusion of waxen figures. See Nunn, *Staging Anatomies* 95-96. She goes so far to note that such “theatrical properties were often real body parts” (102, n6). While some props were made of animal organs, it is highly doubtful that a real human hand was used in production.

Many twentieth century commentators approach the wax figures as having “no other function than Madame Tussaud’s.”²⁴³ However, I argue it is precisely the “Tussaudian” agenda that is operating in this play which I wish to focus on, the power of the feigned figures to seem real only to be revealed for what they are: imitations of the real. David M. Bergeron views the scene as epitomizing Webster’s concern for commemoration throughout the play. Accordingly, for Bergeron, the wax figures resemble funeral effigies with which the early modern audience would be familiar, and “as effigies they must bear significant resemblance to the actual characters so that the Duchess will take them for ‘true substantial bodies’.”²⁴⁴ If operating within a “naturalist” theatre this might be true; however, in the seventeenth century there is no reason why the wax figures could not have been abstract dummies, or as most likely, the actors themselves played them.

The waxen nature of the hand eludes critics such as Scott Dudley who reads the hand as part of a prevalent Jacobean cultural impetus to “have access to the past through the physical.”²⁴⁵ Dudley uses the term “necrophilia” as an emblem for these plays as they attempt to “convert a subject that has been an object back into a subject again.”²⁴⁶ For Dudley the images of the severed hand and waxen bodies “merely represent the potential power of the corpse and, as representations, provide no access to the past or the truth.”²⁴⁷ While Dudley is invested in the demonstrating the return of repressed beliefs in the power of the physical world to embody the supernatural, if we consider the macabre body parts as more than mere relics but as narrative facilitators of meaning and action we are able to observe them pointing to off-stage corporeal fragments and, more so, to themselves as agents in the drama.

²⁴³ Igna-Stina Ekebald, “‘The Impure Art’ of John Webster,” *Review of English Studies* 9.35 (1958) 254.

²⁴⁴ David M. Bergeron, “The Wax Figures in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *Studies in English Literature* 18 (1978) 335. This observation by Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* 339.

²⁴⁵ Scott Dudley, “Conferring with the Dead: Necrophilia and Nostalgia in the Seventeenth Century,” *ELH* 66.2 (1999) 277.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 289.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 287.

Beyond seeing the hand as part of a larger ideological pattern, scholars have also invested the severed hand in *The Duchess of Malfi* with historical-materialist meaning. Dale B.J. Randall acknowledges that Webster makes an “uncanny use of symbolic stage properties” yet views the severed hand as a “mark and extension” of Ferdinand’s own madness. Randall spends significant time exploring the phallic qualities of the hand within the context of Ferdinand’s own sexual repressions, but ultimately he reads the severed hand as participating in the handclasp motif as it is manifested in Renaissance emblematic illustrations and jewelry. He states that, “the presentation of the dead man’s hand clasped hopefully by the hand of the Duchess brings to the stage a horrid, mixed hand-in-hand image that is part sadistic trick, part erotic gesture, part *memento mori*.” While Randall does view the hand as “fundamentally a tool... a sign and a source,” he does not view it as a theatrical object, but a sign of Webster’s own authorial intentions and agency.²⁴⁸ Although not concerned with authorial intent, Katherine Rowe’s extensive study, *Dead Hands*, focuses on the single, repeated occurrence of the severed hand from Renaissance to Modern literature. In her chapter dedicated to the hand in early modern drama, Rowe focuses on the practices of witchcraft that permeates *The Duchess of Malfi*. Focusing on both the handclasps enacted through the play as a metaphor of contract, and the severed “Hand of Glory” described in the *Compendium Maleficarum* (1608), Rowe links both to the ongoing concerns of “agency relations” and obligations in the early seventeenth century.²⁴⁹ Although Rowe illustrates how the dead hand motif emerges from folklore as a witchcraft charm, she does not attend to Webster’s lack of use of that trope. In the play the severed hand does not function as a charm, an object believed to have magical powers, but rather as a prop, a theatrical object with narrative function. Like Rowe, Albert Tricomi attempts to locate the historical precursor for the presentation of the dead man’s hand. Surveying possible sources including Herodotus and Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Tricomi argues that the *true* source of the hand can be found in a sixteenth century French witchcraft tract that treats a severed hand bearing a ring in an explicit relationship to lycanthropy.

²⁴⁸ Dale B.J. Randall, “The Rank and Earthly Background of Certain Physical Symbols in *The Duchess of Malfi*,” *Renaissance Drama* 18 (1987) 178, 74.

²⁴⁹ Katherine Rowe, *Dead Hands: Fictions of Agency, Renaissance to Modern* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 86-110.

Tricomi sees this scene “enact[ing] a communal anxiety that unseen agents will, through lycanthropic possession, sever the bonds that join husband and wife.”²⁵⁰ The contemporary witchcraft tracts discussed by Tricomi and Rowe may have influenced Jacobean audiences to such an extent as to fear lycanthropic possession or worry that their dead body parts may be used as charms of sorcery, but what is more eminent in these concerns—and what is appropriated on the Jacobean stage—is the corporeal fragment’s ability to retain some element of the producing “whole” body or “spirit” of the original to influence others.

The severed hand’s in *Malfi* is made available for various forms of agency, action, and meaning. It takes on a life of its own, remaining elusive and indeterminate in its origin and purpose, as evidenced, in part, by these various scholarly essays attempting to establish the hand within fixed historical emblems and images. While attending to ideological patterns within the drama may help us to understand the scene in context and isolated source study may contextualize the occurrence of the severed hand, none of these approaches consider the inherent *theatricality* of the scene which uses the waxen hand as a stage prop. I offer this review of the varying scholarship of the scene to demonstrate how critics’ perceptions of the severed hand is often grounded in only textual reception and lacks attention to the theatrical function of the scene, which contributes to the alienating ambience of the wax effigies. Like the imprisoned Duchess, the playwright’s captive audience is forced to watch powerful and disturbing spectacles, spectacles that are by definition artificial and illusionary. The dead man’s hand does not function as a metaphysical object or a metaphorical symbol, nor is it a magical charm; it is a stage property in that it represents one thing but is another, all the while furthering the actions of the plot.

Ferdinand’s sadistic spectacle may have been as unsettling for the early modern viewer as for the Duchess. At first sight, the audience, like the Duchess, is “fooled” because Ferdinand has not yet identified the figures as “artificial.” Whereas in the fiction the Duchess understands these figures to be dead, the viewer would presumably understand them as representation of the

²⁵⁰ Albert H. Tricomi, “The Severed Hand in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*,” *SEL* 44.2 (2004) 352, 56.

dead. If the actors on Webster's stage were pretending to be wax impressions themselves, the usual double-perspective would be in place (the actor playing dead). But, once Ferdinand announces that these are not "true" the spectator's perception is jolted by yet another layer of artifice: what is made to look dead might be, in Bosola's words, "feigned statues" (4.2. 351).

The Duchess' reaction to seeing the "corpses" of her loved ones inspires her own macabre wishes:

Duchess: There is not between heaven and earth one wish
 I stay for after this. It wastes me more
 Than were't my picture, fashioned out of wax,
 Stuck with a magical needle and then buried
 In some foul dunghill. And yond's an excellent property
 For a tyrant, which I would account mercy—

Bosola: What's that?

Duchess: If they would bind me to that lifeless trunk,
 And let me freeze to death.

(4.1. 60-67)

Presumably there would be a retroactive shock in realizing that in the fiction the Duchess, unaware of the artifice of the tableau, has imaged the instrument of her own death as a wax image, eerily and magically animated to kill. The Duchess' plea "to be bound to that lifeless trunk" does more than reinforce the supposed authenticity of Antonio's death and his corpse; in retrospect it underscores the fact that the bodies in the carefully constructed tableau never lived in the first place. Similarly, the Duchess heightens both the pathos and unreality with the image in the discovery space with her assertion that "I account this world a tedious theatre,/ For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will" (84-85). In many ways, by the end of the play, all of the actors are seen as waxen figures staged for dramatic effect; as Bosola informs us "We are merely the stars tennis balls, struck and banded/ Which way to please them" (5.4. 56-7). While the hand is a tool for the plot—furthering the torture of the Duchess, pointing to the figures of her massacred family—the hand is also representative of larger theatricality operating in the play, as it is later recalled when the "real" bodies of the murdered children are revealed, or when the Duchess' voice is heard in an echo, or when Antonio's is mistakenly murdered by Bosola in the darkness, and the Cardinal

falls victim to his own ruse. The uncertainty and counter-intentionality of the severed hand has permeated *The Duchess of Malfi*.

I use Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* as an example of the defamiliarizing power of corporeal stage props in Jacobean drama because of the fluctuating reception the severed body part receives in the play by both the Duchess and the audience, unmooring the off-stage notions of the body as whole and authentic. *Malfi* present us with a concept of the bodily fragment as a prop—disembodied, yet active and influential, one that restructures how audience members and characters perceive the play and the plot. Later playwrights expand upon this treatment of the dismembered corpse.

V

Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* offers an extended and more graphic example of the hand-as-property trope. Like *The Duchess of Malfi* where the severed hand is part of the whole Antonio, in *The Changeling* the severed finger is part of the whole Alonzo, both fragments representing the murderous actions taken to procure them. In both plays the appendages are harvested for mental torture of their beneficiaries. However, unlike Webster's play, the audience witnesses the butchery of Alonzo in the castle vaults. Also, whereas in *Malfi* the dead man's hand significance and meaning were clear—as Bosola says, “you know now direct they are dead” (4.1. 58)—in *The Changeling* the fragment of the finger contains various interpretations which must be negotiated by both character and audience.

Early in the play, the villain Deflores kills the man betrothed to Beatrice, the woman he lusts after. She has enlisted Deflores' aid in dispatching her fiancée, Alonzo, and after Deflores commits the deed, he cuts the dead man's ring finger off. The severed finger that Deflores returns with testifies to the success of the crime but also to the broken truth between the betrothed, and it also symbolizes the new coercive compact that replaces it, the bargain between Beatrice and her henchman. In the ensuing action the finger haunts Beatrice as Deflores does. It becomes a talisman of the permanent hold his service has over her and the sexual blackmail it permits.

Loathing Deflores, Beatrice does not mean to agree to either a continuing relationship or a sexual partnership with him, but the contract for murder returns more than she contracted for.

The dismemberment of Alonzo's finger is prefigured earlier in the play by continual references to hands and violence. In the first scene of the play, Deflores picks up Beatrice's dropped glove. Recoiling from the violation she feels when Deflores offers to return it, she throws down its counterpart: "For t'other's sake I part with this-- /Take 'em, and draw thine own skin off with 'em" (1.1. 222-23).²⁵¹ Flaying is no threat to the facially scarred Deflores, who views the glove as a potential second skin. As Beatrice exits, Deflores pulls the glove onto his own hand and muses:

... Now I know
She had rather wear my pelt tanned in a pair
Of dancing pumps than I should thrust my fingers
Into her sockets here.

(224-27)

While the "sockets" Deflores refers to are the fingers of the glove, the reference also allude to Beatrice's genitalia.²⁵² Deflores obscene mime with Beatrice's glove at the end of 1.1 is echoed and partly glossed by the bawdy exchange between Alibius and Lollo in the following scene. As the subplot of the asylum is introduced, Alibius tells his man Lollo that he has secretly married a young wife and that he "would wear my ring on my own finger;/ Whilst it is borrowed it is none of mine,/ But his that useth it" (1.2. 27-29). Beyond these mentions of fingers and rings are Beatrice's musings on true love:

A true deserver like a diamond sparkles--
In darkness you may seem, that's in absence;

²⁵¹ All quotations are from Thomas and William Rowley Middleton, *The Changeling*, New Mermaids, ed. Michael Neill (London: A & C Black, 2006) and will appear parenthetically.

²⁵² Much has been made of the similarities between Deflores and Iago (See Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* 168-75 as well as his article Michael Neill, "Hidden Malady: Death, Discovery, and Indistinction in *the Changeling*," *Renaissance Drama* 22 (1991), and, therefore, the parallel between the handkerchief and the glove as symbolic props. However, the handkerchief in *Othello*, despite its abuse and manipulation, derives its symbolic power from a romantic myth of origin that makes it an appropriate emblem for the extraordinary love between Othello and Desdemona. The glove, by contrast, is interchangeable—a token of exchange that fits any man's hand.

Yet is he best discerned then
With intellectual eyesight.

(15-19)

All of these linguistic references to fingers, rings, and diamonds, coupled with connotations of violence and sexuality culminate in the spectacular dismemberment and display of Alonzo's finger.²⁵³ The full resonance of these two early scenes depends on the climatic moment where the phallic suggestiveness of fingers and rings is given a shocking twist by the bloody "token" carried by Deflores.

Following Beatrice's orders to dispose of her inconvenient fiancé, Deflores kills the unsuspecting young man in the vaults of the castle. Noticing the diamond ring on his victim's finger glinting in the darkness, Deflores thinks to remove the treasure so that it will "approve the work" of his murder (3.1. 33). However, he finds that the ring will not come off easily. "What, so fast on? Not part in death?" He asks. "I'll take speedy course then: Finger and all shall off" (33-35). It is horrific that in death Alonzo's corpse defies Deflores' appropriation of the ring and resists his actions until Deflores must forcibly sever the finger from the dead body.

When we next see Deflores he carries the "token" of Alonzo's finger with him and presents it to Beatrice:

Deflores: I've a token for you.
Beatrice: For me?
Deflores: But it was sent somewhat unwillingly—
Shows the finger
I could not get the ring without the finger.
Beatrice: Bless me! What hast thou done?
Deflores: *Why, is that more*
Than killing the whole man? I cut his heart-
strings!
A greedy hand thrust in a dish at court
In a mistake hath had as much as this.
Beatrice: 'Tis the first token my father made me send him.
Deflores: And I made him send it back again
For his last token; I was loathe to leave it

²⁵³ This verbal imagery is translated into visual imagery in the 1974 BBC production of *The Changeling*, starring Helen Mirren where the camera consciously lingers on hands performing routine tasks, such as cleaning leather.

And I'm sure dead men have no use of jewels--
He was loathe to part with't, for it stuck
And if the flesh and it were both one substance.

(3.3. 26-38, my
emphasis)

Again Deflores emphasizes Alonzo's corpse's resistance to giving up the ring, moreover it is clear than Deflores sees the severing of the finger as symbolic for slaying "the whole man." Beatrice seems to agree, as she instructs him to keep the ring for his own payment, yet "pray, bury the finger" (41). The word "token" is repeated between Deflores and Beatrice; however each use has a different connotation to the speaker. For Deflores the "token" is the severed finger of Alonzo; for Beatrice the "token" is the ring which finger bears. Here the power of the corporeal stage prop is in its ability to reflect various interpretations as to meaning and worth. The severed finger means differently to Beatrice and Deflore, demonstrating that the power of the prop to influence does not lie in what the object *is*, but in *how it means*—and that meaning for both has nothing to do with physical presence of Alonzo. The finger is a clear synecdoche for the man, and yet its horror seems to exceed that symbolic function; it is horrible because it is a body part and one that resisted being taken.

When Beatrice recoils at the sight of this "token" it is not because of its gruesome dismemberment, but because it wears the ring that she gave to her fiancé. To which Deflores asks, "Why, is that more/ Than killing the whole man?" (29-30). The dismembered finger shocks Beatrice's romantic sensibilities: ring and finger, the very emblem of wedding rites, are translated into blatant sexual desires by Deflores. When Deflores offers the finger to Beatrice—a perversion of an "engagement" gesture—he insists how the ring and the finger were inseparable without violent action: "I could not get the ring without the finger...for it stuck/ *As if the flesh and it were both one substance*" (3.3. 28, 38-39). The ring and Alonzo are not only "one substance" but it seems that Alonzo's corpse would not release the ring to Deflores thereby maintaining a postmortem resistance.

The ring/finger is a sign not merely of Beatrice's indisputable betrothal to Alonzo, but the new intimacy which Deflore's remorseless innuendo brings her slowly to realize: "Why are not you as guilty, in (I'm sure)/ As deep as I? And we should *stick together*... Nor is it *fit we two, engaged so jointly*,/ Should *part and live asunder*...peace and innocency has turned you out/ And *made you one with me*" (84, 88-9, 139-40, my emphasis). Deflores uses the language of marriage to imply lust and crime and overtly debases the ideological values of wedlock operating throughout the beginning of the play. Despite this, the horror that the finger invokes exceeds that sexual symbolism. The severed finger functions via dislocated efficacy in that it literally has a power that is separated from Alonzo, however the original *intent* of Alonzo is fastened to that finger and its ring: union with Beatrice. Yet that intent is manifested through Deflores' actions of seduction and bribery.

The severed ring-bearing finger of Alonzo has a striking iconic parallel to the waxen, ringed hand in *Malfi*. It may also be seen as a predecessor of the dagger upon which the distraught Giovanni carries with the heart of his sister Annabella in the final scene in *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. In the same way that *The Changeling* uses the severed finger to contain and exploit the various notions of "marriage" operating in the play, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* uses the stage property of Annabella's heart to interrogate conventional notions of love, however with very different results.

V

The concluding scene in John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* provides an even more striking example of the defamiliarizing power of the human part, for in it the heart of a newly murdered woman takes center stage, entrancing—and horrifying—the on-stage audience that has gathered for a celebratory banquet. The celebrations cease the moment Giovanni enters the feast with his pregnant sister's excised heart exposed at the end of his dagger. Unlike its predecessors, *The Changeling* and *The Duchess of Malfi* in which the severed parts of stage corpses are integrated as agents in the course of drama's action, the mutilation in *'Tis Pity* serves

as the climax of a play that has attended to issues of the heart throughout, pointing to the ability of body parts as props not only to enact desire—like in *The Changeling*—but to collate the circulating desires of others in the narrative.

In the play Giovanni has developed an incestuous passion for his sister Annabella, who despite being approached by a number of suitors, requites his love immediately and the siblings consummate their relationship. However, when she discovers that she is pregnant by her brother, she is convinced that she must marry in haste and resigns herself to wed one of her suitors, Soranzo. After their marriage, Soranzo becomes aware of Annabella's pregnancy and discovers the incestuous liaison with her brother. Soranzo's jealousy leads him to order Giovanni's murder, setting the birthday banquet as the scene for the retributive killing; Giovanni foresees the plan and schemes to take his own revenge on Soranzo whom he holds responsible for ending his idyllic, albeit scandalous, union with Annabella. Giovanni's infamous entrance into the banquet scene with the disembodied heart of the murdered Annabella on the edge of his dagger shocks and stuns the on-stage audience, to whom Giovanni addresses:

The glory of my deed
Darkened by the midday sun, made noon as night.²⁵⁴
You came to feast, my lords, with dainty fare.
I came to feast too, but I digged for food
In a much richer mine than gold or stone
Of any valued balanced. 'Tis a heart,
A heart, my lords, in which is mine entombed.
Look well, upon't; d'ee know't?

(5.6. 21-28)²⁵⁵

For those in attendance at the banquet, and witnessing Giovanni's presentation, his actions hint at nothing other than his derangement. The characters on stage have no knowledge of Giovanni and Annabella's incestuous relationship; as a result the story Giovanni tells upon his entrance compounds the shock of his bloody spectacle. As commentators have frequently noted, the

²⁵⁴ Notice that this detail of the reversal of lighting and time resembles the setting for Horatio's murder in *The Spanish Tragedy* and the setting for Atreus' slaughter of his brother's sons in *Thyestes*. This similarity reveals that Giovanni views his actions as both a needful sacrifice and as an act of revenge.

²⁵⁵ All quotations are from John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, New Mermaids, ed. Martin Wiggins (London: A & C Black, 2003) and will appear parenthetically.

spectacle serves “as the enacted culmination of Ford’s obsessive heart and banquet imagery.”²⁵⁶ Michael Neill observes that, “Giovanni’s feverishly excited language [upon entering the final scene] exposes his sister’s heart to a bewildering variety of competing interpretations.” Neill concludes: “In the absence of any controlling ritual contact, not one of these [interpretations] can be confirmed; so that the heart always threatens to become nothing more than itself, a grisly tautology of metaphor—a piece of *offal en brochette*, brutally stripped of all vestiges of metaphor.”²⁵⁷ While scholars attempt to make an emblem of the heart, it also exists as a prop that defamiliarizes the emblem it supposedly represents. Whereas Deflores appropriates the finger—and the intent—of Alonzo for his own means, Giovanni’s manipulation of Annabella’s heart functions separately from her desires. Whereas in *The Changeling* and *Malfi* the literalization of the metaphor of the hand/finger renews its figurative meaning, in *’Tis Pity* that same literalization destroys the emblematic reading of the heart offered throughout the play.

Similar to the repeated references to hands in *Titus Andronicus* before their severing, the heart and its image are invoked throughout *’Tis Pity*. In fact, “heart” is the most popular word in the play, appearing twice per act, leading up to the final scene when Giovanni enters “with a heart upon his dagger” and the word “heart” is used nine times—four of which directly refer to the heart as a tangible prop and not an abstract metaphor. There is a marked difference between the metaphor and the reality; between an emblematic illustration of a heart and the grisly, messy organ itself. Yet, unlike *Titus*, the recurring heart imagery gradually sheds its metaphorical trappings until it becomes gruesomely literal at the climax.

Early in the play the imagery of the heart is entirely conventional, as seen in the scene where Giovanni, in the process of wooing his sister, offers his dagger and instructs her:

And here’s my breast: strike home.
Rip up my bosom: there thou shalt behold
A heart in which is writ the truth I speak.

(1.2. 204-206)

²⁵⁶ Michael Neill, “‘What Strange Riddle’s This?’ Deciphering *’Tis Pity She’s a Whore*,” *John Ford: Critical Revisions*, ed. Michael Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 155. Neill offers an extensive analysis of the heart as emblem and image in the play.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 161, 165.

It is, however, Annabella's body rather than Giovanni's that comes to bear the meaning of their transgression. These lines not only foreshadow the eventual dissection of Annabella, but engage in familiar conventions of romantic seduction. Similar to when Giovanni explains his love to Annabella in conventional Petrarchan tropes:

I have too long suppressed the hidden flames
That almost have consumed me. I have spent
Many a silent night in sighs and groans,
Ran over all my thoughts, despised my fate,
Reasoned against the reasons of my love,
Done all that smoothed-cheeked Virtue could advise,
But found all bootless: 'tis my destiny
That you must either love, or I must die.

(1.2. 217-24)

Certainly these familiar and conventional expressions of love are shocking when they are contextualized within the situation of an incestuous relationship. Notably, the heart is the site where such defamiliarization is located. The play itself suggests this conflation between the emblematic and the authentic, for example, when Annabella mocks Soranzo's similarly conventional lover's rhetoric.

Soranzo: Did you but see my heart, then you would swear--
Annabella: That you were dead.

(3.2. 23-24)

Annabella's quick-witted reply conjures up the reality that if she were to truly see Soranzo's heart, he would likely be on an anatomy table. As the play draws towards the climax the imagery of the heart becomes more and more brutal. When Soranzo discovers Annabella's pregnancy he interrogates her as to who the father is, to which she refuses to answer. He declares: "Not know it strumpet! I'll rip up thy heart and find it there" (4.3. 52). The idea of ripping up Annabella's heart to discover the name of the child's father reminds the audience of the earlier incestuous exchange of vows between Annabella and Giovanni.

In the play the image of the eviscerated heart there is a collision between an amorous metaphoric suggestiveness and the horrible, concrete stage reality that resists interpretation. We

may struggle to find an answer to its “strange riddle” (5.6. 29), to make the image of the heart discursive, transcendent, beyond the merely physical; but in the theatre our efforts will always founder on the physicality of the prop. The present-ness of the physical body part resists being subsumed into a symbolic scheme of romance. The stage image of the heart on Giovanni’s dagger literally reveals to view that which was previously hidden: an internal organ of the body. The object that Giovanni brandishes on the tip of his dagger is unmistakably carnal, possibly a “sheep’s heart dripping real blood,”²⁵⁸ if we take the bathetic (and potential apocryphal) legendary program note seriously, “heart by Dewhurst the Family Butcher.” Annabella’s heart as an emblem incorporates a range of possible significances that are independent of Annabella and thus more than mere synecdoche. Unlike Titus’ hand, the prop of the heart is carried on stage and closely examined by other characters. More than that, the prop of the heart is removed from the dead Annabella and exists independently of her character, and therefore can be used as an agent of revenge as when Giovanni stabs Soranzo with the same dagger, most likely with the disembodied heart still on it.

VI

In forecasting his madness, Ferdinand asserts that “The wolf shall find her grave and scrape it up,/ Not to devour the corpse, but to discover/ The horrid murder” (4.2. 303-5). Significantly the wolf does not desire to consume the dead limbs that exhumes, rather he wants to “discover” the truth of them. In each of the plays discussed here, the body props serve as “ocular proof” of a deed or a situation: the finger “approves” the murder of Alonzo for Deflores; the heart of Annabella proves the intimacy of her relationship with her brother/lover. Each bodily fragment requires an explanation by the characters that wield them: Ferdinand must explain the illusionary nature of the waxen props; Deflores must make explicit the significance of the severed finger; and Giovanni must explain the heart on the edge of his dagger to the banqueters. These

²⁵⁸ Nicholas Brooke, *Horrid Laughter in Jacobean Tragedy* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979).

explanations, while seeming to merely identify the fake prop as a realistic body part, also imbue these objects with a dislocated efficacy: the on-stage body fragment as a prop cites the dislocated off-stage fragment of the corpse, but it also cites the theatrical corpse as well—the body from which the fragment was severed/dismembered. The Jacobean theatre recalibrates its own presentation of bodily presence as a source of power. The body props substitute horrifying theatrical spectacle for the kind of animistic power of the dead body off-stage. In this way, the Jacobean theatre imagines body parts as active props and similarly “reanimates” them in the way that body parts outside of the theatre were once regarded as animistic. As it has been long argued, Jacobean drama subverts the idea of a divinely ordered universe and these plays also subvert the concept of a unified human subject.²⁵⁹ This dislocated subjectivity can be seen to manifest in the ways in which seventeenth century dramas treat the theatrical corpse’s fragment as a stage property, severing the part from the whole and the action from the agent in order to manifest tangible results.

Jacobean and early Stuart tragedies offer their heroes new means of using the physical remains of the deceased in obtaining their revenge. Whereas Hieronimo uses the whole body of his son in order to illustrate his passionate conviction and stage his revenge, Giovanni uses only the heart of Annabella. Perhaps the seventeenth century theatre is interested in increasing the poetic sensationalism of revenge lust? Perhaps body parts are more convenient for stage portability? Despite these practical possibilities, I believe that this shift in treatment of the theatrical corpse is ultimately a re-conception of the corpse, one that recognizes that the portioned body may still carry and convey the resonances of life, and that those resonances can be manipulated for theatrical effect.

²⁵⁹ See Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, 3rd ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

EPILOGUE

LAUGHING IN THE FACE OF DEATH

Throughout this examination of early modern drama, I have discussed how and why early modern playwrights appropriate the cultural resonances in their staging of the theatrical corpse. In all of my examples the corpse is seen as an influential and dynamic agent of the stage: effecting the stage space, the actions of characters, and the trajectory of plot and genre. I have argued that this dramaturgical phenomena originates not only from these playwrights' engagement with liturgical texts seeking to define the materiality of the corpse, but also from their readings of Seneca translated into English, which modeled the performative capacity of the corpse to influence dramatic action. In the plays of the sixteenth century the intact corpse spectacularly staged within the discovery space operates as a visual *lacuna* that suspends the play's actions as well as disrupts the interpretative stability of the play. By the seventeenth century such potentials for suspension and disruption are no longer confined to the intact corpse, but are registered in the dismembered body parts that circulate around the stage and through the drama. Detached from their signifying bodies, the severed corporeal fragments in these later dramas act as stage properties in their ability to realize intent and agency. There is clearly a recalibration of the significance of the corpse throughout early modern drama. While it may be a sign that the theatre is now able to comfortably appropriate the animistic qualities of the Pre-Reformation corpse, such an adjustments also reflect a growing comfort with the corpse's liminal status to signify beyond the limiting confines of theatrical space and gesture.

In these final pages I would like to, briefly, muse about another possibility for the theatrical corpse that I believe assists in understanding this recalibration. While my discussion of the theatrical corpse thus far has focused on the staging, the performance, and the theatrical

objectification of the corpse, I have not considered the *comedy* of the corpse. In order to demonstrate the potential humor in the stage death, I would like to briefly consider the following passage that represents a contemporary account of the London stage and discusses the popular actor, Richard Fowler:

Fowler you know was appointed for the conquering parts, and it being given out that he was to play the Part of a great Captain and mighty Warrior, drew much Company; the Play began, and ended with his Valour; but at the end of the Fourth Act he laid so heavily about him, that some Mutes who stood for Souldiers, fell down as they were dead e're he had toucht their trembling Targets; so he brandisht his Sword & made his *Exit* ne're minding to bring off his dead men; which they perceiving, crauld into the Tyreing house, at which, *Fowler* grew angry, and told 'em; and so they crauled out again, which gave the people such an occasion of Laughter; they cry'd that again that again, that again.²⁶⁰

The plays of the late seventeenth-century are outside the scope of this study, and the veracity of this account is somewhat doubtful, but the passage is vividly suggestive in terms of the questions of stage practice, theatrical efficacy, and audience response that I have been exploring in this study. In this account the staging of the corpse affects a different kind of destructive performance than I have been discussing: unintentional comedic effect.

There is a potential humor lurking in the theatrical corpse in its capacity to break its stillness and reveal all to be illusion. Shakespeare's Falstaff exploits that potential to great effect in *1 Henry IV* when, after engaging in combat with Douglas, Falstaff falls next to the body of Hotspur who Prince Hal has just killed. The Prince delivers a moving speech over Hotspur and covers his foe's face with his "favours" (5.4. 95) as "fair rites of tenderness" (97). He then turns to Falstaff's colossal corpse and simply asks, "Could not all this flesh/ Keep in a little life?" (101-2). As Hal exits the scene, there may be a "pregnant pause" for the audience members to consider the two corpses on stage, until Falstaff's sudden resurrection breaks the silence with a bellowing "Emboweled?"

²⁶⁰ From *Knavery in All Trades*, ascribed to John Tatham. Quoted in Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) vol. 6, 172-3.

It is a crucial performance point to consider whether or not the audience is aware that Falstaff is “playing dead” when Hal speaks over him. David Scott Kastan notes in his Arden edition of the play that recent productions have “exploited the comedy of having Hal aware of Falstaff’s shamming by emphasizing words like ‘heavy’ (104) and ‘Emboweled’ (108), thereby inviting a response from the “dead” Falstaff that is perceptible to the audience, if not to Hal. In Orson Welles’ *Chimes at Midnight* it is the profile shot of Falstaff’s armored helmet visibly emitting breath in the cold air that Keith Baxter’s Prince Hal perceives and responds to ironically. In truth, it might be difficult for an audience to accept Falstaff’s death here, since he has successfully avoided all threats to his survival throughout the play.

This moment on stage is a tantalizing one, as it harbors the potential to reveal the play as an illusion, to “break to scene.” In trying to conceptualize this scene for my dissertation I staged it several times with students from the Department of Theatre and Dance. We experimented with the possibilities of Falstaff revealing himself to be alive and Henry reacting to the sham, with Falstaff revealing himself to be alive and Henry ignoring the obvious signs, and with Falstaff and Henry playing the scene straight as Falstaff pretending to be dead and Henry believing in his counterfeit. With each potential staging we laughed, breaking the scene, and having to gather ourselves together again. Most interesting, from my perspective, was how the most humorous (and therefore botched) attempts were those in which we attempted to play the scene straight: Falstaff, Henry, or Hotspur (or myself) could not keep from laughing hysterically.

This moment in *1 Henry IV* illustrates the power of “corpsing.” The term is theatrical slang used to describe when an actor breaks character during a scene by laughing, or by causing another cast member to laugh. Legend has it that the term “corpsing” originated when a living actor played a corpse on stage and the tendency of other actors to try to make that actor laugh. The thespian folklore may be true, and, I think it reveals a significant impulse in our desire to laugh in the face of represented death.

While comedic dimension of the theatrical corpse is apparent in the example of the botched corpses in Fowler’s performance, it is an underlying potential of every staged corpse that

threatens to call attention to its theatricality, interrupting the fantasy of the play. If this interruption occurs, the moment of laughter annihilates the represented being and the suspension of disbelief comes crashing down. Therefore, even in the moments where we laugh in the face of the staged death, the theatrical corpse still exerts its power to disrupt and transform.

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